



# Summer 2020 Prairie Gazette

Official Publication, Lakewood Historical Society



*Twenty-six years after leaving Lakewood, eight years after his death,*

## Ivan the gorilla goes Hollywood!

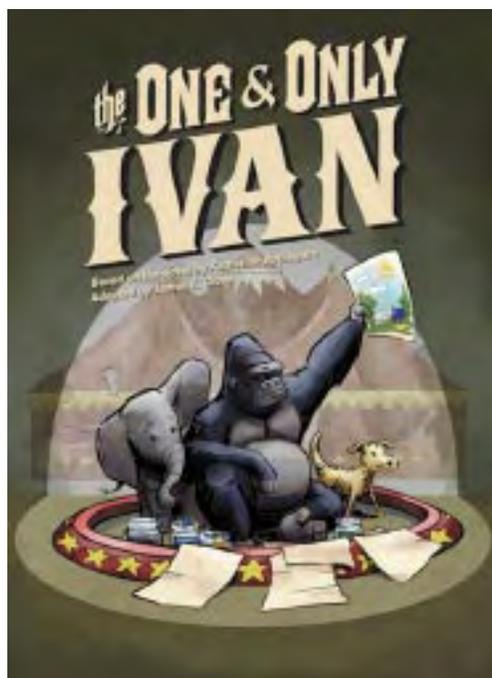
*Re-acquaint yourself with Lakewood's most celebrated non-human primate as the world awaits the major motion picture inspired by his story!*

Pandemic permitting, **The One & Only Ivan** will debut in theaters everywhere on August 14, 2020. Based on a 2013 best-selling childrens' book by Katherine Applegate, the film combines CGI and live action. The A-list cast includes **Bryan Cranston**, **Angela Jolie**, **Helen Mirren** and, as the voice of Ivan, **Sam Rockwell**.

To anyone who grew up in the 60's in Pierce County, Ivan surely needs no introduction. For those who arrived later, here's a little background:

Lakewood's favorite (well, *only*) great ape, **Ivan**, was a silverback gorilla born in the Republic of the Congo in 1962. He and another young gorilla—a female who would be named **Burma**—were captured by poachers in 1964.

**Earl Irwin** (1909-1973), owner of the **B&I Circus Store**—a



*Movie poster features star and entourage.*



*Ivan (r) and his ill-fated co-captive Burma shortly after their arrival in Tacoma, 1964*

sprawling establishment on South Tacoma Way in Lakewood featuring a merry-go-round and other carnys-style attractions—purchased the two. Burma arrived first, the two having been transported separately. Sadly, she soon died of internal complications.

Two-year-old Ivan, having been lost in transit for *eight weeks*, finally arrived in Tacoma in August 1964. He was weak and malnourished, weighing only 9 pounds. His chances for survival were slim, but once in the care of **Ruben Johnston** (1923-1998), the manager of the

B & I's pet shop, Ivan thrived. For 37 months the Johnstons raised him as if he were a human child. Home movies captured his life with the family. Ivan slept in a bed, went to baseball games, held babies, raided the refrigerator, and rode on motorcycles. **Lois Johnston** would often startle local residents when she took Ivan—still in diapers—with her while shopping for groceries or waiting at the doctor's office.

By the age of 5, Ivan had become too large, strong, and boisterous to

*See IVAN page 4*

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**Special Feature Throughout**—Life During the Pandemic: Vignettes of Living History in the Making.



## Lakewood Historical Society

contact@lakewoodhistorical.org

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Vacant

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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 of 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 us on Facebook or our website for information on events and activities:

www.LakewoodHistorical.org

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Sue Scott

## President's Message

I certainly hope everyone is staying safe—this has been a very different year! The museum is still closed to the public, but work goes on with our museum consultant to get us put back together again. We are waiting for the day we can throw open the doors again and welcome everyone back.

If you haven't done so yet, please take a minute to send in your membership renewal. Your memberships are important to us! And many thanks to those members who added a little extra—your donations are really appreciated.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Prairie Gazette*.

Stay safe and mask up!

## Living History I: *A Lockdown Birthday*



Long time Historical Society member Linda VanDyk recently celebrated her 93rd birthday with a "garden party".

Her children and friends decorated the outside of her window at the Tacoma Lutheran Home and gathered round in lawn chairs.

Linda was born in Lansing, Michigan on June 22, 1927

where her father was a local dentist. She attended nursing school in Grand Rapids, Michigan and met her future husband **Van** in Chicago when a classmate introduced them. Van was in dental school (even though Linda was *never* going to get married and *never* to a dentist!). Van joined the Army Dental Corps. and after their marriage in 1948, they set out for their first assignment in Fort Lawton, Washington.

Twenty-six years and 6 kids later, stationed from Germany to Okinawa, Linda & Van retired here in Lakewood. Van passed away in 2000. Linda moved to the Tacoma Lutheran Home last year (no cooking or washing dishes for her!).

The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed Linda down. The dining room is closed and all residents must eat in their rooms. She can hardly wait to get out! Her family visits outside her apartment window—fortunately she occupies a first-floor unit.

# Remembering our grandfather who died in 1918 of Spanish influenza

*As the coronavirus continues to grip the world, a look back at the loss suffered by one local family during an earlier pandemic.*

## My sister and I knew only one grandparent.

Born in 1879, our paternal grandmother died at age 94 in 1973 when I was 25 years old and my sister was 28.

Our maternal grandparents, U.S. immigrants from Sweden, died in the late 1930s (he) and early 1940s (she), before my sister and I were born (1944 and 1948, respectively).

Our paternal grandfather, **John Joseph Marsh**, an immigrant from Ireland and husband of the grandmother we knew, died in 1918 of the Spanish influenza at age 49 in Bellingham, which is also where our father was born in 1907.

On June 3, 1918, the *Bellingham Herald* reported on our grandfather's death saying, "John J. Marsh (was) one of Bellingham's most genial citizens and for nearly twenty-five years employed in the fire department of this city, half of that time as its chief..." That was when fire engines were horse drawn.

Although we did not know our Irish Catholic grandfather John, he's never far from our minds.

My sister's first name is **Mayo**, for County Mayo in Ireland where our grandfather was born and where he and other family members lived before coming to America. My middle name, **John**, honors him.

According to HistoryLink.com, on October 3, 1918, the worldwide Spanish influenza epidemic arrived in Seattle. It was part of the influenza pandemic which engulfed the world. Grandfather John died June 1, 1918, of that influenza.

A story in a March 2020 edition of the *Wall Street Journal* said, "...more American soldiers died from influenza during World War I than from battle wounds, in a pandemic that killed upward of 50 million people world-wide."

That brings us to today. My sister and I are among those reading about coronavirus and its impact on the world. We never thought there would be anything to seemingly rival what killed our grandfather and so many others.

This is a worrisome time. We pray for the coronavirus calamity to end.

*Our thanks to Author **Tim Marsh** and the **Suburban Times**, on whose website this article first appeared, March 26, 2020*



*Flu victim John J. Marsh, 1869-1918*

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## *Living History II: COVID 19 and My New Friends*

***One of the last activities I took part in before Covid-19 restrictions took hold was mingling among the crowds at the Seattle Home and Garden Show on Feb. 28.***

Little did I know the ensuing pandemic would create a new way of living that has yet to release its grip on our everyday lives.

On a sunny day in May, I was feeling especially "cooped up" in my condominium because of the stay in place orders I had been following. I poured myself a cup of coffee and went out on my second-floor balcony.

From a safe distance, I chit-chatted with several neighbors taking their dogs for their morning walks.

My spirits lifted.

A few minutes later, another next-door neighbor texted, "Since we finally have nice weather would you like to go for a walk this afternoon—we can keep six feet apart."

The next day, still another neighbor told me—over the balcony—to feel free to clip some roses off a prolific bush she had planted in honor of her late husband. They enhanced my dining room table for days.

I think there is an irony in recognizing I have developed a greater sense of community at my condominium in spite of the isolation mandated by the Corona pandemic—not just when



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IVAN from page one

continue living with his human family. By that point, he had completely destroyed the Johnstons' home, causing an estimated \$17,000 in damages (\$130,500 in 2020 dollars). The Irwins and Johnstons, following the advice of experts at the time, made the decision to cage Ivan in the B&I.

Ivan's move made the *Tacoma News Tribune*, which reported:

"Never before had such protections been provided for an animal's home. The custom-built, state-of-the-art mobile concrete trailer, appraised at more than \$60,000, was now his home."

To reduce Ivan's isolation, 16-year-old **Larry Johnston** planned to spend the first week with Ivan in his new home. The cage was constructed with the expectation that Ivan would grow to be six or seven feet high and weigh six or seven hundred pounds.

According to the *Tribune*,

"Ivan's cage included an operating table that would allow doctors and scientists to study, operate on, and provide medical attention to Ivan or any animal occupant, along with such conveniences as hot and cold running water, baseboard heating, a built-in television set, and more."

At noon on Saturday, March 4, 1967, the new custom-built trailer that would serve as Ivan's cage arrived at the B&I. The Columbia Body and Equipment Company, of Portland, Oregon designed and built the structure, then carefully placed the cage in a newly built section of the store. Viewing Ivan was free on the weekend of his caging, and the B&I offered free balloons as an added attraction, handed out to all children who came to see Ivan in



*A playful Ivan approaches the camera in September of 1973.*



*In 2016, a bronze statue of Ivan was unveiled at the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma.*

his new home.

The B&I's plan thereafter was to charge 10¢ per person to see Ivan, explaining that "the money will help us to find a mate for this very, very valuable animal." Unfortunately for the increasingly withdrawn and seemingly depressed Ivan, nothing ever came of this proposed hunt for a mate.

From the 1970s through the 1990s animal rights groups seeking to move Ivan to an environment more suited to his species campaigned to encourage the community and nearby cities to place pressure on the B&I store to move the gorilla.

In 1992 the B&I filed for bankruptcy. In 1994, the Irwin family donated Ivan to Seattle's **Woodland Park Zoo**. The Seattle zoo lacked space to house Ivan, so that October he was sent to **Zoo Atlanta** on permanent loan.

After 27 years in a concrete enclosure, Ivan was finally in a more natural setting and in the company of other gorillas, although he showed little interest in socializing with them.

Ivan lived his final 18 years at Zoo Atlanta. On August 20, 2012, he died at the age of 50.



*Ivan in his later years at Zoo Atlanta.*

# LHS Member Shirley Burrows Celebrates Unique 90th Birthday...

by Phil Raschke

Lakewood Historical Society Member **Shirley Burrows** was recently treated to a unique 90th Birthday Celebration. Shirley has been a member of Lakewood's Little Church on the Prairie for over 54 years and the church was planning a party to honor her 90th birthday. But COVID 19 suddenly appeared and put new rules on social distancing and crowd gatherings. Church staff members **Mary Mannering** and **Nichole Zuger-Cheney** put their heads together and developed the idea of a "Drive By" celebration. Using the Church's semi-circular drive way, they placed Shirley at the covered main entrance. Then all her friends drove by, one at a time, with each stopping briefly at the entrance to wave, drop off cards and wish Shirley a sincere Happy Birthday. According to Shirley, "It was the best party she could have wished for" and she will cherish the memory forever.

For those who haven't had the pleasure of meeting Shirley, she was born in Grandview, WA, a small town east of Yakima on June 5th, 1930. She moved to Tacoma with her family in 1942 and remembers her family coping with food and gasoline rationing during World War II. In 1948 she graduated from Lincoln High and attended Knapp Business School, eventually obtaining a position with the National Bank of Washington (later Wells Fargo).

Shirley's first husband was an Alaska Airlines pilot and they spent time living in Anchorage, AK. In 1964 she re-mar-



LHS Board Member Phil Raschke and wife Bev convey best wishes to Shirley on her big day.

...at Little Church on the Prairie.



ried, adopted a daughter named **Jennifer** and moved back to the Tacoma area so her adopted daughter could get to know her grandparents.

Shortly after returning, Shirley joined the Little Church on the Prairie and has been a proud member ever since.

A happy and honored Shirley asked the *Prairie Gazette* to thank all involved in the planning and to all who took time to drive to the church and participate in her special birthday "Drive By".

**Below: Shirley tells us a bit about what life's been like for her during the pandemic.**

## Living History III: "The Lockdown"

*As a senior citizen, I live in a Lakewood apartment complex that enjoyed a lot of daily interaction among the residents. With the virus that all changed.*

The complex closed the activity room, stopped the exercise group and established social distancing and wearing of masks.

Thank God I had my devoted dog **Paco**, plus a Kindle. I also had a computer, but the news was too depressing, so I kept to reading books, emailing friends and watching Hallmark movies.

Moreover, I deeply missed my church family and our church activities. So glad things are starting to open back up.

—**Shirley Burrows**, Lakewood

# A Corona-conscious Lakewood Farmers



And she **JUST DID IT** right— thanks to all who masked up!



Enjoy the food trucks folks, but...next time, can we tighten up the social distancing a bit?

# Market moves to Fort Steilacoom Park

A cautious Opening Day in a new era—June 19, 2020



Plenty of fresh air and room for social distancing—two good reasons the City moved the market from its long-time home on the sidewalks around city hall to the spacious setting of our biggest park.

Market is open every Friday, 3-7pm until September 18.

Setting up produce and floral booths around the parking lot perimeter had an additional advantage. Shoppers, if they chose, could further minimize contact by ordering from their cars.



Social distancing may not be required in *all* situations. *Prairie Gazette • Summer 2020 7*

## Historical Markers of Lakewood: 6th in a Series

# *The Oakes Pavilion & Lakewood Ice Arena*

Located a few yards inside the Steilacoom Boulevard entrance to the Waters Edge Condos near bridge crossing Chambers Creek (note: marker is on private property; please seek permission before viewing).

Jointly funded by the Lakewood Historical Society and the City of Lakewood, the marker was dedicated by **Mayor Don Anderson** at a 2014 ceremony attended by a small crowd of LHS members and friends.

The plaque features a photo of the Pavilion with text that reads as follows:

*This property was first claimed by **Andrew F. Byrd** in 1853. The claim was surveyed in September of 1868 by **Ezra Meeker** and totaled 159 acres. In June of 1923, the **Oakes Pavilion** opened for boating, bathing, picnics on the grounds and dancing on Sunday afternoon and evenings and on Wednesday evenings. In 1924, the Olympic trials were held at the Oakes which included **Johnny Weissmuller**.*

***Duke Ellington** and **Tommy Dorsey** were some of the notable bands and celebrities that played in the Oakes Pavilion. In 1936, the Oakes was sold to Lakewood Development Company. (**Norton Clapp**). By September 22, 1936, the Oakes was converted into an ice arena for Mrs. Clapp. In 1938 the **Lakewood Ice Rink** opened to the public. From then on state championships in ice skating, hockey leagues and figure skating were the main activities.*



*July 2014: Dedication ceremony with then-President Becky Huber (left of rock), current President Sue Scott (right of rock). Among the guests: Mayor Don Anderson (behind Becky)*

*FRIENDS from page three*

looking out over my balcony, but also when walking around the complex and the neighborhood. Strangers I've passed by are becoming acquaintances I acknowledge whenever I see them. Neighbors are becoming true friends.

***As the media tells us frequently, "We're all in this together." I'm discovering we can benefit from taking this truism to heart.***



*The Oakes Pavilion and water stadium in its heyday, around the time of the Olympic trials in 1924.*



*1956: Young skaters and their instructor watch an experienced figure skater.*

*On April 18, 1940 the water stadium was demolished. On October 10, 1948 the Lakewood Figure Skating Club bought the arena. In June of 1955, eight performances of the Ice Capers had 175 participants. The roof collapsed in October of 1982, and the building was soon demolished to build lake front condominiums.*

*"By reaching out to those around us, we can develop a sense of togetherness and well-being that will benefit all of us living in our community, well beyond the days of a crisis like COVID-19."*

*—Judy Davis*

# Recent Donors

*We're always grateful to Members for their support, especially those who step up during this time of need – thank you!!*

Shirley Kapala  
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Edith Wallace  
Elaine Lyle  
Tal Edman  
Ray Richardson  
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## Donations in Memory of James Curley

Suzanne Merriam  
Sue Scott  
Kris Kauffman

## AND WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Shawn Luvaas  
Lonnie Lai  
Yorleny Clapper  
Thomas Williams  
William G. Moore

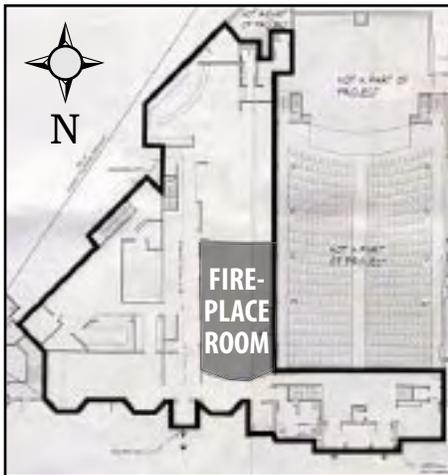


## Your museum then & now: Part II

Most friends of the Lakewood Historical Society know by now that the museum moved last year into the space formerly occupied by Lakewood's most elegant restaurant—**The Terrace**. We're going through our new home one room at a time, comparing photos of each room's past (above) and present (below), a recurring feature dedicated to those Lakewoodians who remember where you *had* to go to have a truly special local dining experience thirty, forty, and more years ago.

Top right, a spacious room apparently known by two names to the Terrace staff: either "the Main Dining Room" or, in recognition of its most prominent feature, the "Fireplace Room".

Today, it has just one name: the main display hall, home to both permanent and, when called for, special temporary exhibits.



Black border outlines the Museum's space inside Colonial Center—the former Terrace Restaurant plus the lobby of the Lakewood Theatre.



Top photo, from the Tacoma Library's Richards Collection, shows the main dining room of the Terrace Restaurant after a series of extensive renovations in the early 50's. Bottom photo is of the same room, now the main display hall of the Lakewood History Museum, as it appeared on opening day, September 14, 2019.

## Living History IV: *The Virus Amongst Us*

**In late February a new virus, born in China, was reported circulating throughout King County and hitting a Kirkland nursing home especially hard.**

We, Don and Linda were preparing for our annual trip to Phoenix to watch the Mariner's Spring Training games (and more) but we did not expect it to affect our travel plans that much. As we prepared for the trip we found store shelves strangely thin on certain supplies, like sanitizing hand wipes. But, no matter, we could restock our personal supplies in Arizona. We were wrong. Basic cleaning and

sanitizing supplies and even bottled water and toilet paper were not to be found. Public anxiety over the virus was increasing with daily news reports of infections and deaths.

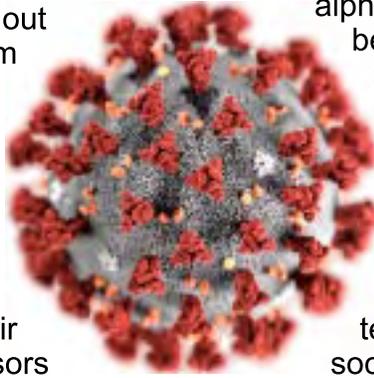
The last baseball games were cancelled as players returned home, and with the urging of Linda's family, we decided to do the same. As we boarded a packed Alaska airline, we noted passengers madly scrubbing their personal space with Clorox wipes, as did we. We were seated shoulder to shoulder with other nervous passengers, as well as a full shuttle on the ride home from the airport.

*Continued next page*

Continued from previous page

At home we prepared to shelter in place as per the governor's order, venturing out only to collect needed supplies from the supermarket or drug store. It was surreal to walk through the local market and find isle after isle of empty shelves. All non-essential businesses were closed and that included barbershops, hair and nail salons. Fortunately for Don, Linda had some expertise with a small pair of animal clippers and sewing scissors so she kept his hair nice and neat. Linda's hair continued to grow and an aging manicure was gradually chipped away.

Don did what he does best, thinking, reading and writing but mostly thinking. Linda decided spring



house cleaning was in order, so pantry shelves were emptied and rearranged by product and alphabetically when feasible. She also began sewing masks for a local charity and tidied up the garden when weather permitted. We watched our backyard birds around the feeders, especially a pair of Juncos who raised three families in the hanging flower baskets.

Also, in late June, a few of Don's friends masked up, took individual temperatures and maintained 6 foot social distancing to help Don celebrate his 90th Birthday.

**Yep, this is what our life was like during the great COVID quarantine of 2020.**

—Don Wilbur & Linda Wakeley

*Living History V:*

## **COVID, COVID, COVID—Oh, How You Have Changed Us**

**Within about six months time you have altered all aspects of life from how we greet one another, hold business meetings, go to school, shop, and how we spend time with family and friends.**

I am a counselor at a 24 hour facility who, since Covid-19, has been labeled an "essential worker." My everyday roles consist of wife, working mother, and partial caretaker for two elderly family members. Since the stay-at-home order started I have had to put on a couple different hats and I think teacher has been the most difficult. My daughter is an 8 year old 2nd grader. I never would have thought it would be such a huge adjustment to work and home school an 8 year old. I have always appreciated the work a teacher does and the student teacher bond is truly priceless. Teachers are clearly irreplaceable and I don't know how many times I heard "that's not how Mrs. so and so does it." I am very grateful to have a supportive husband who took over about half way through on the book-work side of things.

My husband works graveyard and originally he would come home as the PE teacher, but after weeks of managing kids my daughters age at work and having to come home to teach, that just wasn't working out. I then changed roles and became the P.E. Teacher and after working dayshift

would come home and do some sort of exercise with her like bike riding, jump rope, or a nature walk. This benefited us both to help burn off the quarantine stress.

It definitely took some adjusting, but eventually we created a system that worked for us. The teaching part was just the tip of the iceberg.

After the first couple weeks of quarantine the emotional stress began to set in. We all missed our social interactions. Every night before bed my daughter would cry and talk about how much she missed her friends and teacher. She is an only child and she was craving that social interaction. Explaining to an 8 year old why we can't visit friends and family members was very difficult. Introducing words like "quarantine", "pandemic" and "social distancing" was a learning experience for us all.

One thing for sure that the Covid quarantine has done for me and my family is give us a chance to grow and learn *together* how to survive difficult times.

It brought us back to the table to have family dinners, slowed us down enough to have face to face conversations, reminded us to put our phones down and live in the moment, and not take the little things for granted. For this I will be forever grateful.

—Shannon Suafoa

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