



# Calumet County Historical Society Museum

**Open Sundays June-September 1:00 to 4:00  
or by appointment**

## People-Chilton Times-Journal Pride runs deep in downtown Chilton

By **RANDY BISHOP** Staff Writer  
January 25, 2001

In 1955, John Meyer, of Hilbert, welcomed the St. Patrick's Day Parade much more than usual. He had just been discharged from the Navy after surviving an artillery attack off the coast of Korea. The USS Owen DD 536 was reported sunk or missing for several days.

"It was scary", said Meyer. "We got hit. I was glad to be home."

The next day, Jack saw a Help Wanted sign on the Chilton Manor Trailer Factory. The huge building was located at 311 E. Main Street, next to the Rollie Woelfel's Chilton Creamery on

the west side and Schmidt Brothers' butcher, later Paul Weber, on the east side.

Norman Lunde, president of Manorette, was a short, frail man. His right arm was somewhat deformed, and he always kept his hand in his pants pocket.

"He was a gentleman; full of energy," Meyer said of Lunde. "When he talked, you listened. When you talked, he listened. I gave him my Navel history resume on ac-

counting and bookkeeping. I was hired and my office was at his large, impressive, white brick house on Park Street. Later we built an office at the factory. At that time, the payroll was about 85 people. George Schroeder of Hilbert was a foreman as well as Harry Bancroft of Chilton. Lon Keuler was in charge of all plumbing." Bill Rogahn was vice-president and general manager. He was known to work from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. When the

shift ended, he would go get lumber from Oshkosh and have it ready so the crew would never run out of work.

"Both men were great to work for, but Lunde could get irritable," Meyer said. "Gene Schneider was a big man with a fist the size of a catchers mitt. Gene needed to choke up on his hammer because of his strength.

Lunde said,

"Give me that hammer", then he sawed three inches off the handle and gave it back to Gene and walked away."

But the team of Lunde and Rogahn was generous, and full of fun, too. When the company sold its 1,000<sup>th</sup> Manorette trailer, they threw a party at Hickory Hills Country Club. "I remember it as a great time the whole evening," Meyer said. The firm invited Art Connell, president of the State Bank of Chilton. Art was a funny man, full of jokes and brought out the best of humor in



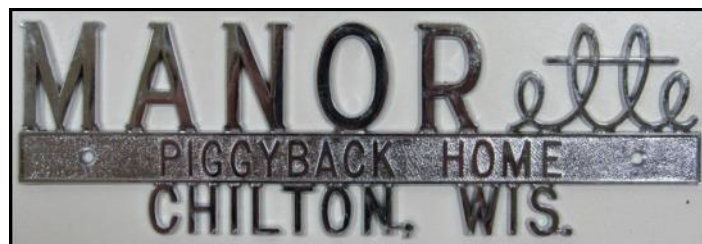
everyone in attendance.” (The trailer firm did most of their business with the State Bank.)

Lunde had four salesman and dealerships in 36 states. Each dealer had an Entertainment Bar Trailer, and each customer that bought a trailer got a courtesy case of Gettleman’s Beer. It was a clever advertising gimmick.

“We bought beer by the pallet load,” Meyer said, “and often shipped on the railroad, which went behind the factory.”

Lunde had stock in the Gettleman Brewing Company. Remember the commercial “Get...Get...Gettleman. The thousand dollar beer! On...Grand...Beer!” When Lunde bought a round of drinks at a local business, if they didn’t have Gettlemans, he wouldn’t drink.

there for one year until the original factory was reorganized for our smaller trailers. Norman Lunde often



came to visit and watch us work. By this time, only 20 of us worked there. I used to deliver trailers to Minnesota at night. Bill Rogahn got caught in a windstorm in Texas and lost that one. John Herrick used to deliver them also.”

“About 1960,” Boll continued. “I was asked by Norman to move his brother, Howard, to Chilton from Minnesota. I did, and Howard and Norman formed a partnership. They were about to start the ‘Norseman Ice Machine’ business.” But that’s another story.

Boll stayed on building trailers with Rogahn. Jim Bloomer bought the business in about 1975 and renamed it Manorette. It was about 1985 when Bloomer sold it to another company and they went bankrupt in 1987. An auction took place. Bloomer got his building back, but the trailer business—neither mobile home nor travel trailer—was never to be again.

But Lunde held his head up high. Pride runs deep in downtown Chilton. Everyone worked together and Norman Lunde knew he had one more chance.

(PS) According to Bob Boll the frames for the Manor mobile homes (the big ones) were made by Bock Industries of Indiana. The wheels/axles were assembled to the frames on the outdoor lot that Seven Angels Restaurant is now located. (July 30, 2011)



By the late 50’s, business was so great that the firm could hardly meet schedules. Some of the workers were Cecil Arenz, Serve Darban, Andy Hopfensperger, John Herrick, and others, like Putz Lisowe and Zierer. It was great! Then the bad news came. The frame for the trailers were found to be defective. The trailers were no good and had to be rebuilt. Rogahn and Lunde were devastated.

Meyer recalls that Lunde was “not a quitter.” “He made arrangements to keep going. He hated the thought of bankruptcy. He did real well for quite some time, but he finally was forced into bankruptcy. It nearly destroyed him. But that was only the beginning of his bad luck. His wife, Ruth, was also dying of cancer.”

Bob Boll, of Hayton, started working for Bill Rogahn in 1959, after graduating from Chilton High School. By this time, Lunde was tying up loose ends, trying to make good on his products. Rogahn renamed the firm the Chilton Trailer Company. His trailers were the travel type, while Lunde’s were exclusively the type that could be pulled by special vehicles to locations to be lived in.

Boll remembers that time. “We built travel trailers across the street in a building owned by Kaytee. We worked