

View from Baldhead 1874

Remembering When ... Our History

SAUGATUCK'S RICHEST MAN

In 1976 after the death of Howard Hughes and J. Paul Getty, Daniel Keith Ludwig was proclaimed by the *New York Times* to be the richest man in the world and there is no doubt that he was a world class mega-billionaire!

What most do not know is that Daniel Keith Ludwig—born in South Haven in 1897—moved with his mother Flora Belle and his father Daniel Ludwig to Saugatuck at the age of seven and grew up right here on Hoffman St. He got his start shining shoes and selling popcorn in the Big Pavilion. His father, nicknamed “Lud” was a sailor, and a businessman who made a living selling real estate and dabbling in business ventures, including a partial ownership interest in the Pavilion.

According to a 1978 Commercial Record article by Kit Lane (who wrote a book titled *The Popcorn Millionaire and Other Tales of Saugatuck*), Keith Ludwig exhibited entrepreneurial talent at a young age—besides selling popcorn, he managed the finances for the local ball team, bought an old boat, which he and Ky Walz rebuilt and sold for a profit. He was

remembered as a likeable but disinterested student in the class of Mrs. Carl Bird. Elita Bird, a classmate remembered that Keith was interested in candy sales at the Bird Drugstore. Keith was a member of a group called “Whits Boys,” a YMCA type group organized by Charles F. Whitcomb who lived on Holland St.

His parents separated when he was in the eighth grade—he then quit school and went to Port Arthur

Texas with his father. At age 19, he left Texas to return north, where he bought a dilapidated Lake Michigan cruise vessel for \$5000 and converted it to a barge bulk carrier to haul molasses. In the next 20 years he proceeded to make his fortune—first by buying and leasing tanker ships, then building ships during WWII and ultimately established a diversified world-wide empire that included major interests in

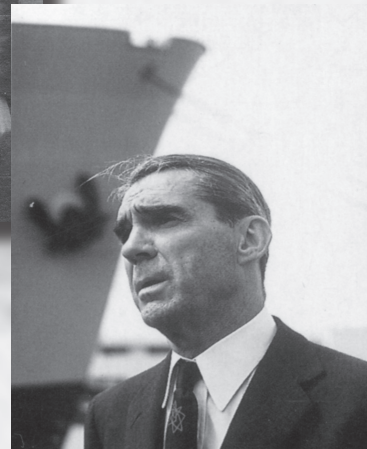
oil refining, coal mining, salt water conversion, agriculture, real estate, finance and banking. He was always somewhat of a loner and shunned publicity. In his most publicized venture, he invested billions in an unsuccessful timber farming venture (the “Jari Project”) in the Amazon. When he died in 1992, he had no living descendants, and most of his fortune was left to his Cancer research foundation.

By Jack Sheridan



Whit's Boys in 1912

Front row, left to right: John Pear, Dick Newnham, Daniel Keith Ludwig; Back row, Harry Pfaff, Hazen Koning, Charles Clapp, Ivan Arends, John Aliber, Cary Bird and Charles Koning



Ludwig ca 1955



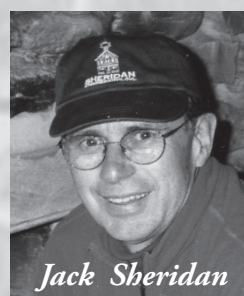
Ludwig home today, on the corner of St. Joseph and Hoffman



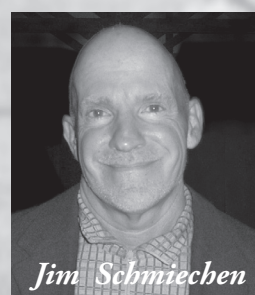
Lud Ludwig and August Pfaff ca 1910

The *Remembering When* feature is the creation of volunteers Jim Schmiechen and Jack Sheridan of the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. Utilizing the SDHS technical resources, Jack produces the finished feature every week. Jim is a history professor and our master of research. We split the fun of choosing topics, photos and writing. Thanks to our readers, the *Local Observer* and SDHS supporters, we enjoy this opportunity to exhibit the great history of our area.

We welcome your comments on *Remembering When*. Call 269 857-7901, email us at sdhistory@accn.org or write to Box 617 Douglas, Mi 49406. SDHS historical images can be seen on the SDHS web site at www.sdhistory.com and all historical photos are available for purchase in print sizes up to 12x17. Our historical image database is growing through your contributions. We scan your old photos—you keep the originals—and we then provide you with a CD of your digitized images.



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