

Documenting Minnesota: The 1970s Oral History Project

LORI STURDEVANT
narrator

THOMAS SAYLOR
interviewer



Grant Recipient
MINNESOTA HISTORICAL
& CULTURAL GRANTS

*Made possible by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the vote of Minnesotans
on November 4, 2008. Administered by the Minnesota Historical Society.*

Interview © 2010-11 by Thomas Saylor

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy and recording by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from Project Director Thomas Saylor, Department of History, Concordia University—St Paul, 275 N. Syndicate, St Paul, MN 55104.

This project is funded by the Minnesota Cultural Heritage Grants Program, which is part of Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. The program's goals: to preserve and enhance access to Minnesota's cultural and historical resources and to support projects of enduring value for the cause of history and historic preservation across the state.

The Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution, passed in November 2008, raises new funds from a sales tax increase to be divided among projects benefitting the outdoors, clean water, parks and trails, and arts and cultural heritage. A portion of the newly established Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund – \$22 million for the 2010-11 biennium – was appropriated to the Minnesota Historical Society for a variety of history programs around the state – programs intended to preserve and enhance access to Minnesota's history and its cultural and historical resources. One of those is the Minnesota Cultural Heritage Grants Program.

Documenting Minnesota: the 1970s Oral History Project

Project background

American society in the 1970s is increasingly a subject of historical scholarship, with numerous general works and focused studies appearing in the past several years. Yet there has been little in-depth research on the 1970s completed here at the state level and, more importantly, almost no focused oral history projects or individual interviews – the Powerline controversy project (housed at the Minnesota Historical Society archives), and the Reserve Mining case, with seven interviews conducted by the Save Lake Superior Association and located at the Northeast Minnesota Historical Center, Duluth, stand as exceptions. This project is an attempt to fill this gap.

Documenting Minnesota is organized around broad 1970s themes of environmentalism, activism and protest, and focuses initially on two specific topics: Metrodome protests (1972-79); and statewide activities and programs of the 1976 American Bicentennial, including the Esthetic Environment Programs (1973-76). Twenty-five focused, individual oral history interviews were conducted on these topics; these interviews were transcribed and edited, and are here made available for public access, thus creating a body of primary source material with potential for present and future use.

Oral history is particularly suited to these project topics. First, it enables the collection, evaluation, and permanent preservation of the experiences and memories of individual participants. To learn from our past, to employ history as a decision making tool, we must assemble the historical record. But perhaps more importantly, emotionally charged events – such as the Metrodome protests – can produce multiple perspectives, based very much on individual perception. To appropriately preserve these multiple perspectives, it is necessary to speak with the participants and allow them to recount events in their own words.

The topics

Opposition in Minnesota to the funding and construction of professional sports facilities predates Target Field (2010), or a possible new home for the National Football League's Minnesota Vikings. Protest accompanied plans for the Metrodome, the downtown Minneapolis stadium which opened its doors in 1982 as the home for Major League Baseball's Twins and the NFL Vikings – from the first public discussions for a downtown Minneapolis venue in 1972, through the 1978 approval for a facility by the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission, and into the 1979 legislative session. Various organizations arose, focused on issues of funding, location, taxation, the impacts on neighborhoods, and the aesthetics of outdoor sports. Interviews consider multiple viewpoints of this controversy – from the Twins and Vikings to grassroots protesters, from political figures to journalists who covered the stories.

Minnesotans had multiple viewpoints of the 1976 American Bicentennial, too, and celebrated the event in many different ways. But statewide programs and activities to mark 200 years of the USA began in 1973, with the establishment of the Minnesota American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (MARBC), a state-funded agency. Energetic state leadership developed grassroots programs that placed decisions on programs and activities squarely with local residents – with the result that some communities planned and built and celebrated and documented, while others did little or nothing. Interviews focus on two locations that then Lieutenant Governor Rudy Perpich called ‘Minnesota’s two Model Bicentennial Communities,’ Fertile and Duluth, as well as on MARBC’s state leadership.

Additionally, a number of Bicentennial interviews look at the Esthetic Environment Programs (EEP), one of the major related activities in Minnesota of the 1976 Bicentennial. EEP created, and helped to fund, statewide and also local community projects focused on beautification programs, grassroots preservation initiatives, and protecting natural resources. This focus on environmental questions fits nicely with the larger national debate, and federal legislation and public awareness campaigns.

When future generations look back at the 1970s, and ask questions about what life was like for Minnesotans during that decade, I am pleased that these interviews will be available as a source for research. For this I thank, above all, the women and men who took time to be participate in this project.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to research assistants Sara Peterson and David Edwards; David Grabitske and James Fogerty at the Minnesota Historical Society; Michael Dorner at Concordia University—St Paul; Natascha Saylor, Bruce Larson, and Linda Gerber.

Thomas Saylor, Ph.D.

Professor of History, Concordia University—St Paul

Founder and Director, Documenting Minnesota: the 1970s Oral History Project

Documenting Minnesota: the 1970s Oral History Project

Project narrators: Metrodome

Name; positions in mid to late 1970s.

Bell, Jerry. Worked for the Metropolitan Council; one area of responsibility was questions of downtown stadium financing. Later executive director of the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission, which owns and operate the Metrodome. In 1987, became president of the Minnesota Twins.

Brandt, Steve. Reporter, Minneapolis *Tribune*. Covered state government, state agencies and the Legislature during period of debates on stadium and its financing.

Gage, Kelly. Lawyer, Mankato, and former State senator from Blue Earth County, 1966-72. Appointed member of Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission that made the 1978 decision for a domed, downtown stadium.

Gornick, Ronald. Business owner, Chisholm. Appointed member of Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission that made the 1978 decision for a domed, downtown stadium.

Griffith, Clark. Part owner, executive vice president and treasurer of the Minnesota Twins.

Kerr, Jon. Grassroots activist and journalist, Twin Cities. Active with Save the Met organization and Minnesotans Against the Downtown Dome (MADD).

Loscalzo, Julian. Grassroots activist and organizer, Twin Cities. Active with Save the Met organization and Minnesotans Against the Downtown Dome (MADD).

Mungavan, Tim. Community organizer, Cedar Riverside Project Area Committee, Minneapolis.

Ogren, Tim. Grassroots activist and community organizer, Cedar Riverside neighborhood, Minneapolis.

Primoli, Fred. Bar owner, St Paul. Head of Citizens Opposed to the Stadium Tax (COST), a bar owners protest group.

Rantz, Jim. Assistant minor league director, Minnesota Twins.

Sturdevant, Lori. Reporter, Minneapolis *Tribune*. Covered Minnesota Legislature during period of debates on stadium and its financing.

Weiner, Jay. Reporter, Minneapolis *Tribune*. Later author of Stadium Games: Fifty Years of Big League Greed and Bush League Boondoggles.

Wright, Frank. Managing Editor, Minneapolis *Tribune*.

Project narrators: Bicentennial

Name; positions in mid to late 1970s.

Beaudin, Robert. Mayor of Duluth, 1975-79.

Egge, David. Banker, Fertile. Member of Fertile Bicentennial Committee.

France, Al. Appointed Chair, Duluth Bicentennial Commission; also employed with Lake Superior Industrial Bureau. Former State legislator from Duluth area, 1963-70, and former Assistant Secretary of Commerce in Washington, D.C.

Larson, Bruce. Business owner, Fertile. Appointed Chair, Fertile Bicentennial Committee.

Mott, J. Thomas. Law student, St Paul. Worked with Esthetic Environment Programs (EEP), specifically with dilapidated buildings program.

Oldendorf, Yvette. Appointed Director, Esthetic Environment Programs (EEP).

Olson, Roberta. Owner and publisher, Fertile *Journal* (weekly newspaper).

Pollari, Lois. Appointed Director, Minnesota American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (MARBC).

Smith, Sybil. Youth organizer. Worked for MARBC in charge of Youth and Special Programs.

Vind, Merna and Charles. Merna: homemaker, Fertile. Charles, business owner, Fertile, and member of Fertile Bicentennial Committee.

TIMELINE – Metrodome debate and construction

1956

Metropolitan Stadium in Bloomington is opened, originally only with minor league baseball.

1961

The Washington Senators are relocated from the nation's capitol, and re-named the Minnesota Twins. Vikings launched as NFL expansion team.

Late 1960s

Minneapolis architect Robert Cerny introduces a concept of a domed football stadium in downtown Minneapolis.

1972

Downtown stadium advocates develop a proposal for a \$49.1 million stadium and parking ramp. Nearly 1,000 people show up at a public hearing in 1973 to protest.

1973

Minneapolis Mayor Charles Stenvig, DFL, vetoes dome proposal – due, he says, to tax burden for Minneapolis. But Minneapolis City Council overrides veto, 10-3. The proposal then goes to the seven-person Board of Estimate and Taxation (which had to approve the bond sale for the project). Board is ready to approve with the required 5 – 2 majority, but Mayor Stenvig blocks appointment of a 7th member, stalling proposal.

1973

Minneapolis business leader Harvey MacKay recruits 26 people to serve on a Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce Stadium Task Force. The executive director of the Task Force is Charles Krusell, who plays a vital role in Task Force success.

1975, 1976

Wrangling in the State legislative sessions, with no conclusive plan. Both professional franchises claim they may be willing to relocate if no new stadium is built. Location of any new stadium undecided.

May 1977

A 'No-Site Bill' – the idea of Rep. Al Patton (DFL-Sartel) – passes and is signed by Governor Rudy Perpich, DFL. The bill creates the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission (MSFC), with seven members appointed by the governor, to select the stadium site and design. A revenue bonding package is developed to finance the stadium. If revenue streams to support the bonds are not sufficient to retire the bonds, a two-percent metropolitan area liquor tax would be imposed to generate additional bond revenues.

The MSFC has several options:

- It could spend up to \$37.5 million if it chose to build a new football stadium in Bloomington, and improve Metropolitan Stadium for baseball.
- It could spend up to \$25 million if it chose to remodel Metropolitan Stadium as a multi-purpose stadium.
- And it could spend no more than \$55 million if it decided to build a new domed stadium anywhere else. In effect, if any other city than Bloomington wanted the stadium, it would have to provide for a way to get the land at no cost.

May 1977

MSFC members are appointed by Governor Perpich. They are:

- Dan Brutger, St Cloud. Commission chair. Owner of a St. Cloud construction company and numerous other business holdings.
- Solveig Premack, Minneapolis. Vice chair of the Capitol Area Architectural Planning Board.
- Richard Radman, St Paul. VP of the Minnesota AFL-CIO and secretary and business representative of the Saint Paul Building and Construction Trades Council.
- Marion Kennon, Edina. Elementary school teacher at Breck School.
- Ron Gornick, Chisholm. Owned a service station and motel. He had also served on Governor Wendell Anderson's Small Business Task Force.
- Josephine Nunn, Champlin. Mayor of Champlin and a member of the Metropolitan Council's advisory committee on municipalities.
- Kelly Gage, Mankato. Lawyer and former state representative from Blue Earth County.

December 1978

MSFC votes 4 – 3 to build a stadium at a site in Minneapolis. Nunn, Premack, Brutger, and Gornick cast votes for Minneapolis.

April – May 1979

Final legislative agreements on taxes for financing – hotel and liquor taxes in Minneapolis. Twins and Vikings sign 30-year leases, and reach agreement on rents, space usage and revenues from concessions.

December 1979

Construction of the Metrodome starts in downtown Minneapolis.

April 1982

Metrodome opens, on time and under budget.

TIMELINE – Bicentennial planning and activities

Bicentennial: the national context

4 July 1966

Congress establishes the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (ARBC) as an independent federal agency, to plan and develop an overall program for commemorating the Bicentennial of the 1776 American Revolution.

December 1973

Facing charges of corruption and criticism for top-down planning, President Richard Nixon disbands ARBC and replaces it with the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA), under the direction of Secretary of the Navy (and later U.S. Senator) John W. Warner of Virginia. Congress approves small levels of federal funding, and turns over much planning and funding to state and private organizations.

1974-76

ARBA works to coordinate state activities. Director Warner crisscrosses the nation visiting state and regional Bicentennial organizations and rallying support, but the Bicentennial remains a controversial event.

April 1975

The American Freedom Train, with more than 500 artifacts from U.S. history, departs Wilmington, Delaware on a 21-month tour of the forty-eight contiguous states. Millions will visit the travelling exhibit.

4 July 1976

Nationwide Bicentennial celebrations in communities large and small. Festivities include fireworks displays in major cities. Those in Washington, D.C. are presided over by President Gerald Ford and televised nationally.

Minnesota – some key events and dates

June 1972

Governor Wendell R. Anderson issues Executive Order No. 28, establishing the Minnesota American Revolution Bicentennial Committee (MARBC) and charging it to “to plan, encourage, develop and coordinate Minnesota's observances and activities commemorating the historic events and activities associated with the American evolution.”

MARBC organizes itself into three panels – Heritage '76, Festivals U.S.A., and Horizons '76 – that complement the federal Bicentennial themes. Lieutenant Governor Rudy Perpich is named as Chairperson for MARBC.

During 1972-74, Bicentennial themed projects are proposed, but initially neither state nor federal monies become available to the expected levels. Interest begins to lag and many plans are shelved.

March 1973

Duluth becomes Minnesota's first Bicentennial Community. Before the end of 1976, thanks to aggressive MARBC efforts, 349 communities will receive official designation.

August 1973

Another Executive Order of Governor Anderson establishes the Esthetic Environment Programs (EEP); Yvette Oldendorf is named as director. In keeping with the times, EEP receives a broad mandate for action on removal of dilapidated buildings, junk cars, and "other manifestations of visual pollution."

early 1975

Re-organization of MARBC, with Lois Pollari named in February as new director. MARBC also assumes the administration of EEP, which did not receive further funding from the legislature. Director Pollari encourages the development of grassroots programs that place decisions on activities with local community leaders.

August 1975

American Freedom Train stops in Minneapolis.

1976

Before the end of the year, MARBC approves grants for more than 270 statewide projects valued at over \$10 million. Focus is on activities in the Bicentennial theme areas, with an "emphasis on projects of lasting significance."

On 4 July, communities across Minnesota mark the Bicentennial with a broad range of events including parades, fireworks, and commemorative re-enactments.

Metrodome interview No. 12

LORI STURDEVANT
narrator

THOMAS SAYLOR
interviewer

Interviewee: Lori Sturdevant

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 14 December 2010

Location: conference room, *Star Tribune* building, Minneapolis

Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, December 2010

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, May 2011

Interview key:

TS = Thomas Saylor

LS = Lori Sturdevant

TS: Today is 14 December 2010. This is an interview for *Documenting Minnesota: The 1970s Oral History Project*. My name is Thomas Saylor. Today I'm speaking with Lori Sturdevant in office space here at the *Star Tribune* Building in downtown Minneapolis. First, Lori, on the record, thanks very much for taking time out of your busy day to find time for this project. I appreciate it.

LS: My pleasure.

TS: Let's get right to the subject matter here. By 1976 you were working as a reporter with the *Star Tribune* here in Minneapolis.

LS: That's right.

TS: Was this your first full time newspaper job?

LS: Yes, it was. I had worked for newspapers part time and in the summertime while I was in college. I came here directly from graduate school at the University of Minnesota.

TS: So briefly, what were your responsibilities? What was your position and what were your responsibilities when you started here in 1976?

LS: Like most young reporters I started as a general assignment reporter covering just about everything that came along. Worked a lot of night shifts in the early years. But by 1978 I had gravitated to covering a fair amount of public affairs and public policy issues and covering politics. We had a big election in the state in 1978, with both senate seats and the governorship all on the ballot, and I did a fair amount of coverage, really pitching in and helping the politics team in 1978 and by 1979 I was considered part of the legislative coverage team.

TS: From your perspective, how were the *Star* and the *Tribune*, two newspapers at that time, how were they doing by the mid-to-late 1970s?

LS: Are you thinking how are they doing financially?

TS: Maybe connected with the role of newspaper media in the Twin Cities. What was their...how were they seen? How were they perceived?

LS: The *Star* and *Tribune* were the dominant news sources, not only for the Twin Cities but for the state of Minnesota. They were seen as two papers with distinct personalities. The *Tribune* more the intelligentsia paper, more the establishment paper, moderate Republican in their editorial leanings. The *Star* more the blue collar newspaper with a history of the *Star* of being originally a labor paper going way, way back now we're talking about. Had been under joint ownership since the 1940s and were far and away the strongest news organizations in this region. Set the pace for every other news organization, broadcast, other newspapers, you name it. We were the big gorillas.

TS: And one worked for either the *Star* or the *Tribune*?

LS: That's right.

TS: And you worked for...

LS: The *Tribune*.

TS: Was that okay with you or would you prefer the *Star* or were you okay with the *Tribune*?

LS: I was delighted with the *Tribune*. I grew up in South Dakota, and the *Tribune* circulated in South Dakota. In those years it saw itself as a regional newspaper and the region was not Minnesota, it was the upper Midwest in those years. This was a paper with big ambitions.

TS: Just some background to read in here as far as the Twins and the Vikings and the stadium, which had a long history. Of course [Metropolitan Stadium in Bloomington] being built in 1956, the Twins and Vikings here from 1961, but by the early 1970s both the Twins and Vikings were making some noises about wanting or perhaps needing a new facility. By 1973 there was an actual plan for a dome proposal. That was the same year that Minneapolis business leader Harvey Mackay recruited people to serve on a Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce Stadium Task Force, executive director was Charles Krusell. '75 and '76 in the legislative sessions there was some wrangling, but no conclusive plan until in May of 1977 when we get the infamous No-Site Bill, which created a stadium – kind of. So we also get the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission, and we also get involvement by lots of businesses and individuals for trying to push an agenda, push something in one direction or the other. As you joined the *Tribune* in 1976, how aware were you of the situation concerning the stadium and the sports franchises?

LS: I'd say the first several years of my being at the newspaper not very in that this was not an issue that I covered at all until January of 1979 when this was handed to me as part of my new legislative coverage portfolio. Until then I was just a reader of the paper...my area of coverage was religion and features and night general assignment and did not have anything to do with this issue until it popped up a little bit in the fall campaign of 1978. But it was not by any means a dominant issue at that point. We were aware that it would be perhaps a small issue in the '79 session. I think the portfolio was handed to me as a green reporter because the people who had longer experience covering the legislature were quite sure this was going to be a minor issue that year.

TS: The December 1978 decision by the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission to select a downtown Minneapolis location over Bloomington. As you start to look at this issue from the beginning of '79, how surprised were you by that decision?

LS: Not very when I saw the names of the people that Harvey Mackay had on his task force, and the interests that were backing a downtown stadium. It seemed that the powers that had been most vociferous in the business community through many, many years in the city were aligned behind that central location. It all seemed to make sense to me from an infrastructure point of view. If you look at a map of the metropolitan area even then and were to just blindly point to the middle, you'd end up pointing at downtown Minneapolis. It had been clear for decades that Minneapolis was the dominant of the Twin Cities and with the infrastructure that had been built in the 1960s and '70s with regard to freeways, with regard to transit planning, even then we were talking about eventually light rail, that was all aimed for downtown Minneapolis. So it seemed from an infrastructure sense and from a business development sense, pleasing the business community sense, that this was going to be the place it was going to go. But I was surprised I think as it unfolded how vigorously the pushback came from Bloomington and from rural interests that preferred Bloomington.

TS: There were three votes that didn't go for Minneapolis. Who were these downtown business interests? When you say that the people on Krusell's task force, who are we talking about here?

LS: I can't remember the names. ... But I do remember one big name, which was John Cowles, Jr.

TS: John Cowles, Jr., a good lead in there. John Cowles, Jr. as the owner of the *Star* and *Tribune*. Do you want to talk about how you perceived, what was the perception, conflict of interest here, [in that the] Cowles family owns papers, owns property, lobbied ...

LS: I thought of it as a small town minded publisher's role and unusual for the Cowles's, who were big city publishers and had, as I said, pretty grand ambitions

for this region and for their own operation. Kind of an unusual parochial role for them to play. As I got to know them better, and their motives, I think their motives were not personal pecuniary, they really were operating out of a sense of civic interest and a sense of protection. A desire to protect downtown, which already then...the Nicollet Mall was fairly new and already then the notion of, We have to invest in downtown to keep it healthy. We don't want to become like a Detroit. Already then, thirty years ago, that was on peoples' minds.

TS: Don't be a Detroit.

LS: Don't be a Detroit. Don't be one of those cities, those Rust Belt cities, where the downtown area suffers blight and all the investment is in a donut around the city. That's not a good, healthy way to have development. Dispersed metro area. That sense was already then animating some of the decisions and I think was animating the Cowles's, who I think were involved in this more out of a sense of civic altruism than out of a sense of trying to enrich themselves. But let's face it, sports, professional sports are good for newspapers.

TS: The 1979 legislative session, which you were present for, featured a funding fight, if we can it that. The state legislature votes to repeal a 2% metro liquor tax which had been enacted to guarantee bond repayment and again, just for detail, the senate voted to repeal in February; the house voted to repeal in April. You followed that story.

LS: Yes, I did.

TS: What do you recall about this repeal issue?

LS: I'm this green reporter covering the legislature for the first time and so when I see things being defeated I naively think that means they're dead. That means we're done. That means a decision has been made. I was quickly disabused of that notion, that just because something has had a setback in February or even April or even May, doesn't mean that we're done, especially not when powerful people want something to happen. So we'd have these steps and then something would come bouncing back. I remember being witness accidentally to a conversation between then senate majority leader Nick Coleman [DFL, St Paul] and one of the lobbyists the day after the house voted and just through eavesdropping became aware that this was a long ways from being done.

TS: This was April.

LS: Yes.

TS: How did you sort of separate the actors here? Who were the actors in this debate, in this ongoing drama?

LS: As it played out at the Capitol it wound up being the guys in suits from downtown Minneapolis, Chuck Krusell and Harvey Mackay and John [Cowles] Jr. was certainly present, with Otto Silla from this company, but there were other business folks. People from the banking community. Some of the people from Piper Jaffray were involved. I'll think of a few more no doubt. There were these sort of high powered fellows. White guys in fancy suits versus kind of a ragtag more blue collar lobbying cohort aligning themselves with the city of Bloomington and with some rural folks who were horrified at the idea that they'd have to drive into town, into the big city, the big bad city, to see sporting events.

TS: What kind of access did you have to legislators or let's say actors in this debate as you were covering these stories?

LS: Then and I must say still now, access in Minnesota for journalists or really for anyone to elected officials is pretty good.

TS: By comparison?

LS: By comparison to anyplace else. I've had occasion to bring touring journalists through of one sort or another and they're always amazed – if you want to talk to somebody, pick up the phone and call them. I always say, "Just do that," and they're amazed that that's possible. But this is a state where government is very open. I was just a kid reporter, but I was certainly given ample access. I have to go back and read my clips which I'm sorry I did not do before this conversation, but ample access to the players, pretty open conversations about what was being sought here and the reasons. Interesting player was Dan Brutger, who was the head of the Sports Facilities Commission and a businessman in his own right from St. Cloud, and understood because he was involved in the hospitality industry the hospitality industry's stake in this debate and also understood how to present a case for a cost effective, lean, no bells and whistles project that could be done efficiently and well.

TS: What kind of conflict did you feel trying to cover for example the Cowles family as a player in the story and yet this is also your employer?

LS: It did get uncomfortable. This was...as I think back on it, probably had I known what I was doing instead of being so green, I probably would have been more uncomfortable because the *Star Tribune* did have this sort of dual persona at the Capitol. There would be representatives of our company testifying in favor of a stadium, and they did come before legislative committees and testify personally, and I would be in the press row taking my notes trying to play a very different role. But the relationships I had with the lobbyists on all sides seemed to be strong enough that I didn't...I can't remember anybody ever saying, "I won't talk to you or I don't trust you because of who your boss is and what your boss is doing." My relationship seemed rather separate. Not so for [columnist] Sid Hartman, who was seen to be a shill I think for the management point of view

and it turns out I think Sid was more a skill for the sports teams themselves. Sid was seen as the arm of the bosses. Not the journalists, who were based in the Capitol basement. The folks in the Capitol basement are seen by politicians then as now as fairly independent minded.

TS: Devil's advocate might say come on, this is your employer here. You didn't practice any kind of self-censorship of what you put into your own columns?

LS: There was an ad purchased that you maybe have heard about. I believe I did sign it and I believe after I did – again, I'm green here; I'm the kid – after I signed it I kind of regretted that I did.

TS: Let's talk about that ad because I brought a copy today for us to look at. This is indeed the ad which ran in the *Tribune* on 1 March 1979. We're looking at it right now.

LS: Look at all those good old names. Wow.

TS: And you are on the list.

LS: I did sign it.

TS: What do you remember about this particular...what went into this ad?

LS: I had nothing to do at all with getting it organized and I was approached just as another member of the newspaper guild to sign it and because I tended to think favorably about guild activities I thought sure, I'll be a good guild member and I'll sign this. Then afterwards thought I have a little different role than these other folks – I'm actually covering this issue and I maybe should have just kept my name off of it. I think today I would have a little more of an arm's length view of this. But it was...I think this ad sprang from this discomfort that lots of folks had, that we had employers who were taking a visible role in what had become a dominant public issue and it became a dominant issue in part through our own reporting, but it had been through our own making. We then and now, we being not just the *Star Tribune* but all the broadcasters I think in the news media in this region, we tend to overemphasize sports and this had become a big deal ala we see this week with the collapse of the Metrodome roof being a big deal. This had become a bigger story than I certainly expected it was going to be.

TS: To follow up on this, do these reporters make valid points in here that, had you not been covering the story, you would agree with or did agree with?

LS: The notion that we needed to assure readers that our professional principles had not been undermined...I don't recall that people were at any point accusing me of that and I would have been more on the front lines of feeling that of probably anybody else on this list. The notion that we had to assure readers of

that, that sounds fine. I don't know that this ad came because we, I felt certainly that we were standing accused of that necessarily.

TS: You mentioned the public's perception, or alluded to that. The public's perception, was this a response to public perception or from things that the public was voicing about this?

LS: You'd have to go back and look for the letters to the editors to see to what extent there would be a lingering record of public perception that the newspaper's news coverage was being affected by the bosses. But it stands to reason that there's always a suspicion when the corporation does something that its employees have to fall in line. It stands to reason that there would have been some kind of that notion. Again, if it was a widespread notion, if it was affecting my relationship with sources, I think I would have confronted it much more directly than I did. But it was a source of some discomfort for me and I remember once at the end of the legislative session being invited to give a talk about news coverage of this issue at the old press club, which is no longer in existence, in what was then the Radisson Hotel. As I was getting ready to give my talk I was eating my lunch quickly so I would be done eating when I was called upon to speak and I looked up, felt this presence over me, and there was Otto Silla and John Cowles walking in and they said, "Pretend we're not here." I remember feeling very uncomfortable, because I'd probably then was going to in that speech and maybe went ahead and did so anyway because I'm that kind of a character but ...but I was going to say there were times when we felt uncomfortable realizing that the notes we were taking were of remarks that our bosses were making at hearings.

TS: Because John Cowles, Jr. on the other side of this also spoke out about this particular relationship between supporting the stadium vocally. You said he was at the state legislature.

LS: He spoke at hearings. Yes.

TS: In an interview in January of 1982, John Cowles Jr. speaking about this said, "It wasn't the newspaper who supported the stadium, it was me and the company. My distance from the actual reporting and editing of the news was great. There were layers and layers of people between me and the news."

LS: And that's certainly accurate. That's certainly accurate. Never at any point did I feel like my stories were being edited in any way at all to please the company. In fact, I think we bent over backwards to make sure that didn't happen.

TS: Should people see a difference between editorial staff and editorials and newspaper reporters as far as what's said and how it's presented?

LS: There certainly always has been in all my years on this newspaper staff a strong demarcation between editorial and news. That's why you're sitting now in an editorial department conference room that is not shared with the news room. We have a different suite of offices. We have different lines of reporting up to the publisher. We are very separate operations. In the Capitol basement I sit as an editorial editor in a different room than the people who work for the news side. We're very separate.

TS: And that was the same in the late '70s as well?

LS: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yes. That was a standard that the Cowles's brought to this paper. I know that was not true in times of...ancient times and I doubt that it was true through the 1930s but by the 40s when the Cowles's came, they brought that kind of professional standard. They really strongly believed in a vigorous editorial voice loaded with boosterism but also very separate, very independent news side. That was why we structured this building the way we did.

TS: Separate.

LS: Yes.

TS: Let's talk a little bit about opponents. One of the thrusts of this project is those people who pushed back in some way against the stadium concept. So we're going to ask again how aware you were of certain groups and individuals who were opposed to new stadium construction or to a particular location. Let's start with the Save the Met organization.

LS: When I said ragtag a little bit ago, that's who I was referring to.

TS: I suspected. (*chuckles*)

LS: These are the guys with the t-shirts who were the true baseball fans, who just loved the experience of sitting outside and eating a hotdog and drinking a beer on a hot summer day, and the notion that that sunshine was going to be taken from them just galled them no end. They put together a pretty effective lobbying group for a bunch of college kids and guys who were sort of stadium rats at the old Met Stadium. One of them went on to be a professional lobbyist and has been pretty successful. That was Julian Empson.

TS: Julian Loscalzo now. Right.

LS: Another vigorous voice then was Brian Coyle [1944 – 1991], whom I didn't really know before and who now is of course gone from us, but turned out to be a very effective city council member and an advocate for this neighborhood.

TS: Did you interact with Julian Empson Loscalzo at the time?

LS: Interviewed him many times.

TS: Your byline showed up with a number of times.

LS: Interviewed him many times and also I remember being at Brian Coyle's apartment once to interview him. So those two were the most visible folks. It seems like I could probably think hard and remember a couple other names.

TS: We'll prompt for some others in a second. Julian and Save the Met: how seriously did you take this particular organization?

LS: I think on first impression they didn't look as formidable as the guys with the suits, but they were persistent and persistence counts for a great deal in legislative lobbying. These were the people who would...if you were writing a stadium story at seven o'clock at night and you needed a fact, you could stick your head out the door and yell hey, Julian! And he was probably in your colleague's office and would come down and answer whatever question you had. He was that kind, always present really working this issue in a way that...the guys with suits would go home.

TS: What were their bullet points, as we might put it today, that they were really trying to make the case based on?

LS: They were the voice of the fans. They were trying to talk about the aesthetic experience of attending a baseball game and how this was going to be the ruination of something that should be under God's sky and with grass and that it should be to the extent possible, all of this should be public ownership. This was a public asset and that ought to be owned by the public, not paid for by the public for the enrichment of one or two people, one or two owners. So they would have been among the folks advocating for a different kind of ownership model entirely.

TS: Did your opinion of that organization change over time from when you first met them through the session?

LS: I would say yes, because like I say, they convinced me that they were serious about lobbying and at times, witness February and April, [were] rather effective I think. They were contributing to the cause that suburban legislators and some rural legislators were expressing that somehow a downtown location was not suitable for the kind of experience they wanted to offer people.

TS: As you covered this story did you see a real distinction between outstate opinions on the matter of stadium construction and Metro area opinions among the public?

LS: I saw more rural legislators aligned with Bloomington than otherwise. But there were several come to mind in the St. Cloud area who were strong leaders on the other side and these I think were people who had been in relationship with Dan Brutger and who understood the issue from Dan Brutger's point of view and he had approached this as a person in the hospitality industry but also as a contractor who understood and could speak to all kinds of engineering and funding advantages of the downtown location. I think the merits of the case were on the downtown side and that obviously made the difference in the end.

TS: Another about opponents. A group called Citizens Opposed to the Stadium Tax, St. Paul bar owners opposed to the metro liquor tax and this was led by Fred Primoli. Do you remember this group as well?

LS: Not until you mentioned it did I remember it. No. Indeed there was sort of a modestly organized bar owners group opposed to the liquor tax that was used as the main funding mechanism. I don't remember them being particularly effective.

TS: Minneapolis neighborhood groups, particularly those in Cedar Riverside and Elliot Park, also had their hands up.

LS: Yes. This is where Brian Coyle's interest came from. Brian was allied with Save the Met but he also was clearly a voice for that neighborhood and there was a feeling that this was going to change the tenor of the neighborhood by having a major regional piece of infrastructure, a facility in their neighborhoods. As it has turned out I don't think that that concern has been so vigorously...I don't think that their worries have been borne out.

TS: Brian Coyle is attached to his own group, the Minnesotans Against the Downtown Dome, the MADD group. So you interacted [with], had a chance to meet Brian Coyle? How did he impress you as an individual person when you interacted with?

LS: Bright and intense and a little bit out of the '60s in those years. Someone I thought who was a person with a bright future, and he proved me right. He went on to be rather prominent on the city council.

TS: Yes, he did.

LS: He left us too soon. Died of AIDS.

TS: In March of 1979 the MADD group registered a complaint with the Minnesota Press Council alleging that the papers, *Star* and *Tribune*, slanted their coverage to favor a downtown stadium. Brian was quoted as saying, "This is a fight against heavy handed brokers wheeling and dealing." Was he onto something there?

LS: Yes. I had forgotten that he did that. I don't remember that that complaint went very far. Now that you mention it, I do remember him saying to me at one point, "This isn't about anything you've written, Lori." Sid Hartman cast a pretty long shadow and the sports sections were also covering this. It wasn't just what I was covering from the Capitol.

TS: When you say Sid Hartman cast a long shadow, before we let that idea slip by, what do you mean by that?

LS: Sid was then I would guess the most read feature in the newspaper and he may still be. He still is very...has a big column. And Sid was and is a strong local booster of the teams and was very aware how badly [Vikings owner] Max Winter, who was his old friend and old employer, how badly Max Winter wanted a new stadium. Max was the owner of the Minnesota Lakers and in the 1950s Sid was not only a journalist for the *Tribune* but he was also the general manager of the Lakers. Talk about conflict of interest. In the old days, there you have it.

So there was always tolerated in the sports section, in the sports department and even into the modern era, more wearing of multiple hats and more coziness with the teams that were covered than would ever be tolerated today. We have crossed sort of into a modern era finally now. But as late as the 1970s it was okay for Sid to be a mouthpiece for the Vikings and to a lesser extent the Twins.

TS: Fairly openly from your perspective?

LS: Oh, yes. Oh, I remember being at the old Met, staked out outside Calvin Griffith's offices as some of the final terms of the stadium deal were being negotiated so that the Vikings and the Twins would indeed sign on the dotted line to play in the Metrodome, and in the room with Calvin was Sid. The rest of us journalists were all outside waiting for them to come out and tell us what kind of a deal had been cut.

TS: How much did you interact with representatives of the Twins and Vikings during this period?

LS: Quite a bit. Quite a bit. They were among my sources. I remember talking to attorneys who represented them quite frequently. Some of them became good sources of mine for political matters. A couple of them still lobby at the Capitol. Mike Lynn [General Manager of the Vikings]. I could probably go back now and find his phone number still. We were encouraged to do deep reporting on this issue and we had lots of deep source relationships with lots of folks.

TS: As you talked to both these teams, do you have an opinion that one team or the other drove the Metrodome deal?

LS: Yes. The Vikings drove the Metrodome deal, and the Twins were along for the ride.

TS: What were the Vikings after?

LS: We are sitting here on the 14th of December with the prospect for the first time in a long time of an outdoor football game [due to the collapse of the Metrodome roof]. The NFL doesn't like outdoor football games in December in Minnesota for obvious reasons. They wanted a roof. They wanted to get out of the cold.

TS: And they got it.

LS: They got it.

TS: State legislators. There were some local politicians who were opposed to a site or to funding. Representative Ray Faricy and Senator John Chenoweth, both Democrats from St. Paul. Tell us about those guys.

LS: Ray Faricy was a serious minded legislator who had a good sense of humor, and I remember at one point during the debate he played a tape recording of "Take Me Out To the Ballgame," which was not typically done on the house floor. That kind of little humorous interlude. Ray was and is a serious fellow and you ought to be talking to him if you can do so. John Chenoweth is no longer alive and was, in my way of thinking, not as serious a legislator. Very soon after that session he went off to head the Minneapolis pension fund, Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund, I think the acronym was MERF. His career took a bad turn and wound up being murdered.

TS: Faricy and Chenoweth were both pushing back against this metro liquor tax. Justifiable pushback?

LS: The rivalry between Minneapolis and St. Paul was still alive and well then.

TS: Even though St. Paul has not come up in our discussion yet about the stadium.

LS: The rivalry between St. Paul and Minneapolis was still there, and the notion of putting this resource in Minneapolis was not viewed favorably by many of the St. Paul business interests. I don't think it's a coincidence that in the final court fight to try to stop this, Nick Coleman, the state senator from St. Paul, was taking the lead and he had as his ally Bob Ashback, state senator from Arden Hills, a suburb of St. Paul. There was that sense that St. Paul would somehow lose out and become the lesser twin. The fact that there were some St. Paul bar owners who were prominently organizing, that helped them make their case but it was

sort of a sense that this was an unnecessary benefit for Minneapolis to the detriment of other parts of the metropolitan area.

TS: Were they right in your opinion?

LS: It is the case, I think it was already the case then that Minneapolis is the dominant twin. I think that was already the case and I think that St. Paul has maybe finally adapted to the lesser role that it has, which is a good quality of life role. Home to colleges and home to nice arts institutions and a better residential area than some parts of Minneapolis. But St. Paul had a long...it was hard for St. Paul to let go of the truly twin cities notion.

TS: Equal twins you mean.

LS: Yes. And it was a time when it was still being felt at the legislature that if you did something for Minneapolis you ought to do something for St. Paul, and it may even be that some of that sentiment helped them land the [NHL ice hockey] Wild some years later.

TS: That's right. Ice hockey left Bloomington as well[, in 1993].

LS: We have a sort of a sense that you can't leave St. Paul behind or you're going to have some political price to pay.

TS: Three of our four sports franchises play in Minneapolis though.

LS: Some of that's just DFL politics. This was an era, the 1970s, when the DFL was much more in charge of the statehouse. Rudy Perpich was governor. He was not governor in '79. Al Quie was governor in '79, but Rudy Perpich had been governor to appoint the Sports Facilities Commission. The legislature is in DFL hands. The house is closely divided, is evenly split in fact in '79. But keeping St. Paul voters happy for the sake of keeping the DFL majority strong is on peoples' radar.

TS: So Senator Coleman and also Senator Al Kirchner, a Republican from Richfield, later also pushed back against this deal trying to really derail things at the end.

LS: Yes. Al Kirchner – I forgot about his role. Yes. Nick Coleman in the end was sort of trying to be the last stop, the last gatekeeper to try to stop this thing from moving forward. He had been outspoken in debates but had....I think as a majority leader if he had really wanted to kill this he could of, and he didn't. So it was a bit of a surprise to me that summer when he and Bob Ashback and Bob Short put their money together and emerged as sort of the unusual team to try to do the final stop of this.

TS: It didn't work.

LS: It didn't work.

TS: By the end of the session in '79 we have funding, we've got a location and we end up getting the Metrodome. As you covered those final debates, did we get the best solution?

LS: It's hard as we sit here today not to think about what has become of the Metrodome. The Metrodome was built on time and on budget, and that budget was pretty skinny.

TS: \$55 million. Yes.

LS: That budget was to build a bare bones pretty pedestrian stadium and the last of its type, a multi-purpose stadium. As a result each in turn of its major tenants has felt unhappy with it, and we're down now to one major tenant and that major tenant has real reason to complain this week about that facility as they sit there with snow all over the field. Would we have been better off building a lasting stadium or building two stadiums? There was no way that that legislature in 1979 was going to build two stadiums.

TS: They barely built one.

LS: They barely built one. That's right. Minnesotans don't like to see rich people get richer at their expense. That was true then and that is true now. That sort of egalitarian spirit of Minnesotans drives a lot of things in politics. I think it drove in lots of ways the election of Mark Dayton this year. That egalitarian spirit is I think a big feature in the continued opposition to putting any kind of public resources into sports facilities.

TS: The debate over the Target Field was interminable. It just went on and on.

LS: Yes. We had the spectacle of pretty much the same Minneapolis coalition coming together on behalf of what became Target Field, then a new stadium for the Twins, in 1997. We had a governor pushing it in Arne Carlson. They had a special session of the legislature and the thing went down and it went down without a rescue. My usual thing when some powerful group gets disappointed is look around for where is the end run; how is this going to come back? That was a special session and it was dead for quite a few years after that.

TS: It was. It came back, but in a different guise.

LS: It came back because of the good offices of Michael Opat and the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, who were really then willing to stick their necks

out and say to the state, You just give us this much authority and we'll do this. It's a different model.

TS: It was a different model that got the stadium.

LS: And it's probably not a model that can be replicated for the Vikings.

TS: What lasting impact or repercussions, positive or negative, were there for the *Star* and the *Tribune*, again to keep it local, from the end result of the Metrodome, what we got?

LS: I think you'd have to say that for the *Star Tribune* the results were positive, because we got a new lease on the sports teams and within a very few years we had two World Series Championships and we had major events to cover. We had...what was that sort of a trifecta thing we had going into the end of the second Perpich stint, where we had NCAA finals here and we had some other major events ...

TS: The [NFL] Super Bowl was here too.

LS: Yes. All within a short span of time. Newspapers love to cover such events, love to sell newspapers, and advertising around such events. For us this has been something that's been positive.

TS: For the paper. Looking back from today, what lessons should we draw say, for the future? I would think that stadium debates are not a thing of the past for us.

LS: No, no. *(laughs)*

TS: What lessons should we draw from the debate and approval process of the Metrodome, when we think that we could be doing this all over again?

LS: It does sort of bother me that within less than thirty years we've deemed the Metrodome obsolete now for quite some time. That we'd build major public infrastructures and its obsolescence would happen so quickly. I really think that we need to build for the future. I don't think we do.

TS: And the Twins were ... not begging, but at least suggesting the Metrodome was out of whack within a dozen years.

LS: That's right. I think that the lesson, the immediate lesson from this past year's experience with the Target Field coming online, is the recognition of again what a nice facility that we can take pride in as a state, what that can do for the local economy, the local morale, local interest in that which we share. Modern society doesn't hold all that much in common anymore it seems like, but an

affection for professional sports teams for good or for ill seems to be one of those things that we hold together.

TS: Did we do better with the Target Field debate and process than we did with the Metrodome?

LS: Yes, I think so. The state legislature proved both times to be a tough nut to crack. It takes a long time for the state legislature to get its game together, but the lesson I think of the Target Field experience is that the strong local government push that we got from Hennepin County which has not clearly been there from Minneapolis for the Vikings and wasn't necessarily as strong as it maybe could have been in 1979, a strong local partner makes a big difference and then a willingness of a team to do its part to make the amenity as strong as it can be. People feel good about the Twins I think as an organization and their contribution to this effort now today...there are still now I'm sure some group of nay sayers, but not so many. Not so visible. I think the happy feelings about Target Field are stronger now than they were the year or two after the Metrodome was built. It's still a sore subject.

TS: Are we going to get a Vikings stadium?

LS: I think so.

TS: Who is going to pay for that one?

LS: We can't do that with local money in the same way I don't think. Once that's been done for the lower cost Twins stadium, I don't think it can be done again. This is a case where the state does have to...if we're going to keep the Vikings, the state has to step up. There were some good ideas last session about how to do that. Some of the people who had those good ideas are now in the minority, but I think we have in Mark Dayton someone who as governor wants to keep the Vikings. Every legislator is on the ballot in 2012 – I don't think there's a one of them that wants to run for re-election if the announcement had been made a few months before that the Vikings were moving to Los Angeles. That would not be a happy fall to be door knocking for any of those legislators. The awareness of that will make something happen.

TS: Final question I have for you is, you covered that whole issue in 1979. What was the most significant thing for you that you sort of took out of all the actors you met and the processes that you observed?

LS: The lessons in the way of listening, the personal ones: what it takes, what it really takes to cover the legislature. I learned how to cover the legislature by covering this issue. I learned about keeping in good contact with sources and bird dogging things. Don't go home early. Don't assume what's going to

happen. Don't quit. Keep at it. This was a good way for me to begin a thirty year public policy reporting career.

TS: Fantastic.

LS: Yes.

TS: I appreciate your time today. Thanks very much.

LS: Thank you, Thomas.

END OF INTERVIEW