

Beech Gove City Council Meeting

April 16, 2012 – 7:00 PM

Beech Gove City Hall

Good Evening, my name is Lloyd Wright and I grew up in Beech Grove – first on North 15th Street just a few blocks from Sarah T. Bolton Park – until my senior year in high school – when my family moved to South Grove where I was even closer to what would become South Grove Park. I graduated from Beech Grove High School in 1971.

I'm here tonight with Bob Thomas, a 1969 Beech Grove graduate, and someone who has helped to lead the annual Beech Grove High School Alumni Association golf outing – an event that's become known as the Don Challis Memorial Golf Outing and Reunion. Last year we were able to contribute nearly \$2500 to the BGHS Alumni Association to be used for scholarships. I might mention that this year's event will take place at Sarah Shank Golf Course on Friday, June 8th. You are all invited to participate.

It was important to Bob and me to attend your City Council meeting this evening to offer our support for the idea of recognizing the countless contributions of Don Challis to the growth and development of the City of Beech Grove - especially its youngest citizens. Thanks to the Park Board and members of the Beech Grove City Council for considering the re-naming of South Grove Park in honor of Don Challis.

I feel blessed to have grown up in Beech Grove. I can say that I first became aware of Mr. Challis and his role as a teacher and a coach as early as my elementary school years – when I was about ten years old or so. I knew him as a 6th grade teacher at Central Elementary, the assistant coach of the basketball team in 1966 when Beech Grove won the Southport Sectional - as well as the afternoon game of the Butler Fieldhouse Regional when Beech Grove beat the #1 rated team in the state - Howe High School. It's one of the great memories of my life. Mr. Challis was also the baseball coach that same year when Beech Grove won the Marion County Tourney. Mr. Challis was also my varsity baseball and basketball coach when I was in high school.

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I also had the good fortune to become a part time employee for the Beech Grove Parks for four summers during high school and college. Mr. Challis was the Park Director and hired many young people over many years to work in the park - where we all benefitted from his example and numerous life lessons.

I also had the pleasure of being on the same softball team with Mr. Challis – a team called The Old-Timers - in the early years of the Beech Grove leagues that played on the old Junior High diamonds that Mr. Challis helped create and for years maintained. It was in that setting that I had the chance to see what an incredible athlete Mr. Challis was – even at that time when he was well into his forties – he was still quite a shortstop.

I was fortunate to also be on the park crew when South Grove Park was created. I remember helping to put up the first sign for South Grove Park along 9th Street on the hillside as you entered into the Park "drive way". All these years later I realize more and more just how lucky I was - and I think many individuals like me would agree - to have had someone like Mr. Challis in our lives.

He was an incredible Servant-Leader who cared deeply about the people, the youngsters, the city of Beech Grove, the role of athletics in a person's life, and he loved seeing young folks develop to reach their potential. I appreciate all that Mayor Buckley and the City Council is doing to make this honor happen for Mr. Challis, his entire family and all those who knew and loved him.

This action would be a most deserving honor for an individual we all remember as a talented and devoted Beech Grove resident, educator, coach, mentor, civil servant, park director, and the key visionary behind the creation of South Grove Park - among many other attributes and accomplishments. I know I speak for hundreds – perhaps even thousands - of other former Beech Grove students, athletes, park and city employees who benefitted so much from the guidance, attention, direction, kindness and vision of Mr. Don Challis. He was a true role model for the young people of Beech Grove.

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Don Challis played an important role in my development as an adolescent which has helped to shape my life as an adult. I can think of no one more deserving of such an honor from the city of Beech Grove than Don Challis.

Again, thanks to each of you for your leadership and consideration of this important recognition on behalf of Don Challis and his family.