

Prairie Gazette



Winter 2019 The Official Publication of the Lakewood Historical Society

Museum: 6211 Mt. Tacoma Drive SW, Lakewood WA 98499 OPEN Wed-Sat, 12 Noon-4 pm (253) 682-3480

April 18, 1942: Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo



But the clock started ticking at McChord Field months earlier.

On June 24, 1940, the first elements of the **17th Bombardment Group** began to arrive at the Army Air Force's newest bomber base—a municipal airstrip previously known as Tacoma Field, renamed **McChord Field** in honor of Colonel William C. McChord, a pilot who had died in an accident near Richmond, Virginia on August 18, 1937. The units of the 17th BG and the 89th Reconnaissance Squadron flew a mix of B-18, B-18A and B-23 bombers.



MGM's big hit of 1944 told the story of...

After more than a year of preparation, Mc-

Chord Field was formally dedicated on July 3, 1940. Thousands of people entered McChord to inspect the new buildings, hangars, grounds, and the B-18, B-18A and B-23 bombers on the world's largest warming apron—that part of an airfield where planes are parked, fueled and boarded.



ing participated in the 1942 Doolittle

...Jimmy Doolittle and his band of "Raiders".

raid, which was launched from the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Hornet.

If you were among those attending our program after the LHS Annual Meeting

In early 1941, two new units—the 12th and 47th Bombardment Groups—activated at McChord Field flying B-18, B-18A and B-23 bombers. With the new units in place, the 17th BG was selected to become the first to receive the North American **B-25 Mitchell**, eventually trading all its B-18's and B-23's for the new medium bomber.

Countdown to "Thirty Seconds" begins:

After the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, **Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle** came to McChord Field looking for experienced B-25 crews to volunteer for his secret bombing mission to Tokyo. At least 10 aircrew members with McChord train-



North American Aviation's B-25 Mitchell medium bomber on November 27, you were lucky enough to hear "**Historical Phil**" Raschke present the amazing story of Doolittle's Raiders, with details not generally known even to World War II buffs. If you weren't there, see page 3 for a recounting of the mission.

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Much of this article based on info from www.mcchordairmuseum.org

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PRAIRIE GAZETTE

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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



Sue Scott

President's Message

Hello Everyone—

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and looking forward to a Happy New Year in 2019. I want to sincerely thank everyone who has donated to our **Annual Fund Campaign**—your continued support is greatly appreciated. These contributions will help pay for the Museum operating and lease expenses along with new and expanded exhibits in the new Museum space.

We had a great time at the **Lakewood Historical Society 20th Anniversary Gala** at the Rotunda at Clover Park Technical College. Now with your help we can look forward to a 25th Anniversary!

Yes, we are getting closer to moving the museum to the space previously occupied by the **Terrace Restaurant** and the lobby of the **Lakewood Theater**. Just waiting for some final paperwork from the City before we get the keys! We will keep you all informed. Again, if you have a few hours a week to docent, please contact me at **253.588.6354**.



The Final Toast

Last salute to a valiant band of brothers.



The First Toast. Doolittle (circled) and his pilots raise their cups in hopes of success.

They bombed Tokyo 76 years ago.

There were 80 of the “Raiders” in April 1942 when, under Lt. Colonel (later General) **James Doolittle**, they carried out one of the most daring and courageous military operations in this nation’s history. Now only one survives.

After Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, with the United States reeling and wounded, something dramatic was needed to turn the war effort around. Even though there were no friendly airfields close enough to Japan for the United States to launch a retaliation, a daring plan was devised. Sixteen B-25s were modified to take off from the deck of an aircraft carrier. This had never before been tried—launching such big, heavy bombers from a carrier.

The 16 five-man crews, under the command of Doolittle, who himself flew the lead plane off the USS Hornet, knew that they would not be able to return to the carrier. They would have to hit Japan and then hope to make it to China for a safe landing. But on the day of the raid, the Japanese military caught wind of the plan.

The Raiders were told that they would have to take off from much farther out in the Pacific Ocean than they had counted on. They were told

that because of this they would not have enough fuel to make it to safety. And those men went anyway. They bombed Tokyo and several other cities and then flew as far as they could. Four planes crash-landed; 11 more crews bailed out, and three of the Raiders died. Eight more were captured; three were executed. Another died of starvation in a Japanese prison camp. One crew made it to Russia .

Of the 80 Raiders, 62 survived the war. They were celebrated as national heroes, models of bravery.

A motion picture based on the raid, “Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo ,” starring Spencer Tracy and Van Johnson, was a patriotic and emotional box-office hit, and the phrase became part of the national lexicon.

Beginning in 1946, the surviving Raiders held a reunion each April to commemorate the mission, choosing a different city each year.

In 1959, the city of Tucson, Arizona, presented the Doolittle Raiders with a set of 80 silver goblets. Each goblet was engraved with the name of a Raider. Every year, a wooden display case



bearing all 80 goblets was transported to the reunion city. Each time a Raider passed away, his goblet



Above: Phil Raschke relates the Raiders’ incredible story.

Left: The late Edward Saylor of Sumner, WA, one of the last four Raiders.

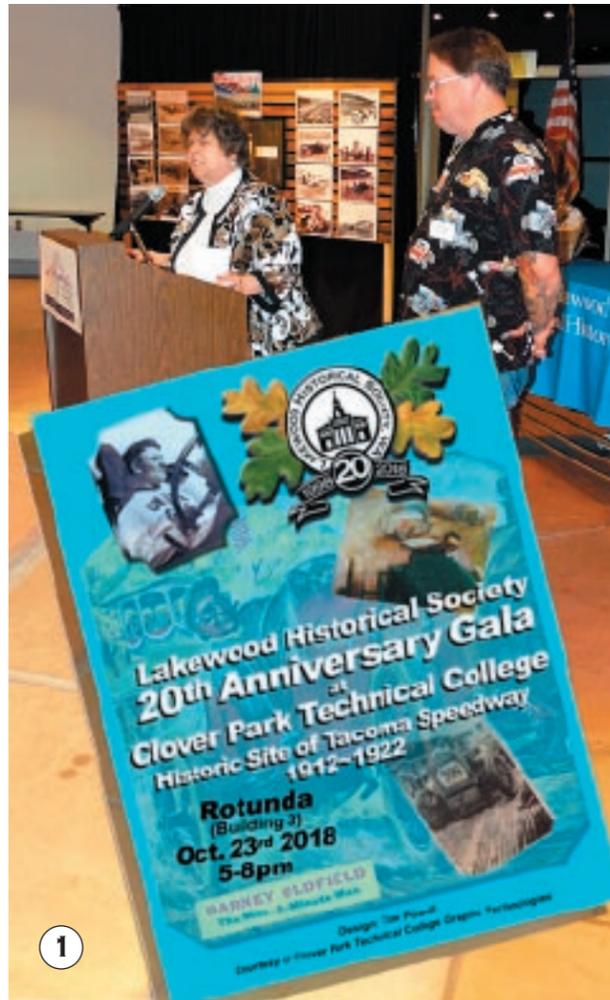
was turned upside down in the case at the next reunion, as his old friends bore solemn witness.

Also in the wooden case was a bottle of 1896 Hennessy Very Special Cognac—made the year Jimmy Doolittle was born.

There had always been a plan: When there

LHS 20th Anniversary Gala—Clover Park Technical College, Oct. 20, 2018

1. LHS Past President **Becky Huber** recognizes CPTC Graphic Technologies student **Tim Powell** for his fine work in creating promotional materials for the gala. His poster, seen here, depicts CPTC's historic significance as the site of the Tacoma Speedway. 2. **Doug Richardson**, Pierce County Council Chair, graciously served as the evening's master of ceremonies. 3. Keynote speaker **Denny Heck**, congressman from Washington's tenth district, emphasized the importance of involving the young in the preservation of our historical heritage.



Journalist/historian **Steve Dunkelberger** shared memories of founding the Society after a long backyard conversation with fellow history buffs Cy Happy and Richard Densley.



Dr. Jerry Ramsey, author of "Stealing Puget Sound" and other books on local history, receives the Cyrus Happy III Historian of the Year award from Becky Huber as Cy's daughters **Emily Happy** (left) and **Marty Happy Behnke** look on.





LAKEWOOD everywhere!

Our fair city's name may be descriptive, but even the most ardent booster will have to admit it's hardly unique—in fact, it may be one of the most common city names in America!

While granting none of them equal footing with ours in terms of beautiful lakes and abundant woods, we thought it might be fun and informative to see what some of the other Lakewoods have to offer, starting with the biggest...

Lakewood, Colorado, pop. 142,980. This suburb just west of Denver boasts the headquarters of both Einstein Bros. Bagels and The Integer Group. Fans of the *South Park* animated series know it as the home of Casa Bonita, a Mexican restaurant that provided the setting for a famous episode.

Lakewood, California, pop. 80,048. Known as the "Instant City," going from lima bean fields in 1950 to a well-developed city by 1960. This classic post-WW II American suburb's motto is "Good Ideas Last for Generations"

Lakewood, Ohio, pop. 52,131, has a library that not only regularly ranks as one of the top 5 in the US, it's also been awarded "Best Place to Hang Out if You're Broke" by *Scene* magazine! Town motto: "A Great Place to Call Home"

Lakewood, Illinois, pop. 3,811. This well-to-do (median income, \$111,172) village of mostly country-clubbers was founded on the shores of Crystal Lake on July 10, 1933.

Lakewood, New Jersey. Unincorporated, but much bigger than the previous entry, with a pop. of 53,805. Unfortunately, it may be the poorest entry on this list, with 29.1% of its population living below the poverty line.



*Lakewood (CA) Drive-In, 1981.
Photo by John Margolies.*

Lakewood, New York, pop. 3,002. Proud (according to its Wikipedia page) to have given the world Dayton Moore, General Manager of the Kansas City Royals, Lakewood dodged a bullet in 2010 when a proposal to dissolve the village was defeated at the ballot box, 848 to 357.

Lakewood, Tennessee, on the other hand, was not so fortunate, disincorporating itself in 2011 to become a mere neighborhood of Nashville. Still, 2,302 Volunteer Staters call it home—and it fared much better than poor...

Lakewood, Iowa, pop. zero. Had a post office from 1900 to 1918; apparently became a ghost town shortly thereafter.

Lakewood(s), Michigan, South Carolina and Wisconsin. Lumped together because all three seem somewhat nebulous. None are incorporated—Wikipedia deems Michigan's "a part of Alpena Township", while the other two are something called "census designated places." But at least they're real, as opposed to...

Lakewood, a fictional town where a string of murders take place in the MTV television series *Scream*. Leave it to Hollywood to besmirch a noble name...!



Now that Lakewood (TN) is just a neighborhood, does it still have this sweet sign?



Main drag, Lakewood (WI)

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 In memory of Donnie Weeks
Silver Sneakers at 24 Hour Fitness:
 In memory of Ella Washburn

New Members Since Sept '18

William & Wanda Elder
Bob Lenigan
Carol Nicholson
Danielle Sharp

TOAST from page 3

were only two surviving Raiders, they would open the bottle, at last drink from it, and toast their comrades who preceded them in death.

However, in 2013 there was a change in plan—the men decided that year's public reunion would be the last. The years were flowing by too swiftly and it would be a shame to wait until only two of them were left to share a fine bottle of cognac.

So, in 2014, the last four survivors cracked open the bottle and gave a Final Toast to the 76 brothers who had gone before them.

Those four were:

Lt. Col. Edward Saylor, the then-enlisted engineer/gunner of aircraft No. 15 during the raid. Phil Raschke was lucky enough to meet and talk with Ed, thereby gaining some unique insights into the mission. Phil says Ed was particularly adamant

that the world know that once the mission was over every officer received a promotion, but not a single enlisted man did! (If we were inclined to be cynical, we might say some things about the army never change...)

Ed died of natural causes, age 94, on January 28, 2015 at his home in Sumner, Washington.

Lt. Col. Robert L. Hite, co-pilot of aircraft No. 16, died at a nursing home in Nashville, Tennessee, at the age of 95 on March 29, 2015. Hite was the last surviving prisoner of those captured after the Doolittle Raid.

S/Sgt. David J. Thatcher, gunner of aircraft No. 7, died on June 22, 2016 in Missoula, Montana,

Lt Col. Richard E. Cole, copilot of aircraft No. 1 (age 103) is the last surviving Raider and the only one to live longer than Doolittle himself, who died in 1993 at age 96. Cole was Doolittle's co-pilot on the raid.



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www.lakewoodhistorical.org**