

Remarks of Nicholas Fodor  
on his retirement as Chairman  
of the Wyckwood Park Trustees  
on November 3, 1980



Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am completing eleven years on this Board as junior, intermediate and, finally, senior Trustee and, for obvious reasons, I am retiring from this position. However, the home that we built thirty years ago will keep us here. I attended all Trustees meetings like this, argued the bumps in the road, the barking of dogs, the noise of children, closing the south gate or walling it up, extra kitchens, stoop and scoop and all the rest. In retrospect, we had some loud, exciting arguments, lively disagreements - but all without bloodshed.

Believe me, I have had a great deal of pleasure in the past score and a half years in doing all that I have done, in the way that I have done, since I believe it was for the benefit of the Park. If anyone disagrees with me now - posthumously - my apologies!

Of course, you took a chance accepting Nick Fodor, a newcomer to this country - only forty-one years here - certainly not a WASP - and in doing so, a highly controversial step was taken. I hope I did not disappoint you. The mixing of tact with argument was not the easiest thing to do but I assure you I have no sign of any oncoming ulcer. I am quite seasoned to arguments. One day, during one of my violent arguments with my son, he yelled at me at the top of his voice, "Dad, you're really a WASP!". I couldn't resist answering with a hearty laugh and a quiet statement, "Thank you for the compliment".

Where do all these perplexing controversies come from? I often wondered, myself, about my descendancy. Then I read a long article about the atom bomb development during the war in a prominent American magazine. Apparently, a large percentage of the thinkers, philosophers, scientists and the brain guys came from Hungary, and in describing Los Alamos, the following was written:

"Long popular within the theoretical division of the Atomic Energy Commission was, for example, a theory that the people of Hungary are Martians. The reasoning went like this. The Martians left their own planet several eons ago and came to earth. They landed in what is now Hungary. The tribes of Europe were so primitive and barbarous that it was necessary for the Martians to conceal their evolutionary difference or be hacked to pieces. Through the years, the concealment has, on the whole, been successful but the Martians have three characteristics too strong to hide. Their WANDERLUST - which found its outlet in the Hungarian gypsy, their LANGUAGE - Hungarian is not related to any language spoken in surrounding countries - and their UNEARTHLY INTELLIGENCE!"

Doesn't this explain everything to you?

An illustrious resident of the Park, Marshall McLuhan, told me some time ago "Easy glum, easy glow".

And that describes the events of the past thirty years. Just to mention a few:

- You will remember the Burnside property proposed to be a service station or retreat institution or museum;
- Or the south Davenport property proposal of dumping 5,000 people in four high-rise apartment blocks and the ensuing fight at the City Hall and the OMB;
- We were collectively buying properties just to keep it as it was;
- Or the late Doug Ambridge sponsoring the pumping out of the pond, cleaning it and surrounding it with cedar poles.

Well, the thirty years were full of fight, enemies from the outside but also from the inside.

I was recently approached by a developer and his lawyer from Sudbury and asked whether a Wychwood Park-like development could be created in their city. "No," I said, "What was started eighty-nine years ago, based on a Trust Deed and a special concept, cannot be duplicated today. The beauty of the physical set-up combined with a population full of character cannot be duplicated. I am proud and happy to state, with good conscience, that Wychwood Park is stronger today than it ever was.

I served the Park as Tennis Committee Chairman, as President of the Ratepayers' Association and as Trustee. All that, even if it included lots of hardship, was most enjoyable.

I received great support from the Ratepayers' Association in my effort to enforce the by-laws and regulations. I believe the future of the Park hinges on it - so keep up the good work.

I am most grateful to my predecessor, Alick Stockwood. What he did, does and will do, will be known only to a few. Believe me, he is more than a Trustee - he is our conscience and trust. My successor is Larry Bonnycastle, to whom I and all of us are most indebted for his logical and methodical way to run the Park business. Stew Johnson is an irreplaceable help. The south gate history is an epic of rebuilding - restoring it in face of vandalism by outsiders. Sy Symons kept me straight - for this and his good stories - I am truly grateful.

The new Trustee is Kerr Gibson, well known to all of you. However, stand up, Kerr, to be seen. His first accomplishment is that the average age of the Board of Trustees dropped seven years.

I am most grateful to all of you that you put up with my accent, my English heavily distorted due to my Hungarian origin. May I tell you that many times, it served me very well. One case of my first days in the new

country: On April 8th, 1939, Gretl 'phoned me in the drafting room, where I worked first for \$5.00, then \$10.00 a week, "Nick, don't come home, go to see a Mr. C. R. Smith at 83 Albert Street, Mimico. He is the chief engineer of the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., New Toronto. If you make a good impression, he will hire you." So I did go there. He interviewed me in his bedroom, sitting on his bed and he hired me promptly. Soon, we became good friends. Old Charlie had the greatest pleasure introducing me to friends, service clubs - "My assistant, Nick Fodor - I hired him because when I interviewed him, he answered my questions fluently but in such an atrocious English that I did not understand a word, and in fairness to him, I had to assume that all his answers were correct!"

And now my final message. Let me tell you that, for me, it was a superb experience. I did my best - Wychwood Park represents in our community a fine institution, a very traditional, low-key operation with little fanfare. It lives strictly from the levy collected, no endowment, grants or other support.

In this world nothing is static. We must move - if we stagnate, we will be left behind. At the same time, those who move from well-established bases into what is, in their best judgment, desirable avenues must be prepared to take responsibility for those moves, singly or collectively and make up for any consequences of their moves.

This group is a fine body. I am sure it will make the right decisions.

Thank you for your patience, ladies and gentlemen.

And good luck to you all.