



# Prairie Gazette



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LAKEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2012

## Celebration of Cityhood Big Success

By Becky Huber

The Lakewood Historical Society hosted two events in February that celebrated the history of the City of Lakewood.

On February 21st, over 40 people heard the history of the City's incorporation from three people who played an integral part in that process. **Claudia Thomas**, **Bill Harrison** and **Andie Gernon** shared their reflections on the efforts taken that ended in the successful passage in 1995. Other people in the audience, including former Lakewood Councilwoman **Colleen Henry**, former Lakewood Councilman **Walter Neary**, Pierce County Councilman **Dick Muri** and cityhood participants **Bob Arndt** and **Jim Taylor**, offered their insights and perspectives. It was universally agreed that it was the right thing to do and all of the efforts were worth it.



**Bill Harrison Cuts Ribbon**

On February 25th, the History Museum's debuted its new exhibit, *City of Lakewood: The Long Road to Incorporation*. Former Mayor Bill Harrison did the ribbon cutting honors with comments from **Becky Huber**, President of the Society; Former Mayor and Coun-

cilwoman **Claudia Thomas** and **Andie Gernon**. **Meg Justus**, the consultant who researched, designed and installed the exhibit and **Helga Miller**, major contributor to funding the exhibit, were recognized. It was well attended by over sixty guests.

## Commemorative Coin Available in June

Soon you will be able to purchase a very special coin to commemorate the Centennial of the Tacoma Speedway. The Society has enlisted Coinforce.com, a Lakewood business that is owned and operated by retired military veterans that has been manufacturing military coins for Joint Base Lewis-McChord since 2003.

The coins will be offered to Society members at a special introductory price of \$10 each. Pre-orders will be taken at the April 17<sup>th</sup> program.

## Revisit the 1962 Seattle World's Fair

Remember the Space Needle? The Monorail! The International Fountain? How about Belgian Waffles? Maybe you visited Gracie Hansen's "A Night in Paradise" International ladies! (Just as long as you could prove that you were over 21!) Plus, all the other attractions at the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, known as "C-21"...

The Lakewood Historical Society will present a very special program on **Tues, April 17<sup>th</sup>** about the Seattle World's Fair. **"The Future Remembered: The 1962 Seattle World's Fair and Its Legacy."** Presenters include **Paula Becker** and **Alan Stein**, who are both historians for the popular website,

HistoryLink.org. The book by the same name was published in October 2011 to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fair and will be available for sale at the program. Special refreshments will be served harkening back to the Fair.



## Society's Big Fundraiser Set for July 22<sup>nd</sup>

This year's signature fund raising event will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Tacoma Speedway. It started as a five-mile road race in 1912 and ended in 1922 on a 2-mile board track on what is now the campus of Clover Park Technical College.

Sunday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> from 4-8 pm at Marymount Event Center, part of the original LeMay Car Museum, in Spanaway, WA, guests will stroll amongst the vintage cars sipping a drink, enjoying delicious hors d'oeuvres and listening to 1920's music. Historic photos will be on display. Program presented on the Speedway history. Get ticket information at the April 17<sup>th</sup> program.

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### Special Pull-out Section:

Seattle World's Fair

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!



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**PRAIRIE GAZETTE**

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The staff of Prairie Gazette actively encourages input from the Society's members as well as the general public regarding story ideas or any other aspects of this newsletter, and the Lakewood Historical Society.

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**MEETINGS**

The Lakewood Historical Society formed in 1998 to preserve and share Lakewood's rich history through programs, displays and publications. The Society offers frequent programs on topics of historical interest. Most programs are free and open to the public. Visit our website for information on events and activities:

[www.LakewoodHistorical.org](http://www.LakewoodHistorical.org)

Newsletter Editor: **Stephen Neufeld**

# *President's Message*

Welcome to the very special edition of the Prairie Gazette. It primarily celebrates the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. It has been really fun putting it together. We are also debuting the "new look" to the newsletter.

Why should the **Lakewood** Historical Society care about celebrating the **Seattle** World's Fair that happened 50 years ago? In our research, we discovered that the Fair not only drew people from all over the World to Seattle but they also visited many other tourist destinations in the Pacific Northwest. Lakewood was only 50 miles from the center of a six month "party" that 10 million people attended. Many local residents went to the Fair at every opportunity and some even found employment.

The idea to cover the Fair took off when I had lunch with **Nancy Covert**. She had recently moved to Lakewood from Steilacoom and I was anxious to have her play a larger part in the Society. She had already helped promote our programs and was a regular contributor to the online "local" newspaper, the Suburban Times. She was an accomplished journalist and author and I thought she would enjoy a new challenge.

Realizing that the Spring issue coincided with the start of the Fair, I gave her this assignment. I shared the articles I had already found and told her to "go for it". It soon became apparent that Nancy had caught "the bug" and was spending countless hours researching and tracking down every lead. She had found some unique stories that tied to

Lakewood that had to be told. They are shared elsewhere in the newsletter.

After realizing she had all of this great material, we quickly realized that we had to expand the newsletter to 12 pages. This was going to require close coordination with our editor, Stephen Neufeld. Our collaboration resulted in this special World's Fair Edition you now hold in your hand. I just know it will be a collector's item someday. Maybe 50 years from now our grandchildren will discover this treasure that might end up in a museum. At the very least we know many people would be interested in reading it so we printed extra copies for our members to share with friends and relatives.

Be sure to attend another new activity we have planned for April 10<sup>th</sup>. A "Take Over" at **Carrs Restaurant** will be a great way to support the Society, 15% of the sales goes to the Society. After all, everyone has to eat dinner. So come join us between 4 and 9 pm. Bring your friends and neighbors.

We are also kicking off our next big fund raising event in July. I know we can't duplicate Villa Madera but we may come close. Details are elsewhere in the newsletter.

So you see, we are not letting any grass grow under our feet.

Yours Happily,

*Becky Huber*

# Ivan, the Gorilla Turns 50

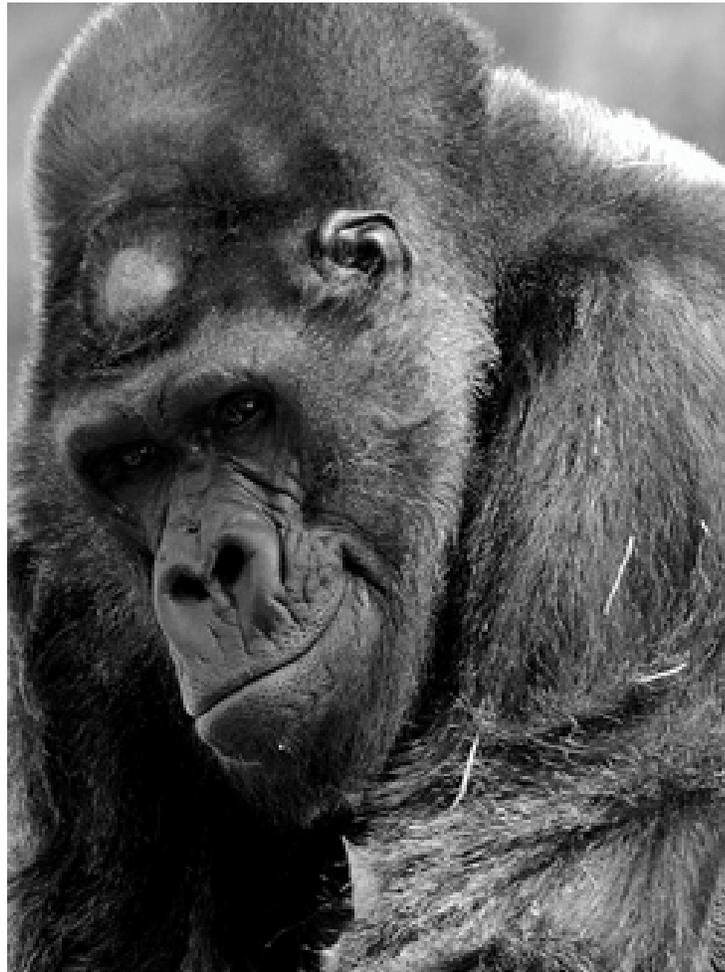
by Becky Huber

In 1964, the owners of the B&I Shopping Center located in Tacoma, Washington bought a pair of young gorillas (the female died soon after arrival) from an animal trader in the Belgian Congo to add to the menagerie at their popular store.

Leo Bradshaw and Earl Irwin started the business as an 18 x 78 ft hardware/army surplus store at the location in 1946. It became known as the "World Famous B&I Circus Store" when began displaying exotic animals in 1948 that included a myriad of tropical birds; April, Kathy and Murphy, the performing chimpanzees; the leopards Bonnie and Iris were on display and Sammy the elephant was obtained from India. The games, rides and animal attractions made it a destination for families all over the region.

But nothing had as lasting an impact as when Ivan the gorilla was added. By 1967 his size and strength made him too dangerous to manage so Earl built him a \$60,000 state-of-the-art enclosure, including indoor and outdoor areas, a heated floor and a small pool in the shopping center.

The activist animal rights group, Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) had begun pushing for Ivan to be moved since 1987. They wanted him to live in a more natural setting with gorilla companions instead of humans. The campaign got a real boost after a National Geographic documentary titled "The Urban Gorilla" was aired in 1991. It contrasted shots of a sad, lonely and listless Ivan with shots of Willie B., another lowland gorilla, taking his first steps in Zoo Atlanta's natural habitat after his own 27 year captivity. Ron Irwin, the owner of the B&I, had a number of offers to relocate Ivan to several zoos and



Zoo Atlanta who has not produced offspring.

Ivan is one of the zoo's "star" attractions, delighting guests with his antics. He seems to have overcome the emotional and physical effects by his years of confinement. According to a recent report from Zoo Atlanta's Public Relations Director, "Ivan is doing very well here. He will turn 50 this year, an impressive milestone for a male gorilla."

even had a serious offer from pop star, Michael Jackson. Jackson was willing to build him a "gorilla palace" on his 2,700 acre fantasyland zoo in southern California.

Finally, in 1995, all efforts were successful. Thanks to scientists from the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle and the Gorilla Species Survival Program, Ivan was gifted to the zoo, who then agreed to permanently loan him to Zoo Atlanta.

On March 16, 1995, Ivan set foot on real grass for the first time in 30 years. Because of his enforced isolation, he had limited social skills in dealing with his own kind. The zoo staff proceeded slowly in incorporating him with other gorillas. They were especially concerned about how he would be react to a female. Over the years he has been introduced to six different females without the results the caretakers hoped for. He is the only mature male gorilla at

She further describes his behavior, "He enjoys watching other gorilla groups and visitors alike. He can usually be seen in his habitat on nice sunny days sitting at the top of the hill. He still enjoys painting and his artwork has many admirers."

He even has his own Facebook page and his story inspired Katherine Applegate to write a fictional children's book. "The One and Only Ivan" that was published in January 2012.

Even though Ivan no longer resides in the South Sound, memories of him remain. Even though he is gone, he is not forgotten. Happy Birthday, Ivan!

*Save July 22<sup>nd</sup> for LHS  
Major Fundraiser!  
Don't miss it!*



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## ~ Programs and Events ~ Spring 2012

**Tues, April 10<sup>th</sup>**, 4-9 pm, "***Take Over***" at ***Carrs Restaurant***, 11006 Bridgeport Way SW, Lakewood. Everyone needs to eat, so come by and support the Lakewood Historical Society for this fundraiser.

**Tues, April 17<sup>th</sup>**, 7-9 pm, ***The Future Remembered: The 1962 Seattle World's Fair and its Legacy***, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, next to Lakewood Library. Celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Seattle World's Fair.

**Tues, May 15<sup>th</sup>**, 7-9 pm, ***Update on Newly Renovated Lewis Army Museum***: St Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, next to Lakewood Library. To celebrate National Historic Preservation Month, Myles Grant, Executive Director of Museum, will discuss the \$9.6 million renovation project.

**Tues, June 19<sup>th</sup>**, 7-9 pm; ***Topic TBA***, St Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, next to Lakewood Library.

**Sat, June 30<sup>th</sup>**, 11 am-7 pm: ***City of Lakewood's SummerFEST*** at Ft Steilacoom Park; come by and visit the Society's booth, take tour of historic sites in Park. Buy tickets for July event.

**SAVE THIS DATE! Sun, July 22nd, 2012**: Major fundraiser to celebrate the Centennial of the Tacoma Speedway. Event at LeMay Car Museum, Marymount Event Center in Spanaway. Details coming...

**Remember, monthly meetings are held at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in the parish hall,  
10630 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, next to the Lakewood Library.**

\*\*\*\*\*Check out our website for more information and current events\*\*\*\*\*  
[www.LakewoodHistorical.org](http://www.LakewoodHistorical.org)