

[News](#)

Former mayor's memory

It would take a long and large book to tell the story of the life of Herschel Lashkowitz. But this month is the anniversary of his birth, and a little reminiscing seems appropriate.

Written By: Andrea Halgrimson | Apr 7th 2007 - 12am.

It would take a long and large book to tell the story of the life of Herschel Lashkowitz. But this month is the anniversary of his birth, and a little reminiscing seems appropriate.

Herschel Irving Lashkowitz was born in Fargo on April 2, 1918. His parents were Harry and Etta (Levitz) Lashkowitz. He attended local schools and graduated from Fargo Central High School in 1935.

During high school, he was a member of the National Honor Society and Quill and Scroll, a chapter of the International Honorary Society for high school journalists. He won several prizes when he served as sports editor and as a reporter for the biweekly high school newspaper, The Cynosure.

He was also a member of the Intramural and Interscholastic Debate Society and the Kent Literary Society that in 1934 presented Adam Applebud's "Oh Kay," a comedy mystery in three acts. Lashkowitz played the part of Gramp to Frances Cooper's Gram.

Also in the play that year was classmate Arthur Naftalin, who later served four terms as Minneapolis mayor from 1961 to 1969.

   Small Cell Lung Cancer affects close to 85 percent of Americans with lung cancer. [OPEN](#)



listen live
watch live



In his youth Lashkowitz almost drowned in Lake Melissa when he suffered a stomach cramp. A cousin rescued him.

Lashkowitz graduated with a B.A. degree from the University of Minnesota in 1940. He attended Harvard for a year and then enlisted in the Army. During World War II, he was a member of an anti-aircraft unit and in the infantry in the battle of Attu in the Aleutian Islands. He served for more than three years.

According to papers at the Institute of Regional Studies at NDSU, Lashkowitz moved to Los Angeles in 1946 to write for the movies. He also changed his last name to Lash. Two years later he entered the law school at the University of Minnesota and graduated with an LLB degree. He returned to Fargo and entered his father's law practice.

He became chairman of the Cass County Democrats in 1950. And he changed his name back to Lashkowitz.

In 1954 at the age of 36, he was elected mayor of Fargo serving until he was defeated by Richard Hentges in 1974. These are the years for which he is remembered. Often they were tumultuous. Lashkowitz was also a senator in the North Dakota Legislature from 1975 to 1989 when he retired because of ill health.

As time passes, I hope we can remember the many good things Lashkowitz accomplished during his tenure as Fargo's mayor and as a state legislator.

When he was mayor, two urban renewal projects were completed and a new Public Library, City Hall and Auditorium were built where there were formerly tenement housing and rundown businesses. Three fire stations and two flood control projects were built and the water and sewage plants were expanded. Two railroad underpasses on Second Avenue were constructed and public housing that provides apartments for disabled people and senior citizens was built. Fargo's high rise at 101 2nd St. S. is named for Lashkowitz.

Lashkowitz was mayor when Fargo was hit by a severe tornado in 1957. And in 1962 Fargo was named an All-American City for the first time.

Lashkowitz endured a number of ordeals during his time as mayor that included receiving many death threats by phone and the writing of profanities on his home. In 1971 a car accident near Hawley, Minn., injured him severely and his 78-year-old mother was killed.

During his illness with Parkinson's Disease, he was looked after by his childhood friend and legislative colleague, Republican Jens Tennefos.

In 1974, when he lost the election for mayor, Lashkowitz said of his terms "closeness to the people, openness in government, integrity in office and disavowal of privileged positions enabled Fargo to move ahead, grow impressively and make real progress."

They are words of which we should often remind ourselves.

Readers can reach Forum columnist Andrea Hunter Halgrimson at ahalgrimson@forumcomm.com