

Carl Sandburg: a little shy

ELMHURST SECTION Wed., Aug. 25, 1976 2

## Writer stops to remember when

By Stirling Morita

**DON RUSSELL** keeps a volume of children's poetry with his most treasured books.

On the inside is written in unusual script:

"Who knows what this is all about, which maybe ain't much as between friends and fellow workers — Carl Sandburg."

What Sandburg, famous poet and writer, was modestly alluding to was a collection of poems in his book "Early Moon."

**RUSSELL, 77, OF 191 Clinton Av., Elmhurst, knew the famed poet quite well.**

They would occasionally ride the train together to go to work at the Chicago Daily News from Elmhurst, where Sandburg lived in the 1920s.

"He was odd," Russell recalled. "He seemed a little aloof at times, a little shy of attention."

**SANDBURG LIVED** in a house near York Street and St. Charles Road, but the site is now a church parking lot. It was only a few blocks west of a junior high school that was later named in his honor.

Russell has seen a lot of Elmhurst. After all, he has lived in the city for nearly 49 years. Russell is also a writer of some renown, specializing in books on the Old West.

Elmhurst's historical society and Bicentennial commission have sought him out to write the "History of Elmhurst," the first comprehensive publication about the city. A local group has compiled extensive research. "It's going to be an easy job for me. I'm not required to do any research at all," he said.

Chicago Trib.  
**Bensenville**  
**Committee offers**  
**\$500 scholarship**

Students interested in applying for a scholarship to continue their educational, vocational or technical training should contact the Bensenville Centennial Scholarship committee.

The committee annually offers a \$500 scholarship.

Applicants must be enrolled in or planning to enroll in an accredited educational, vocational or technical institution. Applicants must also be Bensenville residents and have completed high school or a high school equivalency exam.

Applications are available at the Bensenville Public Library, 200 S. Church Rd., or at Fenton High School, 1000 W. Green St.

## Village hauler now collects yard waste

Yard waste is now being collected by the village's waste hauler.


Yard waste includes grass clippings, garden waste and branches that are less than 12 inches long and 1 inch in diameter.

All yard waste must be contained in either a garbage can or a paper, biodegradable yard-waste bag. If garbage cans are used, a yard-waste sticker must be placed on each can.

Yard-waste stickers are available for free and may be obtained at the Village Hall, 700 W. Irving Park Rd. For information, call Bensenville Village Hall, 350-3435.

## Program explores teens and the law

Issues relating to "Parents, Kids, and the Law" will be discussed in a program at Fenton High School at 7 p.m. April 21.



Tribune photo by Don Casper

## Spring siesta

As the weather turns warmer, Clarence DeVries of Westmont gets comfortable and takes a nap on his lawn chair in the great outdoors Monday at Patriots Park in Downers Grove.

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# Carl Sandburg's Du Page years

## 1920 census paints picture of writer's life in Elmhurst

By Anne Hazard  
States News Service

WASHINGTON—At first glance, the page of enumerator's entries resembles thousands of others pieces of information about mostly average citizens in recently released records of the 1920 U.S. Census.

But the scrawl on Line 45 of this page shows that Carl Sandburg was 41 at the time, and living at 331 S. York St. in Elmhurst with his wife and three daughters.

Already recognized as a monumental literary figure when he moved to Du Page County from Maywood, Sandburg did an enormous volume of work in the Elmhurst house while working as a newspaper reporter, and struggling at times with personal tragedy.

In Elmhurst, where the Sandburgs stayed until 1928, Sandburg wrote two collections of poetry—"Slabs of the Sunburnt West" and "Good Morning America"—and two collections of children's stories—"Rootabaga Stories" and "Rootabaga Pigeons."

He also did all of the work on the first two volumes of his Lincoln biography—"Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years," and readied for publication "The American Songbag," one of the most important anthologies of American folk songs of the day.

He had gathered the songs for years, jotting down the lyrics of tunes he heard during his far-flung

travels across America. In 1902, Sandburg had been arrested for riding trains hobo-style.

The 1920 census records show that Sandburg had a mortgage on the white two-story house where he lived with his wife, Lilian Anna Maria Elizabeth Steichen, whom he called Paula, and daughters, Margaret, 8; Janet, 3; and Helga, 1.

Many of his neighbors were immigrants with working-class jobs who settled nearby on South York Street, the census records show. More than a third of the 39 nearby households were headed by men who had immigrated to the United States from Ireland, Sweden, Holland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Norway and other countries.

Sandburg's neighbors held jobs such as laborer, florist, railroad signal maintenance worker, housekeeper, storekeeper, janitor, clerk and blacksmith.

Sandburg probably felt "absolutely at home" on South York Street, said Sandburg biographer Penelope Niven. "These were the people who were his audience, his subjects. . . . They are the kind of people he'd always been writing about."

Sandburg's parents had emigrated from Sweden and Paula's from Luxembourg.

It was about 1920 that Sandburg switched from covering labor disputes to being the film critic for

the Chicago Daily News and began writing children's fiction. He called the children's stories "my refuge from the imbecility of a frightened world," Niven said.

It was also a time of family struggle, according to Niven.

Many of the activities of Sandburg and his wife during those years reflect their near-desperate desire to find a cure for Margaret's epilepsy, Niven said.

Little was known about treatment of the disease at the time, and Paula Sandburg took Margaret to Chicago and Battle Creek, Mich., where experimental treatments were being done, and Sandburg went on a wide-ranging lecture-recital circuit in which he strummed a guitar and sang his songs to earn additional money to pay the medical bills.

Margaret, now 80 and living in Asheville, N.C., recalls that her father was frequently gone and often worked late at home.

Because of the seizures, her schooling was interrupted. "My mother . . . was just wonderful; she told me that many famous people had had epilepsy," including Julius Caesar, she said.

The house was torn down in the late 1960s, according to Nancy Wilson of the Elmhurst Historical Museum, and the property is now the parking lot of the First Baptist Church.

Judge John W. Darrah.

"Right now, it's one-sided. Botti's Tuesday. 'Nobody representing [us] in this matter. We are the ones who have to convince the judge it's for the greater good of the people to keep them [the landfills] open.'"

County Board members also as Forest Preserve District commissioners, although the two panels are separate government units. Both are usually represented by the state's attorney's office but in this case, State's Attorney James Ryan is the plaintiff.

Earlier Tuesday, Thomas V. McNamara, an attorney for E&H Hauling, a division of Brownair Ferris Industries, which operated the landfill in the Mallard Lake Forest Preserve near Naperville appeared before Darrah seeking to intervene in the case.

McNamara said his action was prompted by a belief by BFI that attorneys already involved in the case would not adequately represent that firm's interests. The other landfill, in the Greene Lake preserve near Hanover Park, is operated by Waste Management.

Darrah issued a ruling last

## Air quality woes trigger relocation

Ten Du Page County judges, their staffs and their caseloads were moved Monday to other rooms in the Wheaton courthouse from their normal fourth floor locations where complaints about poor air quality have been the worst in recent weeks.

As part of the moves, Chief Du Page County Judge Anthony Peccarelli said two judges hearing misdemeanor cases doubled up in one courtroom that had been closed for the last three months for another environmental reason: loud rumbling in the ventilation ducts.

Secretaries to five felony division judges also were moved from their fourth floor offices on Monday to