



LACEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 3324 Lacey, WA 98509-3324

'To be a voice for the early citizens of Lacey, and to be their stewards protecting the historical heritage they have given us'

WINTER 2024 EDITION

2023 ANNUAL MEETING A SUCCESS

The Society held its annual membership meeting on October 24, 2023 and elected four new Trustees to the Board: Larry Ganders, Denise Keegan, Cynthia Pratt, and Tim McGuire. Ms. Pratt (a former Lacey City Council member) was also elected Vice-President, while Ms. Keegan (a Charter Member of the Society) and Mr. McGuire (the recently retired City Clerk) were elected co-Secretaries of the Board. Jon Halvorson and Kendra Hensley were returned as President and Treasurer, respectively.

The meeting was highlighted by a panel of Karen Fraser, Graeme Sackrison, and Jon Halvorson discussing their memories and perspectives and the challenges they faced as Lacey Mayors at different times in Lacey's history (continued on next page).



Former Mayors Karen Fraser, Graeme Sackrison & Jon Halvorson speak at Annual Meeting

2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

OFFICERS

Jon Halvorson
President

Cynthia Pratt
Vice President

Kendra Hensley
Treasurer

Denise Keegan
Tim McGuire
Co-Secretaries

TRUSTEES

Larry Ganders

Susan Hartman

Peggy McHugo

Monte Pascual

Robert Southwick

John Turner

Margie Wyllie
Newsletter Editor

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Lanny Weaver

INSIDE THIS EDITION:

Current and Past leaders of the Lacey Historical Society

The Lacey Burger Bar

Remembering Selma

Union Mills made Lacey's lakes famous for logs

Building a Fire Department from Scratch

Dr. Ehlers: Lacey's first paramedic

2023 ANNUAL MEETING A SUCCESS (continued from page 1):

The members present also adopted amendments to the bylaws: (a) allowing future elections to include absentee and electronic ballots; (b) establishing a single \$10 annual dues amount, eliminating the various categories of membership each with a different dues amount; (c) clarifying that the membership elects both the Trustees and the Officers of the Society; and (d) ratifying a number of technical bylaw changes that had been proposed during the pandemic years.

The Society said thank you and goodbye to the five Trustees who had helped during 2023 with the transition from the board that had guided the Society through the pandemic: Nancy (Cunningham) Miller, John Dziedzic, Mike Smith, Paul Webb, and Judy Wilson.

A delicious sheet cake was provided by the Lacey Costco, and Dancing Goats Roasters supplied the coffee.



ANNUAL DUES CHANGED

At the annual meeting, the by-laws were amended to eliminate multiple membership categories.

Now, all members' dues are the same: just \$10 per year.

Additional donations are always welcome, and both donations and dues are tax deductible.



CURRENT AND PAST LEADERS OF THE LACEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CURRENT TRUSTEES (IN ALL CAPS & BOLD) *Original Trustees (in bold italics)* *Charter members (in italics)*

Ayers, Margaret
Bailey, Ted
 Bailey, Tom (I. J.)
 Balsley, Lauren
Balsley, Ken
Baratz, Jean
 Bernd, Zelma
Bowen, Lois
Bowen, Ralph A.
 Brown, Nora
 Burdick, Evelyn
 Bush, Bill
Cleland, Joan
Cohn, Fritz L.
Contris, Mike
Crooks, Drew
 Cunningham, Jean Collins
 Cunningham, Larry
 Daly, Fred
Deck, Errett
 Dzedzic, John
 Dzedzic, Shirley
Ehlers, Dr. William A.
English, Ruth M.
 Ensign, Louise
Fenuer, Mrs. R. E.
 Finnegan, Helen
 Finnegan, Pete
Fraser, Karen
GANDERS, LARRY
 Goff, Susan
Guilbert, Gladys E.
HALVORSON, JON
HARTMAN, SUSAN

Hays, Creighton
Hays, Florence
Heald, Thomas W.
 Henderson, Paul
HENSLEY, KENDRA
Hicks, Gwin
 Hildebrand, Judy
Holmes, Jay
Homann, Anna M.
 Huntamer, Tom
 Husk, Dick (Richard)
Jensen, Robert V.
Johnson, Ann
 Johnson, Richard
Jordan, Patricia R.
KEEGAN, DENISE
 Kenmir, Agnes
 Kilber, Emaline
 Krier, Robert H.
Lathrop, Phyllis
Lozier, Mrs. Betty
 Mason (Hicks), Genevieve
Mayes, Anne
 Mayes, Larry
McGUIRE, TIM
McHUGO, PEGGY
Merrill, Fay
 Miller, Nancy
Molnes, Louise
Monti, Peggy
 Naismith, Bill
Nelson, Chris W.
 O'Keefe, Michael
PASCUAL, MONTE

Porteous, Bessie
 Porter, Diane Brown
PRATT, CYNTHIA
 Puckett, John
 Raney, Amber
 Rebstock, Tracy
 Ring, Susie
Saucier, Ethel Mae
 Schiendlman, Lillian
Scott, Father John
 Smith, Darrell
 Smith, Michael
SOUTHWICK, ROBERT
Stevenson, Shanna
 Thomas, Elizabeth
Thomsen, Emma
 Travis, Harrison
Triebel, Clara
 Tuggle, Dorothy
Turner, Amy
Turner, Don
TURNER, JOHN
 Weaver, Lanny
 Webb, Dick
 Webb, Paul
 Welter, Frank
Wilcox, Kenneth
Wilcox, Virginia
 Wilson, Judy
 Wooden, Lisa
WYLLIE, MARGIE
 Yates, Harold
 Yates, Dick

THE LACEY BURGER BAR

“Easy to Find – Hard to Leave” and “Headquarters for Tall Tales”

Between 1953 and 1962 the Lacey Burger Bar was basically an “Institution.” The Washington State Patrol had coffee and lunch there so often, they often referred to as their “south end office!” Their menu was full of homecooked food, back when people knew how to “home cook.” Since it was open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. there were breakfast specials for the early birds; salads and sandwiches (and of course burgers) for the mid-day crowd; and lastly a huge menu for the evening crowd from pan fried half chickens to steak or salmon. Everything was made on the premises by the loving and capable hands of Maxine Sheffler. Besides Maxine’s two daughters, Becky and Bev Sheffler, she had a handful of waitresses like Gracie Minch, Ethel Elder, and Sofie and Jackie Bucknell providing excellent service while maintaining the friendly atmosphere that was so genuine to the Burger Bar.

I remember going there with my mom before I even started school. I was a picky eater, but I remember they had good burgers (that’s a given, right?) and I remember the inside of the restaurant was knotty pine which also had a friendly feeling. Mom, like so many, became good friends with Maxine.

The actual location of the Burger Bar was owned by Bernice Scroggins and leased to Maxine Sheffler for nine years. At that time, it was located adjacent to one of the McGimpsey’s grocery stores. However, in “real time” it was just north of the new Verizon store located in the 4000 block of Pacific Avenue. The reason Maxine Sheffler stopped leasing and running the restaurant was the street kept getting wider and wider, thus wiped out the street parking for customers.

*To: All My Patrons: Today is my last day as owner of the Lacey Burger Bar.
After 9 years of pleasant associations – and to my many friends I have made
through these associations – I wish to extend to you my thanks and BEST WISHES
for the Holidays.*

Maxine Sheffler

The note above was inserted into The Burger Bar’s menu, simply dated “Friday” (most likely in December.)

Sometime around March of 1963, Maxine Sheffler and Grace Minch leased a property in Taylor Town and again began serving more wonderful meals and memories. I bet there were lots of old Lacey Burger Bar customers who frequented that place too.

A heart felt “Thank you” to Maxine’s youngest daughter, Pam Sheffler McAferty, who supplied me with the Sheffler hospitality, information, and a menu...

By: Margie Worden Wyllie, NTHS Class of 1969

Chamber

**MILK NOW and
COFFEE LATER**



BREADED VEAL W/COUNTRY GRAVY	1.15
PRAWNS	1.15
FRENCH DIP SANDWICH	1.00
HOT STEAK SANDWICH	1.00
HOT ...	1.00
CH	1.00
CH	1.00
	75c

Lacey BURGER BAR

LACEY, WASHINGTON

M E N U

EASY TO FIND -- HARD TO LEAVE

"Headquarters for Tall Tales"

HUNTING AND FISHING
OUR SPECIALTY

Open 6:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. Closed Sunday

WITH SANDWICH	50c
or	
SALAD	60c
*	
	35c
	50c
LIST	60c
	50c
	1.25
	1.50



REMEMBERING SELMA

To the extent that it can be said that I actually ever really “grew up,” I remember growing up during the 1960s in ‘Old Lacey.’ That’s the area defined on the south by Pacific Avenue, with Himes Street (now 7th Avenue) to the north and to the west lay the open field of grass below the hill where St. Martin’s Abbey and College sat (it wasn’t a university yet) with its quarter-mile oval cinder track and ancient three-story gymnasium (before the Marcus Pavilion was built), and to the east, the undeveloped forested land surrounding the string of ponds feeding Lake Lois.

‘Old Lacey’ could have been the picture appearing beside the definition of “neighborhood” in your Webster’s Dictionary – nothing fancy: a pleasant and eclectic collection of comfortable homes built in the 1940s and 50s representing a variety of styles, most with large well-trimmed lawns and gardens among the scattered and towering Blue Spruce, Douglas Fir, and Poplar trees. The homes were occupied mostly by established families who had seemingly lived there since dirt was new. It was a place where parents felt safe with their pre-teen children walking down the middle of the lightly-travelled (except on Sundays after mass at Sacred Heart Catholic Church) roads because there were no sidewalks.

As the years went by, the bustling commercial businesses and light-industrial facilities pressed in on the one exposed southern edge of this insular little island of calm. But the neighborhood remained. The neighbors knew each other and were ‘good’ neighbors. They shared with each other the bounty of their vegetable gardens and orchards, along with their successes and difficulties, and would always ‘be there’ when it mattered most.

I imagine the same could be said, on a somewhat smaller scale, about Popkes’ Subdivision, as it was originally called when the neighborhood was platted in 1950. The only public roadway within the development was then called Selma Avenue, and it extended northward from Pacific Avenue where it intersected with the west end of Lacey Boulevard, before the round-a-bout was constructed. Selma Avenue became Selma Street in 1971, when it was decided that roads running east and west would be called avenues, and those, like Selma, that ran north-south, were to be called streets. Either way, the roadway didn’t actually go anywhere else, as it provided access to only the five single family homes on each side, on lots of about two-thirds of an acre, and terminated at the boundary with the land where the drive-in movie was located, before it was replaced by the Fred Meyer shopping complex.

The Selma Street neighborhood was not as successful as Old Lacey was in surviving 20th century progress, with the ten residences recently being replaced by the new MultiCare Neighborhood Emergency Department that has essentially absorbed most of the street with its parking lot. Fortunately, however, the new, state-of-the art medical facility has been constructed by MultiCare Health Care System, whose mission statement is “partnering for healing and a healthy future,” and is proving to be a good new neighbor: its local leadership team has partnered with the Lacey Historical Society to find ways to remember Selma Popkes, whose husband named the street in her honor.



Selma and her husband, Buster, built the homes on either side of Selma Street, as well as those in the Country Homes Division between Chambers Lake and Sleater-Kinney Road, long before Lacey became a city. It was in the latter neighborhood where Buster and Selma met and became good neighbors with the family next door.

Buster passed away while fishing on Chambers Lake in June 1979, and Selma left this world at the age of 88 on October 1, 1994. They are buried together in the Masonic Cemetery in Tumwater. The inscription on their headstone says, quite appropriately: “They liked people.”

And their good neighbor from the Country Homes Division liked them, too, and hasn’t forgotten them. The neighbor recently shared their history about the naming of Selma Street with the Society and the leadership team of MultiCare Capital Medical Center in West Olympia.

In addition to helping the Society seek to recognize Selma Avenue/Street as a “Memorial Roadway,” complete with a distinctive brown historic street sign, it was the suggestion of Will Callicot, President of MultiCare Capital Medical Center, that perhaps a bench with a brass plaque honoring Selma could also be located beneath the spreading limbs of a large Tulip Poplar tree (a species, *Liriodendron tulipifer*, not commonly found west of the Mississippi River) that is located at the very north end of Selma Street. Fortunately, the tree, which is thought to have been there for at least 70 years, was protected during construction of the new neighborhood emergency department through the efforts of Mr. Callicot and Mayor Ryder (who has connections with both Old Lacey and the Selma Street neighborhoods), and is now the subject of a joint effort to designate it as an historic tree under Lacey’s Municipal Code.

By: John Dziedzic, NTHS Class of 1973

What’s your favorite memory about growing up in Lacey?

Send your personal recollections and your ideas for future articles in the newsletter to: Lacey.Hist.Society@gmail.com

BUILDING A FIRE DEPARTMENT FROM SCRATCH

On April 2nd 2024 the Lacey Fire Department (Thurston County Fire District #3) will celebrate their 75th year as a fire district. Among the things they will celebrate will be the incredible effort that was expended by a small group of interested citizens in starting a fire department from scratch.

And while their formal beginning as a fire district occurred on that early April day in 1949, there was a precursor to the fire district known as the “Lacey and Lakes Fire Department.”

While the Lacey and Lakes Fire Department would become a fire district, for nearly the first year of its existence, it was, in fact, the special project of a service club. That service club was one “Elephants Club.” The historical record shows them being organized in 1930, and they were a service club much like today’s Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions clubs. Among the community activities they took on was support for the Lacey Children’s home and the Boy Scouts. They also sponsored community dances for teenagers in the area, and funded the Lacey School Patrol which were students that controlled intersections around the old Lacey School during high traffic periods. They even organized garbage pick-up for people who could not afford to get rid of their garbage by normal means.

George “Doc” Stansfield was a member of the Elephants, and a resident of the area roughly between Long and Hicks Lakes. In 1937, he proposed the purchase of a “portable pump” that could be used to fight fires in the area. The club ultimately agreed to purchase a firetruck, which was able to fight fires in a larger area.

There were two means of organized response to fires even before advent of the fire department. The Washington Forest Fire Association, precursor to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, had their headquarters at the intersection of Martin Way and Marvin Road. They also ran a smaller facility in Littlerock. While they specialized in wildland fires, they would respond to structure fires to do what they could.

The second means was from St. Martin’s College. The Benedictine Monks that started St. Martin’s took an early interest in establishing their own means to fight fire after several fires at, or around, the college.

Pre-war Army-issued pumper of the style used by Saint Martin’s student firefighters.



In the 1940’s they purchased an army surplus pumper set up as a forest fire unit. It had a 250-gallon water tank and a 300 gallon per minute front-mount pump. The unit was led by Father Luke, and the firefighters were students who volunteered their time.

St. Martin’s would routinely run the rig off college grounds to assist their neighbors wherever they were called.

Fundraising by the Elephants was conducted in 1938 and 1939. After two years, a total of \$614 was raised toward the trucks purchase. It was determined this was not adequate to purchase the fire truck they needed. The Club placed the \$614 in an escrow account to be used only to purchase a fire apparatus. The most likely reason for suspension of their efforts was WW2. Consequently, the club began raising funds to help the war effort.

Near the end of WW2 and shortly after, two fires occurred which reignited efforts to purchase a fire truck. Larry Cunningham and his wife and children lived in a home at Union Mills. One night one of the homes caught fire and burned along with three others.

A house fire on Lilly Road just north of Pleasant Glade burned the home of Clarence and Emily Green. His family escaped unharmed, but despite the response of Tumwater Fire Department, WFFA and St. Martin's, the home burned completely.

Henry Turner, owner of a grocery at the intersection of Lacey St. and Pacific Ave, contacted his fellow Elephants Club member and club officer, "Doc" Stansfield and inquired about re-starting fundraising. Doc approached the club about continuing fundraising, and, on May 25th 1948, they agreed to research and purchase a firetruck, and to research the steps necessary to form a fire district.

May 25th 1948 was the beginning of the "Lacey and Lakes Fire Department" under the sole ownership of the Elephants service club.

The Elephants didn't just commit to buying a fire truck. They committed to building an entire fire department from scratch and be ready to turn it into a fire district upon voter approval.

This was no "big service project," - it was gargantuan.

In any case, the club used their "Days of '49" events, which included a parade in downtown Olympia, to begin garnering the necessary funds. A truck suitable to their needs was found in the unincorporated town of Harvard-Midland-Larchmont, now known just as "Midland" south of Tacoma. The 1932 Ford Model AA (Ford heavy trucks had a double "A" designation) was being surplus by the Midland firefighters, as they had obtained a new one.

The truck had its beginning as a well-drilling rig for "Parkland Well Drilling" and was used as such until 1942 when Midland firefighters acquired it, and had it rebuilt as a fire apparatus by Peterman Mfg. in Tacoma. The owner of Peterman Mfg. was T.A. Peterman, who would go on to start and own the "Peterbilt" company provider of heavy long-haul trucks.



The 1932 Model AA Ford pumper was Lacey's first fire apparatus and served from May of 1948 November of 1949.

Al Homann, a local construction contractor, responsible for many downtown Olympia buildings, had his home and warehouse in Lacey. Being a philanthropist and huge supporter of Lacey, he opened up his warehouse to house the truck and built a small bunk area for firefighters to stay on their duty nights.

On May 28th 1948 the Elephants held a community meeting at the Thurston County Recreation Hall on Long Lake to explain their work in constructing a fire department and to recruit necessary volunteers. 37 men signed on that night. The Elephants appointed their own “Fire Commissioners,” appointed Andy Sprout as Chief, and began the “Lacey Firemen’s Association,” the social arm of the fire department.

Lacey was unique, in that, the volunteer firefighters began providing 24-hour coverage from day one until they began hiring paid staff in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s.

Two firefighters would be on duty in the evening, and the staff at Turner’s Market (Henry Turner and his three son’s Doug, Ron and Don, plus Dick Webb), and Al Homann’s main office (Ray Christensen, Pete and Tommy Finnegan, plus Al on occasion) would handle daytime calls. Most volunteer departments of the era, depended solely on from-home responses of their volunteers.

Shortly after the 37 men signed on as volunteers, they held elections and replaced Andy Sprout as Chief. Leroy Parsons, a long-time barber in Lacey and former UDT member (“UDT” or “Underwater Demolition Team,” was a precursor to the Navy Seals) was held in high esteem by the volunteers. He was elected to the Chief’s job and held the position for 3 years, plus part of a 4th term later on. He served longer than any other Chief in the 10 years elections were held to fill the position.

An election was held on April 2, 1949 and voters authorized creation of the fire district. By County decree, the election was certified and Resolution #1666 created Thurston County Fire District #3, and thus ended the administration of the fire department by the Elephants.

In just shy of 11 months, these good people put on benefit dances, dinners, carnivals, and baseball games to garner funding, arranged housing for a truck and firemen, researched and purchased the truck, a resuscitator and associated equipment, set a schedule for providing 24 hour coverage, set up communications for the responders, set the boundary for a fire district, established administrative, operational and social leadership, researched and executed the process to form the district, then took it to a vote and prevailed.

When the Greatest Generation set their sights on a goal, it got done!

We will celebrate with the Lacey Fire District #3, the 75th anniversary of their beginning on April 2nd 1949, and also remember the audacity of a proud service club in kick-starting the effort on May 25th 1948!

By: Paul Webb, NTHS Class of 1967

For more history on the Lacey Fire Department, the book “History of the Lacey Fire Department – the First Decade” is available on Amazon and at Barnes and Noble.

UNION MILLS MADE LACEY'S LAKE FAMOUS FOR LOGS

By: MIKE CONTRIS, Olympia Staff Writer
(Reprinted from the August 22, 1984 Daily Olympian newspaper)

Gone forever are the tall trees in Lacey's Lake country and the surrounding region. Gone are the logs that made possible the rise of Union Mills as a rising producer of lumber in the second and third decades of this century.

But the family names of that era are still very much with us.

Union Mills had the area's first all-electric sawmill, which made that community just southeast of Lacey an integral part of our early days of lumber production.

The community on the shore of Long Lake was connected with its source of logs and the market for its lumber and shingles by what was then the Northern Pacific Railroad, now the Burlington Northern. Railroad spurs into the timber brought logs to the mill directly; one was into the 640 acres of St. Martin's property where logs were cut to fund the building of Old Main between 1913 and 1918. Or a skid road slid the logs into the lake where the 30-foot steam tug, Skiddoo, towed them to the mill.

A young boy, Fred Daly, much to the frustration of his mother, rode on that tug with his dad, George Daly, or fished off the bobbing logs in the mill pond.

Daly's dad came to the Skiddoo in 1915 from a sawmill on Black Lake. The tug rafted the logs from the southern end of the lake to the mill. Daly said he remembers there was a man-made canal connecting Long and Pattison Lakes. He doesn't remember whether or not the tug used that canal, but logs were floated in it.

Union Mills produced all kinds of lumber, particularly what then called Jap squares, prime timber some 40 inches square that were shipped to Japan.

A large turbine provided electricity for the sawmill and for the big hotel across the tracks. Daly delivered newspapers to that hotel where sawmill hands and loggers bought bed and board. The latter, Daly remembers was plentiful and top rate. He delivered five newspapers: Seattle PI, Tacoma Tribune, Seattle Star, Tacoma Times and, on Sundays, the Tacoma Ledger. He was 15 at the time and got to know many of the men.

His list of customers for his papers is a ledger of the families there then whose children are still here.

When he was 10 years old and Reggie Travis was the tug skipper, he rode the 30-foot tug with his father. The Scotch marine boiler burned wood. His mother didn't like to see him on that tug, but his dad thought it made a man of the young boy, so he rode on it. The mother, however, often called in her boy when he fished off the logs near what is now Pioneer Resort.

That hotel was a marvel. It contained a pool hall and barber shop. The cook house and dining hall were on the first floor. Rooms for single men were on the second and third floors. The fourth floor had larger suites for the company officials, Daly remembers.

The mill complex included the sawmill, a planer mill, a lathe mill, a shingle mill, a silo mill and a dry kiln shed. Originally built in 1910, it burned down and was rebuilt in 1912. It shut down for good on April 3, 1925, Daly recalls.

Daly remembers that Union Mills took logs from the SMC property around 1916 and 1917. He recalls that the late Father Gregory Wall, OSB, often rode the spur railroad with St. Martin's students. Father Gregory, he said, often went to the woods on such trips to steal a smoke.

Daly also remembers taking home brew to the train crews. He remembers too, that Judd Graham was general manager for the sawmill. Hough Hamilton was superintendent. Herman Brandt was head millwright. Sam Beletski, Daly recalls was the barber in the hotel and ran the pool hall. Percy Bisson was the locomotive engineer. Dutch Foote was a pitcher and ran the mill's Twilight League baseball team.

The families and names that Daly recalls from his newspaper delivery days include: Andy and Harry Anderson, George Castle, Bud, Charlie and Chester Clymer, Sam Daugherty, Frank Davis, Nig Floyd, Emil Johnson, Bill Gustafson, Si Gallagher, Jewell Grimes, Stanley Groom, Alfred Gillis, Judd Greenman, John Haggie, Sox Hanks, Celeste Hicks (he was a surveyor), Dave and Ernest Humes, Albin Holmes, Ernie Hubett, Orville King. Pete Lafferty, A.D., B. and Harry Laws, Grandpa and Grandma Laws, Charlie Hyman, Tom Marcott, Sam Marshal, George Martell, Ed, Harry and Steve Mayes, George Messaggee, John Mesplay, Art Ness, Randolph Paige, Babe Parkins, Sam Petty, Adam, Joe and Sam Ross, Russell and Tiny Skinner, Archie Terrell, George Thelander, Clarence Lawrence and Pearl Ulery, Bert and Bob Watkins, Bill Weatherbie, Bill Wiesneski, Bob White, Bill Yates and Martin York.

These are the last names on Daly's list: Van Slyke, Ward, Warren, Metcalf, Mead, Bixler, Ayers, Blankenship, Bloomer.

Are the names familiar? Are there families with these names still in residing parts?

Union Mills is a place of honor in this area's historical hall of fame.

THE FOLLOWING ARE COMMENTS BY MARGIE WORDEN WYLLIE (NTHS Class of 1969):

YES, SO many familiar names to me, as my Grandfather Alfred Gillis, was one of the millworkers named and my grandmother, Lora Gillis, cooked and cleaned at the hotel/boarding house. (My grandfather passed before I was born and since my grandmother wasn't real "Grandmotherly," I "adopted" Sam Petty, also named, and his wife, Ethel, as grandparents), plus they lived close by on Union Mills Road. Fred Daly was frequently mentioned and he lived two houses away. As a child I brought Fred Daly his mail

and paper each day as he was bedridden. And recently, I had coffee with Reggie Travis' granddaughter-in-law, Sharon Travis. I remember other names growing up on the same road my Mother did -- like Ness and Mesplay. I bet my Mom knew all the names. Plus, Stanley Groom and Blankenship were names I remember my Mom saying we were relatives, although I don't remember how we were related.

Also of note, the article mentioned Pioneer Park, but what the author was referring to was the Pioneer Park on Mayes Road off the Union Mills Road, some 50 years ago. Unfortunately, it is now new apartments and housing. It is NOT the Pioneer Park which is now located on Henderson Boulevard in Tumwater.



Dr. EHLERS: LACEY'S FIRST PARAMEMDIC?

Well, the term "Para" means "alongside of" and the word "Medic" is taken to mean Doctor. Therefore, a Paramedic is an extension of the doctor in the field. So, to call Dr. Ehlers a paramedic is a misnomer. Clearly, he was a fully certified physician more qualified than a paramedic.

And while Dr. Ehlers was much more than a paramedic, he, like a paramedic, responded to emergencies many times in order to use his skills to alleviate suffering.

Shortly after opening his office in December of 1953, many people in Lacey immediately became his patients. Of course, this included many members of the Lacey Volunteer Fire Department. As "Doc," as he was known by many, got to know them, he became aware of some of their capabilities. Many of them were WW2 vets and were trained as Army medics.

Both Doc and the firefighters realized quickly they could support each other in providing Emergency Medical Response to the burgeoning community.

The first piece of portable equipment purchased by the fire department, at their inception in 1948, was an "Emerson Resuscitator." This was essentially a "breathing machine" used to deliver 100% oxygen to a patient.

Dr. Ehlers made house calls, even emergency house calls. Consequently, if Doc was called to a patient having heart issues, or some other ailment requiring oxygen, Doc would call his fire buddies to bring the resuscitator. Conversely, when the firefighters knew they could use a higher level of medical knowledge at a scene, they would call Doc.

My dad was a volunteer with Lacey Fire for 25 years, and shared with me a story of one such response by Doc to a call at Pattison (Then "Patterson") Lake. I did not know which call it was, but after some research, I concluded it was a drowning reported by the Olympian on July 26th 1959. A 13-year-old boy simply sank beneath the surface and did not come up. A Puyallup youth swimming in the area with a mask and fins searched for the youth and brought him, unconscious, to the surface.

In my dad's account, he explained the rescue team responded and immediately called Doc to come as well. As they arrived, they went to work with the resuscitator, with Doc supervising their work. However, as happened occasionally with the Emerson, the preset pressure used to deliver the oxygen was inadequate to get air into the patient. As the boy was placed into the ambulance, Doc began mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Now, mouth-to-mouth was not taught to emergency responders yet. My dad had been a medic in WW2 and was not familiar with it even as a responder in 1959. It was only determined to be effective in resuscitation in 1956, and it took some time before it was adopted in first responder training. That did not occur until 1966.

Doc was well liked by all. But on this day, he was elevated to “Hero” to the volunteers who watched him work. My dad responded with Doc to St. Pete’s in the ambulance. In the 15-to-20-minute response, Doc performed mouth-to-mouth during the whole trip. The call was grueling, as most drownings are. My dad explained that it became obvious during the trip, that the young man had ingested numerous blackberries before entering the lake. Doc ignored it all and continued to work the patient.

Unfortunately, the young man died that day, even though a maximum effort was put forth. Doc proved to everyone, that this “five foot-and-a-spit” man could stand tall when necessary.

The relationship between the volunteer firefighters and Doc remained until the fire department took on higher level training as it improved. But Doc established himself as selfless. And he went on to prove it until his retirement in 1998. Remember Doctor Ehlers.

By: Paul Webb, NTHS Class of 1967

REMEMBERING DR. EHLERS

Please let us know your favorite memory of Lacey’s first doctor. Send us an e-mail at:

Lacey.Hist.Society@gmail.com .

Lacey Historical Society
PO Box 3324
Lacey, WA 98509-3324

Use this form to become a member of the Lacey Historical Society for 2024

E-mail: Lacey.Hist.Society@gmail.com

The Lacey Historical Society is a Section 501(c)(3) organization. Dues & donations are both tax deductible.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ e-mail: _____

To join, or renew your membership, please **attach your check for 2024 DUES: \$ 10.00**
(plus an optional Donation of \$ _____)
Total \$ _____

Check here [] if you would prefer to receive your newsletter by e-mail.