



TOWER LAKES

A Look at Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

by BARBARA L. BENSON



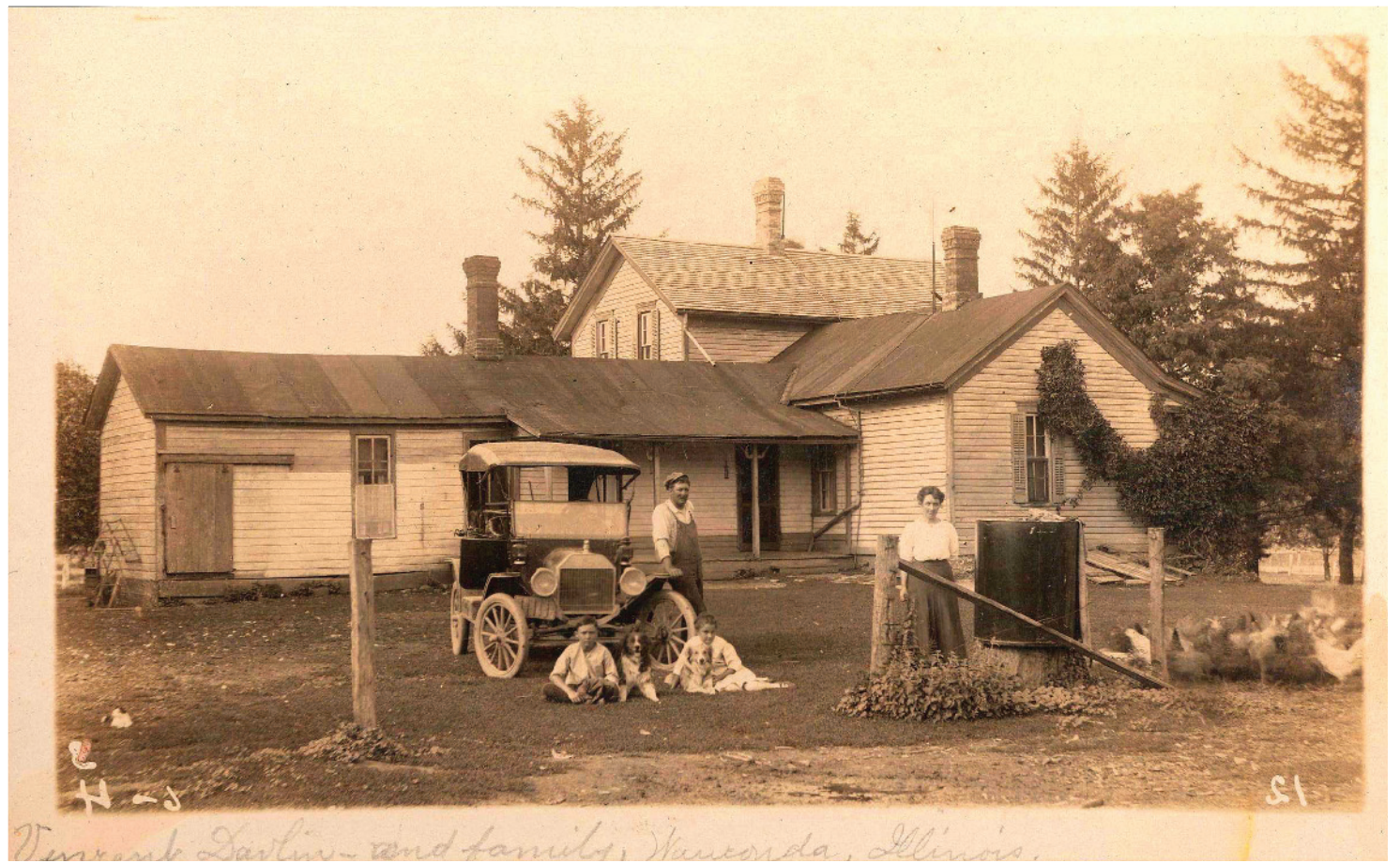
Yesterday's story about Tower Lakes by Barbara L. Benson is based on histories collected by its residents. For perspective on today and tomorrow, and to learn about the spirit of Tower Lakes, read current Village President David Parro's letter in the pages ahead.

MANY ROMANTIC SUPERLATIVES COME TO MIND in describing Tower Lakes, a village of 1,300 people, one of seven separate villages, with ribbons of unincorporated land that define the Barrington area. Is it Brigadoon? Is it Camelot? Is it Mayberry? Tucked away, it seems shielded from daily turmoil.

Its history, similar to its sister Barrington area communities, is rooted with the 19th century pioneer settlers who stopped east of the Fox River, where, as one old timer put it "the land was just right good". After the Second World War when population increases around the century-old Village of Barrington dictated formation of organized local governments, each of the new villages would evolve its own distinct character. For Tower Lakes that character was predetermined early on by a unique set of circumstances.

The Ice Age retreated some 11-12,000 years ago. From its detritus rich soils, wetlands and fens, creeks and rivers emerged to be peopled by Native Americans for hunting grounds as the animal life proliferated, including for some 2,000 years, the woolly Mastodon. Significant artifacts of those ancient peoples were excavated in 1994 and 1996 on the McGraw Farm just west of the Tower Lakes border. These artifacts are considered the earliest known evidence of humans in Lake County.

The last of the Native American tribes best known in the Barrington area were the Potawatomi, encountered by lone travelers. Arnett C. Lines mentions in his History of Barrington that there were isolated trapper's cabins out in the wilderness. With the end of the Blackhawk War, the Treaty of Chicago was signed in 1833 and the Indian nations ceded their lands to



Davlin family farmhouse in Tower Lakes circa 1915.

the United States, to move west of the Mississippi and to Wisconsin. Roads were Indian trails, Army routes, the one to Fort Winnebago in Wisconsin crossed through the southwestern corner of what became Lake County and was eloquently described in Juliette McGill Kinzie's book "Waubun: Or the Early Day in the Northwest". Postal and stagecoach routes offered the only scheduled transportation, one from Waukegan through Lake Zurich, along Cuba Road and southwest to Dundee. Other routes came out from Des Plaines. The Fox River was crossed by fording or ferry.

SEEKERS OF FORTUNES

In 1831, northeastern Illinois was part of Cook County, which ceded its northern territory to become McHenry County in 1836. By 1839, McHenry County ceded its eastern half to become Lake County. The first county seat was at Burlington, now Libertyville. Later it moved to the Michigan lakefront trading post of Little Fort. The name was changed to Waukegan by referendum after residents and merchants objected to being referred to as "Little". Waukegan is an approximate Potawatomie translation of Little Fort.

In northern Illinois, surveys were completed by 1839 and the Government Land Office opened in Chicago in 1840. Already the intrepid and brave, the seekers of fortune and better lives had begun their westward journeys, overland by wagon and ox cart, by water through the Great Lakes, into relatively unknown territory.



Terrace Drive and East Lake Shore Drive in the 1930s.

DAVLIN'S CORNERS

The first known settler in the later named Cuba Township was Amos Flint. In 1834, he built a cabin near the junction of the present River and Kelsey roads, but it was recorded that he left after a disastrous first winter. In 1836, Hugh Davlin was the first permanent settler on land that a century on became Tower Lakes. Like other settlers, he was of Irish descent and came from Troy, New York. He chose the junction of two Indian trails to build his log cabin. Later called Davlin's Corners, it was across from the present Indian Trail Road. In 1837, his son Hugh was the first pioneer child born in



Tower Lakes in 2000. The intersection is Route 59 and Indian Trail Road (Davlin's Corners).

the township, but his wife Rose also died that year, possibly in childbirth. Hugh told of friendly visits by a few Potawatomi who had lingered close by. He traded with them, and they helped him build a cellar to store his produce.

In 1845, Davlin purchased his 80 claimed acres from the government at the going rate of \$100 and the next year another 240 acres. He died in 1847, only 46. His executor was Justus Bangs, the founder of Wauconda, and Hugh's five children were raised by relatives in Grant Township, but they retained ownership of the farm with a tenant farmer. The five children had varied and adventurous lives, but Charles finally returned home to stewardship of the Davlin holdings. Active in Lake County politics, he was a civic and business leader in Wauconda and Cuba Township assessor from 1873 to 1898. When he died in 1915, his farm, about 800 acres, was the largest in Cuba Township.

Mary and John Murray arrived in the early 1840s and bought 80 acres of U.S. Government land west of the Davlins. They had emigrated from Ireland and their sons Dennis and Owen were born in New York. Their third son, John, was born here. With the Davlins and other settlers they founded a catholic community which first held services in the Murray's cabin, and then built a log church called St. John's Mission on Murray land east of Wauconda. Descendants of the Murrays also had a presence in the civic, religious, and business life of what became Tower Lakes and also Wauconda

well into the 20th century.

Another notable settler was Pastor John Lewis Brooks. Born in Boston in 1817, he had visited the future Cuba Township in 1837, but settled in Chicago to start a newspaper, the first in the west to support abolition. He later went to New York, became an ordained Baptist minister, and in 1845 returned to purchase 80 acres of government land south of Flint Creek. In 1847, he organized the earliest Baptist church in Barrington in a schoolhouse on Penny Road, moving the congregation in 1853 to the old South Church at Barrington Center. Pastor there until 1855, he rode on horseback 10 miles each way on alternate Sundays from his home. Concurrently, he helped organize the Baptist Church in Wauconda of which he later became Pastor.

MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILIES

Elder Brooks as he was known, married Mary Winch of Wauconda in 1848 and they had five children, three surviving to adulthood. In 1857, he purchased 120 acres north of what is now Roberts Road. Of their surviving children, the best known was Eugene (E.W.) Brooks, who became prominent in Wauconda business and civic life. Their grandson Leslie Brooks Paddock went into the newspaper business and had a distinguished career which culminated in 17 years as editor of the Barrington Courier-Review from 1953 to 1970. The Brooks-Paddock family kept property in the Tower Lakes area for three generations.



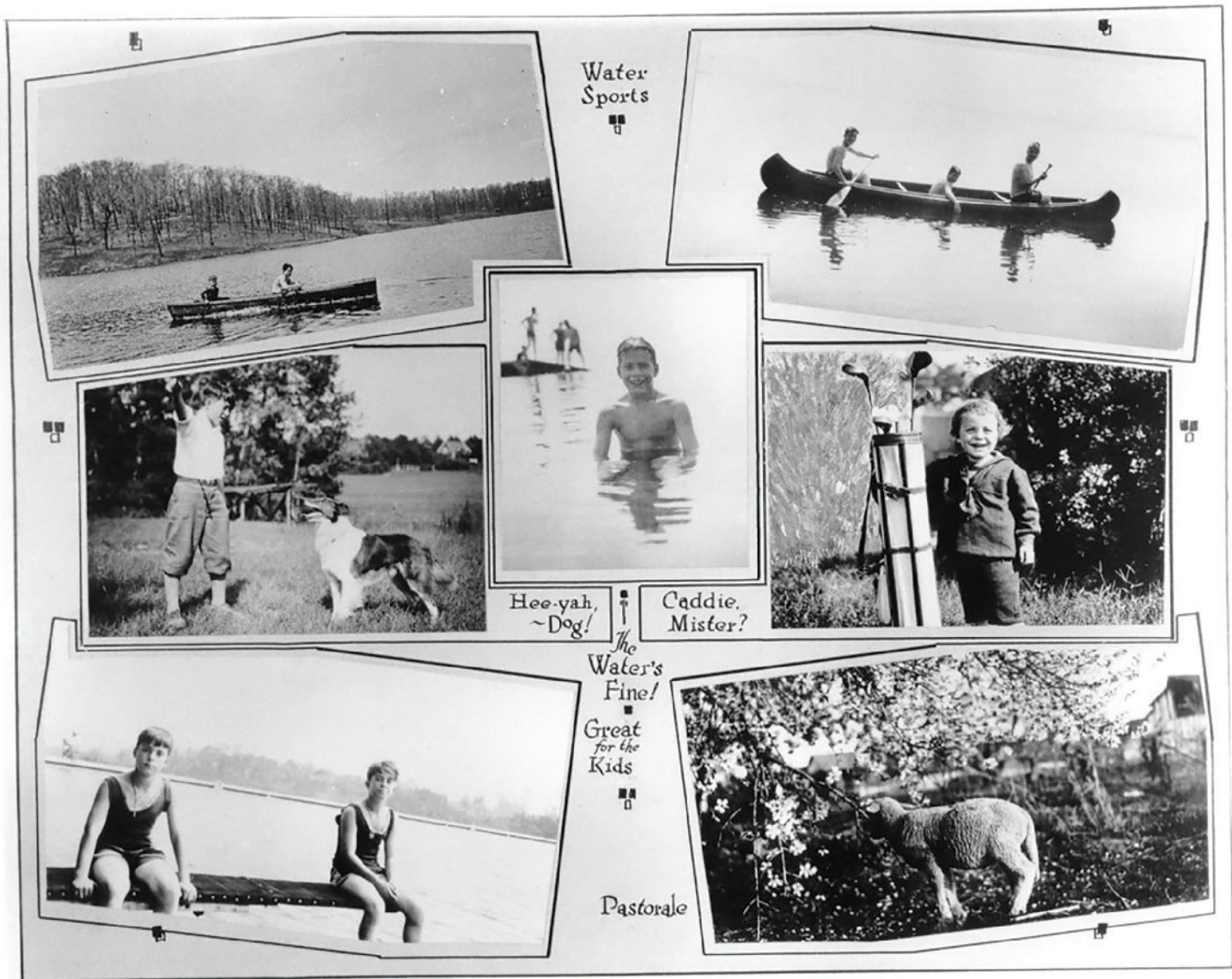
1930



1931

RUSTIC BRIDGE AT TOY ISLAND TOWER LAKES WAUCONDA ILL

0852



A Tower Lakes real estate development advertisement.

In 1850, the legal naming of Townships was required. With many settlers from Troy, in New York State, that was the preferred name, but it was already taken. Lewis Bute, inspired by the current Cuban conflict with Spain, suggested Cuba, and so it is. In 1854, the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad established Barrington Station at the Lake-Cook county line. For farmers around Davlin's Corners this offered new market opportunities. It was a circuitous route to Barrington. The trail followed the current Kelsey Road to Old Barrington Road, east on Route 22 and south on Route 59. (Route 59 was not extended north through Biltmore to Kelsey Road until 1935.) For dairy farmers there was a milk platform at Cuba and Kelsey roads. A stage and mail route opened from Barrington to Wauconda through Davlin's Corners.

In 1857, Hugh Davlin Jr. built a schoolhouse north of his cabin, the structure, desks, and logs hewn from local timber. A blacksmith shop stood between his cabin and the schoolhouse, at the junction of the trails. Later the log school was replaced by a balloon frame schoolhouse which burned in 1924. A red brick building replaced it. When the country schools were

consolidated in the 1940s, it survived as a residence, still there on Route 59 just north of the Tower Lakes Village Hall.

FROM SETTLEMENTS TO COTTAGE HOMES

Into the 20th century, the rural landscape surrounding the Village of Barrington began a transition to country estates, gentlemen's farms, country clubs, and equestrian pursuits. North of Barrington, Honey Lake and Grassy Lake were the only natural lakes, and the first of the country club summer resort communities, Biltmore, was developed around Honey Lake.

Further north from there, in 1924, 70 acres of the Brooks/Paddock farm was sold to the partnership of William Brooks and Myron H. Detrick, a Chicago industrialist and inventor who also owned a nearby farm. The partnership envisioned a lake by building earthen dams between two pairs of hills along Mud Creek, which flowed to the Fox River through the Davlin and Murray farms.. They enlisted Vincent Davlin and his son Charles in the endeavor. The first lake was created where the large suspension bridge linking the east and west sides of the main lake now stands.

Subdividing the 70 acres into small lots, Fred Watson, the



Pond hockey tournaments are a fun part of winter in Tower Lakes.

PHOTO: PATI SCHAEFER

Wauconda Station Manager of the short-lived Palatine, Lake Zurich, and Wauconda Railroad was hired to sell lakefront lots for summer cottages. They all hoped the resort development, named Tower Lake Park, would bring business to the failing railroad of which they were all directors. With the addition of a 68 ft. steel observation tower on the highest hill on the west shore, the Village of Tower Lakes had its beginnings.

The front-page feature story of the Wauconda Leader on June 26, 1924 called Tower Lake Park “one of the most beautiful spots in northern Illinois”. In 1925, there was a remarkable turn in the fortunes of Tower Lake Park and the nearby farm owners. The famed radio evangelist Dr. Paul Rader, former pastor of the Moody Bible Church in Chicago, began using the park for his Chicago Gospel Tabernacle group camp revival meetings. He purchased the 70-acre Tower Lake Park, much of the Davlin Farm west of Barrington Road, the remaining 50 acres of the Paddock farm, the entire Murray farm, and a part of the Gus Sick farm, a total of 367 acres, including all of the lake. Thus, almost at once, 90 years of pioneer stewardship was irrevocably changed.

Followers of Dr. Rader filled the grounds on summer weekends in 1925. Train and coach transportation brought some 2,000 people for the Memorial Day picnic. A few cottages were built, and plans were drawn for a 5,000-seat tabernacle, hundreds of summer cottages, a radio station, and a welcoming beacon light atop the steel tower.

Perhaps fortuitously for Dr. Rader, who had located alternative property more to his liking in Michigan, another emigrant from the old world came on the scene. Born in Armenia in 1883, Nazareth Barsumian grew up with a love of the outdoors. Migrating to the United States in 1902, he continued his university education, graduating from John Marshal Law School. He went into the oriental rug business and subsequently real estate. It might be called land love at first sight when he found Tower Lake Park, and with partners from Evanston purchased the land from Dr. Rader, seeing a desirable residential subdivision.



Boat races around the island cap off every Fourth of July.

DAVLIN'S CORNERS BECOMES A VILLAGE

In 1926, Barsumian took over management of the development assisted by Alfred W. Bays, a Northwestern University law professor. The Davlin land east of the lake was platted to begin lot sales and more cottage construction. Development was slow but orderly. In 1927, the present dam near the southwest corner of Tower Lake replaced the simpler dam there. This deepened the beautiful south section of the main lake and brought it to 66 acres. By the 1930s, a Texaco filling station and a Tea Room had opened at Barrington and Indian Trail Roads.

The growing community needed a governing agency, and the Tower Lakes Improvement Association was formed and chartered by the state on February 27, 1931. In 1939, another dam was built on farmland north of the main lake to form the 6.5-acre North Lake.

By September 1940, there were 30 permanent resident families, and 53 others with summer and weekend homes. Soon the conversion of summer cottages to full-time homes accelerated. In 1941, subdivisions were platted out in undeveloped lands in the North Lake and Summit-Scenic Drive areas.

By 1960, Mr. Barsumian had deeded all of the lakes, shorelines, and parklands to the Tower Lakes Improvement Association. He died in 1963, and his heirs, including his wife Rose and son, Edward, completed development of the remaining lands in the original 400-acre Tower Lakes Estates. Those were owned by the Barsumian Estate and the Barsumian's Tower Lakes Foundation.

By 1959, several neighboring villages had incorporated, and border protection was needed for the Tower Lakes community. A cherished goal of Nazareth Barsumian was realized on September 12, 1966 when the residents voted to incorporate as a Village. Cyril Wagner, TLIA president, became the first Village President, and remained so for 13 years, taking Tower Lakes into the era of the Barrington Area Council of Governments, of which the Village was a founding member.

That was yesterday. For today and tomorrow, and to learn about the spirit of Tower Lakes, read current Village President David Parro's story on the following pages.





PHOTO: JIM PRISCHING

TOWER LAKES

Today and Tomorrow

A Letter from the Village President

by DAVID R. PARRO

Tower Lakes has a rich history. We recently celebrated our 50th anniversary as an incorporated Village and in just four more years we will celebrate the Centennial of our founding as a wonderful lakeside community. I guess it's fitting that we're going to squeeze those two big milestones into such a short period because we do enjoy our celebrations!

What started with pioneer farmers, whose

families were key to the growth of both Barrington and Wauconda, evolved into early 20th century development as a religious camp for a famous radio preacher, followed by becoming a summer cottage resort, to eventually converting to a year-round residential enclave post-WW II.

We also have a rich present and future. In 2015, Niche.com ranked Tower Lakes #3 in Illinois and #19 in the U.S.A. in the category of Best Suburb

in which to raise a family. Whatever the criteria, our citizens agree they properly identified a hidden gem and, heck, we're pretty sure they don't know half the good facts of our story.

TOWER LAKES COMMUNITY STRENGTH

Although we have less than 1,300 people, we generate some remarkable volunteer power, including being able to run local government without any full-time employees. In the past seven years our volunteers are proud to have accomplished some complex infrastructure initiatives for our size. These include the 2012 purchase of the TL Nature Preserve with an unprecedented alliance of two governments, three non-profits, and three private families, which won the biennial BACOG Klein Award for the best area improvement project; 2012 and 2018 water main upgrades and a new iron removal plant constructed with nearly \$5 million in EPA-subsidized low interest loans, and a 2019 electric service reliability upgrade worth \$1 million—done with zero taxpayer dollars.

There was also a 2017-19 \$260,000 green infrastructure storm-water management project funded entirely with grants and volunteer match hours, which involved virtually 100% of residents



learning and contributing and which won another Klein Award, with perhaps more awards to come because of the amazing volunteer component.

Planning has started for 2021 and beyond, involving energy efficient upgrades to the Village Hall, Police Station and potential new community center and garden addition with help from private donors.

These infrastructure projects are great examples of what local government should be doing to enhance quality of life and support our property values. Most importantly, we are doing so in the smartest most responsible ways, such as by leveraging external funds and volunteer contributions and moving towards more sustainable solutions.

WORKING WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

As a founding member of the Barrington Area Council of Governments (BACOG), the Village of Tower Lakes also works cooperatively with our neighbor villages to support regional plans and issues of mutual interest, including protecting our zoning, monitoring our groundwater supply, improving the ecology, and sharing ideas.

I was recently asked to answer the question “What’s Unique About Tower Lakes, Illinois?” I’d

like to share my answer.

Tower Lakes is unique because we have a juxtaposition of unusual attributes that, while maybe not unique individually, are collectively something very special.

First, there is our geography. We have forest-covered hilly terrain. Nothing that would turn heads in New York or California, but in flat Chicagoland, where new subdivisions are mostly built on tree-less cornfields, our topography stands out.

Then, there are the lovely namesake lakes. A few other Chicago suburbs are centered on lakes, but not many have half a dozen islands, or scenic swinging bridges, or an amenity like our aptly named Play Island where the Beach is the hub of the community’s recreation and social activity. Our wilderness trails and water features offer a paradise for kids and their dogs to explore and enjoy. Then there are our demographics. We are exceptionally tiny, in the smallest handful of suburban villages by both population and area. Yet in a very compact acreage we have an uncommon housing diversity; from pre-Civil War farmhouses to contemporary new construction, from tiny ‘20s lake cottages to large estates, from ranch houses to Cape Cods, from Sears catalog homes to modern designs by internationally renowned architects. We cherish the remarkable variety of ages, styles, and sizes.

Lastly, the level of community spirit and the visibility and strength of our friendly-neighbor atmosphere are quite rare. Everybody waves to each other. Volunteers run a full calendar of organized social events, highlighted by the Norman Rockwell-like Fourth of July parade in which the whole town participates. More often than in any other suburb, houses that go on sale are bought by neighbors looking to move up, but not leave, or grown children (who occupy well over 5% of our homes), or folks that did make the mistake of leaving and wanting back in, reporting that they missed the neighborly bonding the likes of which didn’t exist in other towns.

Oasis is an apt description for Tower Lakes. After all, it did start life as a resort. Our resort-like oasis is Chicago’s best suburb, if “best” is measured by how satisfied and lucky the residents feel to have stumbled upon it, and certainly one of the Midwest’s most charming small towns. Unique indeed.

Dave Parro has lived in the Barrington area for 39 years and he and his wife, Marilyn, have lived



in Tower Lakes for 30 years where they raised two daughters. He was first elected to the Tower Lakes Village Board in 1999, was elected Village Lakes Village President in 2015, and re-elected in 2019. Dave has a BS in Chemical Engineering from the University of Illinois and recently retired as an engineering executive after 41 years at UOP Honeywell. U

