



Wimbledon Newsletter



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Wimbledon, North Dakota

Laffen Receives Grand Forks' Highest Honor

Wimbledon native Lonnie Laffen (W 1976), President, CEO, & Founder of JLG Architects and a North Dakota State Senator, received the Henry Havig Award for Community Service on January 18, an honor bestowed by Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce.



Lonnie Laffen (center) with parents Ruby & Del Laffen, sister Paula Kleinknecht, and his wife Pam (far right). Photo courtesy Pam Laffen

Article by April Baumgarten, *Grand Forks Herald* originally published January 18 2018 and reprinted with permission.

A state senator from Grand Forks who leads one of the region's largest architecture firms has won the city's most prestigious business recognition.

Lonnie Laffen, who is the president and CEO of JLG Architects, received the Henry Havig Award for Community Service on Thursday night at the annual dinner of the Chamber of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.

"It's incredibly humbling. You look at all these people, and all the people before you, and you just don't put yourself in that league. You work hard on all these things to improve your community, and you're not looking for attention," Laffen said. "In all that service, what you find quickly is that you get back a lot more."

A graduate of North Dakota State University, Laffen founded JLG with Gary Johnson in 1989 in Grand Forks under the name Johnson and Laffen Architects. The firm had various names over the years as it grew. When it opened an office in Minneapolis in 2002, the owners changed the name to its current title.

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Gary Tharaldson Business Biography Has Wimbledon Connection

Dazey ND native Gary Tharaldson has built a hotel empire twice, and is working on his third. His business secrets to success – and pitfalls to avoid – are chronicled in the business biography “*Open Secrets of Success, the Gary Tharaldson Story*” published late in 2017 by the University of Mary Press (Bismarck ND).

Every entrepreneur has a “first job”. Gary Tharaldson’s first job in 1959 was demolishing buildings for Dick Grotberg (W 1954) at Wimbledon. There were many farmsteads in the area to be cleaned up, places that hadn’t been lived in since the Dirty Thirties. There was money to be made in tearing down buildings, and more money to be made selling the lumber. Tharaldson caught the entrepreneurial spirit, and in Pages 32 – 36, pays tribute to Dick Grotberg.

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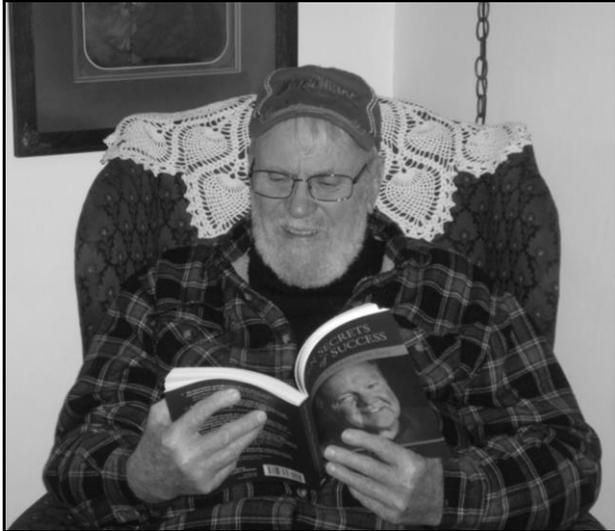
Sophie Korum, granddaughter of Dick Grotberg of Wimbledon, looks on as Gary Tharaldson dedicates a copy of his business biography to her grandfather at the University of Mary on January 24.

Photo courtesy Sophie Korum

Tharaldson Book *Continued from Front Page*

Grotberg says of Tharaldson, "You could see it in his eyes, how sharp he was. He was a problem solver." At peak times, Grotberg had 20 to 40 guys tearing down structures as far afield as Maddock ND and into Minnesota. But those crews were spending a lot of time talking, and not working. The unproductive chatter was solved when Tharaldson suggested playing music at the job site. He also suggested Grotberg should rig up some big lights so they could work later.

Later, in his own hotels, the practical problem solving continued. Tharaldson built the laundry just behind the front desk, so the night staff could do double duty. His hotels – in the cold Northern Plains – were the first to put the room entrances in hallways instead on the outside. He built the swimming pools inside, too.



Dick Grotberg (W1954) reminisced recently about his building demolition days, when Gary Tharaldson worked on his crew and lived with the family on Grotberg's farm southeast of Wimbledon.

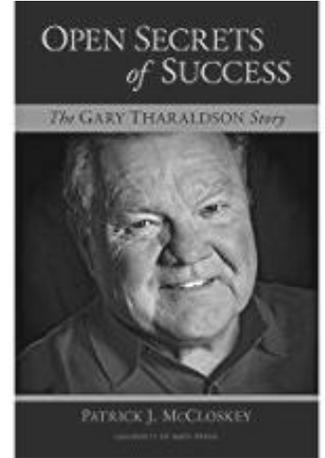
MASON'S BAKED POTATO FEED

benefitting Local Scholarships
Sunday, April 8 at the
Wimbledon American Legion Hall



Tharaldson lived with the Grotberg family for some of his high school years. The chore schedule was always flexible, so that Gary could get to school and play sports. Dick Grotberg, an only child, recalled wistfully, "If I could have adopted Gary as a little brother, I would have."

The two have recently had a chance to catch up by phone. Grotberg's granddaughter Sophie Korum attends the University of Mary, and was at the campus bookstore book signing in January. Tharaldson called the Grotberg farm a few days later.



The softcover book "Open Secrets of Success, the Gary Tharaldson Story" by Patrick J. McCloskey is available from the University of Mary bookstore for \$12.99 or \$15.99 from Amazon.