

Lakewood Historical Society Newsletter

Because Our History Matters.

January/February 2007

Tues, January 16th 2007 Program

History of the Mountain View Funeral Home

The January program will be held at the Mountain View Funeral Home and Memorial Park located at 4100 Steilacoom Blvd SW in Lakewood. Now operated by the fourth generation of the Thompson family, the company has been in Lakewood since 1915. It is now the largest combination of funeral home/cemetery in the Pacific Northwest.

Cindy Thompson attained her MBA from PLU and became President in 1996 when her father, Brewer Thompson retired. She will relate the history of the family company and its influence on the Lakewood community.

The program begins at 7:00 PM in the "Celebration of Life Chapel". Parking attendants will direct members and guests as they arrive.



Tues, February 20th 2007 Program

Sports History in Pierce County

On February 20, Doug McArthur will be discussing sports history of Tacoma and Pierce County with a focus on Lakewood teams and athletes. Doug is a former Sports Director of KTAC radio and he broadcast local sports for almost 30 years. He has also been the Supervisor of Athletics for Metro Parks, as well the Athletic Director at the University of Puget Sound. He was the Tournament Director of the Safeco Classic LPGA Golf Tournament for 13 years and co-authored "Playgrounds to the Pros." Whether you're a sports fan, a local history fan or both, this one's for you!

February's program kicks off at 7:00 PM at the Lakewood Library.



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The end of the year is the time for everyone to reflect on what they have accomplished in the past year, I'm happy to report that the LHS has had a very successful year.

Our biggest dream to have a museum has been realized, we now have a place to call home. Just like a young couple starting out with a rented apartment and using hand-me-down furniture, we found a rental space in the Lakewood Colonial Center furnished with used items. But this is a good place to start, to get our feet wet, to get docents trained, exhibits developed and artifacts collected.

Now we need to concentrate our efforts in fund raising programs that meet our new financial obligations. One of the first decisions was to raise the dues. We have also started a monthly business sponsorship that will bring in regular income. Early next year we will debut an Annual Fund Campaign, soliciting our membership and our community for participation. Other fund raising endeavors include selling raffle tickets, a photo contest and having a signature event such as Steilacoom's Apple Squeeze and Tacoma's Historic Home Tours.

We have exciting times ahead of us and we want you to be a part of it by renewing your membership and participating in these programs.

Thank you for your continued support.

Becky Huber



Hawaiian Holiday Raffle

Are you ready for nine glorious nights in Hawaii? Then purchase a LHS Hawaii raffle ticket to win a week at a Hawaiian condo that includes airfare for two. Pick up your raffle ticket at the January meeting, or stop by our Lakewood History Museum Fridays and Saturdays 12 to 4 pm. Or call T.D. Imholt at 584-3411.



This glorious two bedroom, two bath unit in Kihei, Maui is located on the first floor with an ocean front view. Children are not permitted. Dates are September 10 through 19 for a total of nine nights. This generous donation of a two-bedroom condo is from Gerrie Zeratsky. Don't pass up this raffle. Get your tickets today! All proceeds benefit your Lakewood Historical Society. For more information call LHS at 682-3480.

An Afternoon with Elizabeth Poinsett

By Hayden Mackley

It's a rainy November afternoon when Elizabeth Poinsett invites me in for a chat over a cup of tea. It's the most rain she can remember for a long time. Although there was one time when she was on vacation in Hawaii and her son was left behind to look after the house – he called to tell her it was raining so hard he was getting out the canoe.

I had heard a lot about Elizabeth Poinsett before I met her. This is the 95-year old woman that recently took up a line-dancing class, hanging onto her cane while her feet do the dancing. The line-dancing is on hold for a while since Elizabeth had a large can of soup dropped on her foot, but it's just one example of her remarkable adaptability and resilience.

As we sit down to tea, Elizabeth takes me back to when her family first moved to the prairie land around Lake Steilacoom, now called Lakewood. The year was 1918 and she was 7 years old. Sheep outnumbered trees on the prairie then, and Elizabeth and her sister Katherine would put their dolls in a tiny makeshift covered wagon made of shoeboxes and set off across the prairie like pioneers. Other entertainment would be devising plays and circuses with their neighbors (complete with rope-swing trapezes), or hurling balls to each other over the roof of the house in games of 'Annie-i-over'.

When Elizabeth was growing up, her father was teaching at Lincoln High School in Tacoma, and he later turned his hand to inventing. His most successful invention was the 'Slam-Bang', a high-frequency blue light process that shortened the time for drying glue on timber from one week to one minute. The invention took him all over the country, including to California to help put together eccentric movie director Howard Hughes' (of *The Aviator* fame) giant wooden plane, the 'Spruce Goose'.

Also amongst the 35 patents Elizabeth's father invented was a 'diotherm' – a medical machine using a vacuum tube and pads to help activate the bloodstream, helping to cure colds and all sorts of ailments. When Elizabeth came down with scarlet fever in her early twenties, the doctors had given up on her and she was ready to die, the diotherm machine saved her and she "opened up like a flower." The machine never sold so well with the doctors, however. When Elizabeth's father went to pick up an unwanted machine from the doctor's, a nurse whispered in his ear that the real reason it wasn't being bought was that with the diotherm around, "the doctors couldn't peddle their pills."

When Elizabeth reached high school age she had to go to the nearest school in Tacoma. She often got a ride with her father, and sometimes took the streetcar from a stop just north of where the Colonial Center now stands. However, her mother wasn't happy about young girls having to wait at the station in Tacoma with its unsavory cast of characters. After Elizabeth left home, her mother began a quiet crusade to form a new school district, which is a story good enough to be told in its own right – look out for the article on Iva Alice Mann in the next LHS newsletter.

Elizabeth went off to study at the University of Puget Sound and graduated with a BS in 1933. She became a teacher of home economics, and her first job was in the small town of Peshastin over near Leavenworth. As was the common practice then for a young new teacher in a new town, Elizabeth lived with a local family, boarding in the attic of their farmhouse. In the wintertime heavy snows fell and like everyone else, she used cross-country skis to get to school. That first year she really thought she would quit teaching – an experience for new teachers that seems to cross the ages. The small school wanted to do all the things that big city schools did, and loaded her

up with the school newspaper, being a senior advisor, teaching science, home economics and civics, co-director of plays and on top of all that, having to put on school banquets.

Experience of farm life stood Elizabeth in good stead for her next job in Rochester, where she was teaching a class of boys to cook. One morning the boys thought they'd show up the young Miss Mann and brought a whole chicken along, feathers and all. By the end of the morning, the chicken was plucked, cooked and eaten, the boys bewildered at their new young teacher's expertise.

After teaching at other schools in Bothell and Everett, Elizabeth returned home to Lakewood during the war and worked at the Mount Rainier Artists' Depot to get some business experience. She helped to organize a dinner dance there, where she caught the eye of a young soldier recently returned from a lonely two-year posting in the Aleutian Islands. Ray Poinsett turned to his friend and whispered as he nodded towards Elizabeth, "That's the woman I'm going to marry." Ray didn't waste any time, and every night after that he hitchhiked or took the bus up to Lakewood to propose to her. Every night she told him "I think we'd better wait a little while" before finally being won over in November 1944. They were married a month later in her parents home, shortly before Ray was posted to the Philippines. Her grandmother said it would never last, and her parents were also skeptical. On the foggy night of the wedding, she came down the stairs in her wedding dress, to where her father waited on that last step, and he whispered in her ear, "Are you sure you want to go through with this?" Elizabeth stepped off that last step into 57 years of marriage, and as she puts it, being "showered with love every year."

Elizabeth Poinsett has seen more changes in Lakewood than most people. The prairie has gradually been taken over, and the view of Mt Rainier is now obscured in many places by trees and housing developments. She has seen the Colonial Centre open and close, and in its

heyday she remembers going to the movie theatre there, stopping in at the fountain for a milkshake or soda afterwards.

Elizabeth, like her mother was particularly fond of the Ponce de Leon Springs, a creek flowing through a clover-filled park. Her mother decided that same park should lend its name to the new school district she welded together in the late 1930's. She describes a beautiful creek running through the trees that was later paved over by the Lakewood Mall. The stream got its own back though, flooding the basement of one new store as it was pushed underground beneath the new development. "I think mother could've shot the man who put in that mall," Elizabeth tells me as we're talking about Iva Alice Mann's love of the area.

There are a few downsides to reaching the age of 95. Elizabeth has seen all of her high school friends pass away, and all of her college friends but one are now gone. Did she ever expect that she'd outlive all of her friends? "No... I didn't" she tells me. "But I just keep going, doing new things."

Those new things include line dancing class, joining a book club at UPS, serving on the Board of Directors of the Lakewood Historical Society and volunteering as a docent at the Historical Society's Museum. She also keeps up with her well-practiced hobbies such as playing the dulcimer and oil painting – the walls of her home are lined with a remarkable variety of paintings she has worked on over the years. When Ray passed away after 57 years of marriage, Elizabeth joined the Little Church on the Prairie, and has continued to meet new people there. She is in another book club that was once started by her mother and her friends, and is now continued by their daughters, although their numbers are dwindling. While once there were 15 of them, 8 now remain in what has become more of a social club, the pretext of discussing books not so important any more.

Elizabeth Poinsett is still going strong, having survived numerous surgeries and has fought back from a stroke some years ago. She is a living treasure trove of stories – a great too many to write here. So, if you have the pleasure of meeting her, you'll have to ask her about ice-skating down the hill in Seattle to catch a ferry on her honeymoon; about losing her luggage on the Danube; her happy memories of UW; her many near-death experiences; boating on the Sound; intrepid trips on Mt Rainier; or any of the other great stories she has to tell.

And Elizabeth's own take on her first 95 years? "I've had a full life with love all the way through it. I've been blessed."

Written by Hayden Mackley,

With thanks to Bill & Donna Cable for the use of their Oral History Project interview.

Poinsetts and Poinsettias

If you're wondering if Elizabeth Poinsett's surname has anything to do with the Poinsettia plant, then you're onto something.

Joel Robert Poinsett (1779 - 1851), the son of a French physician, was appointed as the first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico by President Madison in 1825. An avid botanist, Poinsett was visiting the Taxco area and came across an intriguing plant with fiery red leaves. He sent a sample back home to South Carolina, and it was soon being propagated and sold as a 'poinsettia'. Poinsett went on to found what we now know as the Smithsonian Institution. However, he was too busy with all of this to have any children, and Elizabeth says there's no direct family link there. But it's a nice story.

Among the Best in Lakewood

The following LHS members and supporters made cash donations to the LHS since our last newsletter. Thank you!

- Sharon and Clark Montgomery
- W. H. (Howie) Meadowcroft
- Gregg and Stephanie Walsh
- Michael (Mike) J. Carrell
- Maria and Robert Kelly
- Norman C. Todd
- Cheri Pieterman
- Dwight Orr Jr.
- Rhona Diehl
- Thea Vestal

Thank-you to Gerrie Zeratsky for the donation of the condo in Hawaii!

Thanks also to the people that donated money during the Museum Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony on November 9th.

Lakewood Museum Sponsorship Available

On November 9, 2006, the Lakewood Museum had its ribbon-cutting ceremony with our Lakewood Mayor, Claudia Thomas. On that delightful evening, three Lakewood Museum Sponsors stepped forward to provide generous donations to support our Museum: **Jane Whitney**, LHS Vice President, **Comcast Cable** and **Kris Kauffman**, LHS Board Member. Past President, Glen Spieth, thanked these sponsors in his announcements at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Thank you to these sponsors for their immediate donation to this great new Museum.

The Lakewood Museum is accepting donations in excess of \$500 to support the new Museum. The funds go directly to the operating expenses of the Museum to support new exhibits, rent and more. Help our Museum grow! Be a part of this growing list of sponsors!

LHS and Robi's Camera Center sponsor Historical Photograph Contest



Our LHS is sponsoring its first Historical Photograph contest with Robi's Camera Center. Do you have a box of old photographs in a closet? Did your parents take a photograph of a fun event many years ago? Enter that old photograph in the Lakewood Historical Society contest and compete for a great prize!

Robi's at 10015 Gravelly Lake Drive SW will be accepting historical photograph entries in the "Lakewood Historical Society History Photo Contest" from January 15, 2007 to March 15, 2007. The theme for entries is photographs taken in Lakewood, Pierce County, Washington that relate to people, places or events related to Lakewood's history.

Take that old photograph to Robi's to be scanned and mounted for display. Contest entry forms are available at Robi's and Robi's will collect the entry fee. After Robi's has completed the scanning, the original is returned to you. The digital image is mounted and submitted into the contest.

If your entry is already framed or well-mounted and ready for judging, the cost to enter the contest is only \$8. If you are entering an old photograph that is in an album or loose in an old shoebox, it will need to be scanned and the digital image mounted. Robi's is offering scanning 50% off for images being prepared for this contest. Restoration that may be needed will also be discounted 30%. 100% of the entry fees proceeds go to Lakewood Historical Society.

Prizes will be awarded and finalists will be displayed at the Lakewood History Museum. Space permitting, all entries will be displayed at the new Lakewood History Museum. Judges will be area artistic professionals and historians.

- *I have a shoebox full of old Lakewood photographs. Could one of those be entered?*

Yes. The Lakewood Historical Society and Robi's Cameras is sponsoring this contest to encourage you to go through those old photographs and select one or more that can be displayed at the Museum. We encourage you to enter this contest.

- *I have a photograph from the opening of the Lakewood Villa, but it's slightly torn. Is it worth entering?*

With the digital technology today, a scanned image of the photograph can be repaired and the original—tear and all—stored properly. Robi's Cameras has skilled technicians to repair a tear, correct faded images, add colors back and more techniques to enhance that digital copy. You will be able to create many copies that can be shared with your entire family.

- *I have a photograph to enter, but it's only about two inches by two inches. What do I do?*

Robi's Cameras is able to take a scan of that tiny photograph and increase the size for a museum presentation. LHS has asked Robi's to serve as technical consultants to advise how to preserve those beautiful old photographs and create digital images for future generations.

- *I have a large original photograph, rolled up, almost poster size. What do I do?*

With an original that large, we encourage you to take it to Robi's for advice. It may require them to take a photograph of your historical poster to enter the contest. We want to ensure that your original is preserved. What a delight to be able to share a digital copy and possibly win a prize!

- *Can I enter the contest if I'm not a member of the Lakewood Historical Society?*

Yes. But we certainly hope you become a member of the Lakewood Historical Society! Membership applications are available to the Lakewood Museum and can be downloaded at www.lakewoodhistorical.org.

- *I have a framed image of Lakewood that is on my bedroom wall. Can I enter that?*

Yes. Take it down to Robi's, complete the Historical Photograph Contest Entry Form, and pay the \$8 entry fee. You're in the running for a great prize!

2007 Board of Directors

- **Becky Huber, President**
- **Jane Whitney, Vice President**
- **T. D. Imholt, Secretary**
- **Gary Fowler, Treasurer**
- **Glen Spieth, Past President**

Be a part of our LHS team and call
(253) 682-6480 with your ideas,
suggestions and donations.

Directors:

- **Jack Avril**
- **Cyrus Happy**
- **Kris Kauffman**
- **Shannon Krueger**
- **Brad MacGowan**
- **Walter Neary**
- **Elizabeth Poinsett**
- **Stephanie Walsh**
- **Barbara Wyatt**

Consultant:

- **Janda Volkmer**

LHS Financial Summary

NOVEMBER 2006 YTD

Bank balance 12/21/2005 : **\$34,938.56**

2006 Income: **\$43,643.25**

(from Grants, Memberships, Donations and Fund Raising events)

2006 expenses - **\$67,633.87**

(includes Museum feasibility study, lease, and startup, Consultant services, Web site design, Administrative; ie, phone, printing and mailing, insurance, etc, and Fund Raising / Program expenses.)

Bank balance 11/30/2006: **\$10,947.94**

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Mark Your Calendars

Tuesday, January 16th

History of the Mountain View Funeral Home

4100 Steilacoom Blvd SW

7:00 PM in the "Celebration of Life" Chapel

Tuesday, February 20th

Sports History in Pierce County

**Lakewood Library
6300 Wildaire Road SW**

7:00 PM

Become a LHS Member Today

Join the Lakewood Historical Society today for only \$20 for an individual membership or \$35 for a family.

Lakewood Historical Society

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