

In 2021 I was honored to receive the Outstanding Citizen of the Year award. At the DSA (Distinguished Service Awards) dinner on 10/21/2021, we were all offered the time to give a short talk about what we have done to further our passion for our interests. I could not think of why I was being honored for just doing what I love, and trying to get others to see the fun in these activities as well. In the last few years I have noticed an increase in two things:

-An increased interest in local history.

-An increased cooperation between agencies to further that interest.

My talk was too lengthy, as usual, but I thought it was important to point out that **something is happening** in the area, in a positive way.

[Items shaded were not included in the final, to reduce the time to the required 4 minutes or less. I think it went more like 8! I added them back in here.]

Greeting friends and family! I'm deeply honored by this award, a bit perplexed, perhaps, but very **happy** at the same time. I'm **happy** to see that I'm not the only one who sees value and interest in our past. It really CAN be fun, and yes, it CAN be an economic benefit. Many thanks to Brainerd Rotary and Brainerd Community Action for running this program!

HOWEVER, next time someone asks me to do a Downtown Brainerd History MINI Walk for "a large group from Illinois for a family reunion" I will give it more thought. Really, now, Holly, how gullible do think I am, are, **was**. I was completely buffaloed. But what a treat, all the people I really love and enjoy and work with, all there in one place in the Visit Brainerd office. I was blown away. For once, I was (almost) speechless. Thanks to all who planned this and attended, and for this honor. My wife sure pulled off this one. Thank you, Sue!

As you may know, I grew up in Brainerd, right across the street from Gregory Park. As kids, when not in school, we LIVED in that park, and only came here for eating and sleeping. When not there, we hung out down by the river just a few blocks away. Now I live on the river; still hang out there, from our house up to the dam. That's where all the history is, and of course, I spend some time in downtown Brainerd.

I'll tell you, right now local history is **so** alive and well here in the area. Maybe it was the sesquicentennial, Brainerd's 150th celebration that got things going strong. Kudos to the Sesqui Committee for pulling off a super-successful week of events! **The Dispatch**, as usual, had superb coverage each day, and it continues all year. They even have a HISTORY tab on their website! Steve Kohls might stick around for another year! Maybe it was the **Visit Brainerd office** moving to a storefront downtown, or offering **regular MINI Downtown History Walks**, not to mention providing a place to find local souvenirs. It helps that we now have a **city council** and **departments** that are fully on board the history train. **The Mayor** seems to be in 3 places at a time all day. Talk about action in the community! The **Riverfront Committee** is on fire bringing the river back to light, and even had an awesome river cleanup this summer. **Our museum** has been transformed and will now last another 104 years, and is chock full of new and creative exhibits. **Historic markers** are going up all over town, and old projects are getting finished up. But likely, it's YOU, **all of you** who help promote the area, and plan and attend events. Have you gone online lately to check out the event calendars in the area? There is LOT to do here! You know, **Crow Wing County** is a bit unique in that it has 3 active historical societies besides the one here in the county seat...Crosby, Nisswa, and Crosslake, and our neighbors in Pequot Lakes, Pine River and Little Falls all have active groups. We truly **are** history nuts here!

Now, you didn't really think you'd get by without getting at least a short history lesson, did you?

So, I collect vintage local postcards (among other things) and have seen many labeled, such as, “Greetings from Craguns, or Maddens, or Paul Bunyan Center, Brainerd, Minn.” None was in the city limits of Brainerd! Why is that? Apparently, if you were from **the area**, you were from “**Brainerd.**” That really has not changed. Brainerd got to this spot because of the N.P. Railroad crossing the river here. Funny how everything here and north of here became the moniker for the **area**.

Here are some monikers that were applied to Brainerd over the years:

1872: *The City of Pines*

1873: *The Hub of the State* (Talk then was of removing the capital from St. Paul to Brainerd.)

1910: *The Hub of the Continent*, from A. J. Halstead’s Brainerd Tribune

1914: *The City of Mines*

1936: *Gateway to the Wonderland of Nature.* Sounds like something I’d write. Sometime later, shortened, *Gateway to the Lakes Area.*

1950: *Paul Bunyan’s Vacationland.* Later, or earlier, *Paul Bunyan’s Playground.*

1968: *Snowmobile Capitol of the World.* ... Then there is a gap, and there must be more.

2021: But likely much earlier, I’m working on that. Here a haffa century later...I just LOVE the current moniker, just 3 words, but it says it all...the BLA. That is not an acronym, as we are NOT “**blah**” by any means. The initialism is **Brainerd-Lakes-Area**. I’ve never seen so much cooperation between cities, resorts, civic groups, **and people**, in this little slice of heaven. I guess that’s why I came here when I was four, and never left. (Never mind the math.) What great people...what an AREA! **Thank you so very much.**

Photos:



15 / 17 Distinguished Service Awards Banquet Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021, hosted by the Brainerd Jaycees and Brainerd Community Action at Arrowwood Lodge at Brainerd Lakes in Baxter. Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch



16 / 17 Distinguished Service Awards Banquet Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021, hosted by the Brainerd Jaycees and Brainerd Community Action at Arrowwood Lodge at Brainerd Lakes in Baxter. Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch



2 / 17 Distinguished Service Awards Banquet Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021, hosted by the Brainerd Jaycees and Brainerd Community Action at Arrowwood Lodge at Brainerd Lakes in Baxter. Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch



14 / 17 Distinguished Service Awards Banquet Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021, hosted by the Brainerd Jaycees and Brainerd Community Action at Arrowwood Lodge at Brainerd Lakes in Baxter. Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch



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-Carl W. Faust, 10/21/2021