

Totem dedication brings back the past

It brought back memories, that afternoon at Rocky Point when a contingent of Marines and Navy rededicated the tall Totem Pole that had been a fixture for 50-some years in front of the red barn on 50th NW where today's Montessori School is located.

When the Totem first went up, the barn was Oak Harbor's USO under director Tom Moore, and each evening the old structure rocked to the music and good times of Navy boys and the community. There was food and music and dancing and programs, and outside the Totem Pole watched in stately tribal blessing over a community in change.

Navy boys carved the symbols on the Totem, topping it off with a pair of giant wings of an eagle below an Indian Maiden and her child. These two are the only symbols left of the original Totem that grace its height today. The other symbols have been carved anew to replace the old wood torn by the elements and time.

The old red barn antedates the Totem by many years, and is itself an historic relic of the Oak Harbor village settled in the 1880s. Jerome Ely, a Civil War veteran who came West after a long stay in a hospital, to put down roots and become the first Mayor of a growing town, built his house (still standing next to Help House on 200 Ave. West)



Newly restored Totem at the Navy's Rocky Point picnic area.

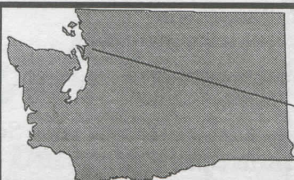
and the barn on the old Sumner Donation Claim, land that is now the central part of Old Town, above the harbor waters.

As the town grew the old barn was moved farther north, where it has stood for over 70 years. How it was moved, no one seems to know, but it served as a barn until after the Navy moved to Whidbey Island, and it became the USO.

Our little family, in the late 1930s, lived in the little house (next door to today's American Legion) that was the only house north, sitting on acres of farmland and patches of forest on the Ely Farm, and the Red Barn housed a dozen or more of cows and a couple of horses.

The Ronhaar family kept their family cows in the barn, and milking time was a highlight for our two little ones who accompanied their Dad to the milking chores in the evening. Jim Ronhaar tells the story of 4-year-old Mary Lee explaining to him the presence of a neighborhood bull in a stanchion.

He doesn't give any milk," she said, he doesn't have faucets!"



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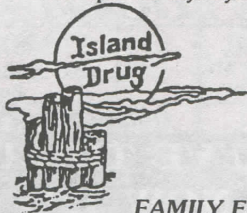
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When Tom Moore took over the barn for the USO it became the center of life for Navy boys far from their own small towns, and for community volunteers.

Moore was a tireless leader who took an active part in the community and who, on Sunday mornings, undertook to cut the back lawn of the USO with an electric mower. The uneven ground did not adapt well to being a lawn, and rocks were numerous, hitting the mower blades and many times bouncing off Tom's shins, which produced a volume of expletives which he thought were drowned by the roar of the mower. They weren't. They rose high above the roar, clearly audible to everyone on The Hill!

Our personal memory of Tom Moore and the USO pictures him on Sunday mornings, knee-length red bathrobe and black socks directing a rock-flipping mower over the terrain!

That was the time when the Totem Pole went up under young

sailors who left Oak Harbor a legacy. And now it stands, tall and immaculate in its new incarnation, gazing out over the Straits of Juan de Fuca, watching over picnickers and visitors.

It calls to mind the days when Indian villages populated Whidbey Island, and when the Sea Captains came to bring another

civilization.

The Navy has been a very positive part of our community since it arrived in 1941 and the Totem Pole preservation is a part of our history preservation. Depicting four historic generations, the Indians, the White Man's coming, World war II and the 21st Century! S



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Legend of the Indian Potlatch

The Indian Potlatch was an elaborate ceremonial of gift-giving, and an important feature of Indian life from Oregon to Alaska. All Potlatches were marked by the host giving away quantities of goods, beads, blankets and food.

The more lavish his Potlatch gifts, the more he was respected by his fellow tribesmen and guests from distant tribes. Several days of feasting, dancing, singing and athletic contests during daylight, and gambling and story-telling at night, marked the Potlatch.

How it began is the subject of a creation myth of the Quillayute Indian tribe. The Nisqually tribe also has a similar myth.

The first Potlatch

A very strange bird with feathers of many colors once appeared in the ocean in front of the Quillayute village. All the young men went out and tried to shoot the bird, but none could hit it. Every day Blue Jay, a slave of Golden Eagle, watched the hunters in their efforts to shoot the bird.

One day Golden Eagle said to Blue Jay, "My children can catch the strange bird," to which Blue Jay reminded him that "they are girls."

Golden Eagle's daughters overheard the two men talking and the next day they went into the woods and stayed all day.



Many days they spent in the woods making arrows, but told no one, as girls were considered to have other pursuits besides making arrows. Arrow making was the domain of men.

One morning before daylight they went out to the forest and collected their arrows, returning to the village after the hunters had gone out to try their prowess in killing the Bird of Many Colors. The sisters disguised themselves and tied their hair over their faces so they could not be recognized. When the hunters returned, the girls paddled their canoe in a zigzag line until they were near the bird. The elder of the two sisters killed it with her third arrow.

They reported back to their father that they had killed the bird and hidden it in the woods, and that they wanted to use its beautiful feathers as gifts. They asked their father to ask Blue

Jay to invite all the birds to their lodge on the morrow.

When Blue Jay went out with the invitations, all kinds of birds began to gather in the lodge of Golden Eagle. He explained: "My daughters caught the strange colored bird and want to give each of you a present."

So it was that the Quillayute Indian girls gave certain colors to different birds, the yellow and brown feathers to Meadowlark; red and brown to Robin; brown only to Wren; and yellow and black to the little Finch. They gave to each bird the colors that would identify it forever, and kept on giving until there were no feathers left.

Ever since, certain birds have had certain colors, and since then, there have been Potlatches. The giving of colors to the birds was the first Potlatch, the giving of gifts from the people who invite to the people who are invited.

On Penn's Cove north side, well into the 20th century, there was an Indian Potlatch house where periodically Indians who had accumulated a lot of worldly goods held a Potlatch, inviting fellow tribesmen and friends from neighboring tribes to attend. Their wealth given away, they would begin all over again, knowing that they were held in high esteem by their fellowmen for sharing everything they had accumulated.

Indians on Whidbey

When the white man arrived on Whidbey Island the Indians lived on the shores around Penn's Cove in their "long houses" and "living off the land" as well as the sea. They made friends with the newcomers, after a few flourishes, and we today are indebted to Flora Engle, who chronicled a





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number of Indians who became friends of the white man and for many years were an important part of the "new world" on Whidbey Island.

Flora Engle told of Michael Job, son of Pappy Job who was a trustworthy, hard-working Indian except when he was drinking, which was only on Sundays. Michael Job got into a fight with another Indian, and had a chunk of his nose bitten off!

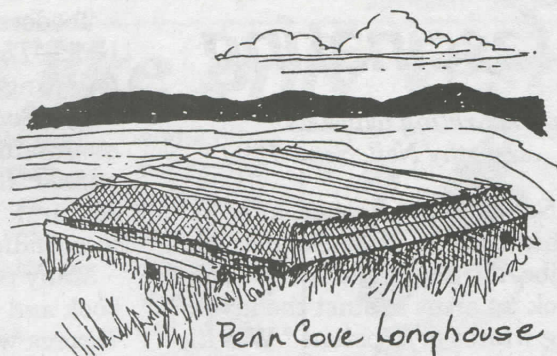
Charlie Shoemaker picked up the trade of mending shoes for the pioneers. And Jim Whiskey was fond of drink. Indian Friday had the only curly head in the tribe, and old gray haired Nainaimo was said to have been a slave taken in a war with the Vancouver Island Indians.

He was accepted by the local Indians as one of them and married a local Indian woman. They had a little boy they named Wiggly because of his nervous temperament!

Old Squinty had an affliction of the eyes, and was much loved by the settlers. She carried a sack of clams on her back which she peddled to her white friends.

Charlie Paul was a quiet gentlemanly Indian who tried very hard to be like the white man. His wife Lucy worked during the week at the wash-board ironing board and cleaning houses, and took Sunday off to drink. On Monday mornings she appeared with her head bound in a cloth, saying "nika la tete sick" which was a combination of Chinook for "I have a headache." "Nika" was "me" and "la tete" is French for head, plus the English "sick."

Schnapps got his name from stealing schnapps from John Robertson's store where he worked. His wife was a real Indian lady, and kept the little



frame house Schnapps built for her as neat and clean as her white sisters' homes.

When their daughter Lizzie married, most of the guests were Mrs. Schnapps white "tillicums" (friends) at the wedding performed by the Rev. C. E. Newberry. The guests all took refreshments with them to the wedding.

Billy Barlow was an Indian Chief of considerable intelligence and once at a Fourth of July celebration in Oak Harbor he delivered an oration all in the Chinook jargon!

Flora Engle was quoted in the Island County Times in September 1929 as saying, "Few of the Whidbey Island Indians of 60 years ago are left, the majority went to the Swinomish or Tulalip reservations. Many have gone to their Saghali Tyee (Great Father) and are happy with Him in that they know that nevermore will they be dispossessed of their inheritance."

Flora Engle told how the greater part of the Indian nation had been carried away by the dread scourge of the native American, tuberculosis. Alcohol also took its toll.

Chief Charlie Snakelum, son of the old Chief Snaklum who was said to have been the greatest and most powerful of all the sub-chiefs who ruled the Island was always a friend of the white man, and at his death was said to have had over 100 slaves. Charlie Snakelum was an expert shearer of sheep, and

farmers all over North Whidbey would bring him to their farms for a day's work, then take him back to his Snakelum Point home!

"Mrs. (Rebecca) Ebey's diary told that the Indians took the Old Chief's passing very hard. He died in December of 1852, and Charlie Snakelum must have been a very small boy when he lost his father, as he claimed to be the same age as the writer (Flora Engle) who was born in 1850."

The Point where he lived still bears his name and his picture appears on the cover of Dorothy Neil's *"By Canoe and Sailing Ship They Came,"* a comprehensive history of Whidbey Island. (S)

San de Fuca . . . 1890s boom town

Street naming isn't new to Whidbey, according to a journal submitted to us some years ago by former Oak Harborite Romaine Bantz, now of Napa, Calif. His father, Harvey Bantz, was Oak Harbor's first druggist, and owned the first drugstore.

"A Short History of San de Fuca," signed by "Aunt Susie" tells of the founding and the short life of the little Boom Town on Whidbey Island, which included the naming of streets platted as far north as Hastie Lake!

A.W. Arnold of San de Fuca had a vision for a city located where San de Fuca is today. A Mr. Clark was looking for such a place and organized the Townsite Company. Ed Monroe of Coupeville surveyed the lots and blocks and made a plot of the area.

Streets were named beginning with the one going up the hill past the schoolhouse (still standing): Arnold, Barstow, Clark, Dunbar, Edwards, Forest, Gillespie, Hoye, Island, Junction, Kinnear, Lansdale, Morris, Nunan and Oliver Streets.

The crossing streets were numbered up through Eight, plus Oak Harbor Avenue, Wall Street, Water Street and Cross Street. The "San de Fuca" name which replaced "Coveland", came from being close to the Straits of Juan de Fuca.

From then on, San de Fuca began to grow, with the building

of a saw mill, a hotel, and a restaurant which was in a tent built by Jim Pagani. Harry Barrington, early settler, said The Tent was where he got his first meal on Whidbey!

New buildings and homes began to spring up and trees were cut on the road to West Beach to prepare for the proposed digging of a canal from The Straits to Penn Cove. A starch factory appeared, and the town applied to have Western Washington University located there. Lots sold for as much as \$200.

Ed. note: Anyone know the identity of "Aunt Susie"?

How did Goldie Road get its name? All we know is that John Goldie, a farmer, lived at the end of Goldie Road, and no doubt was responsible for its being.

We recall that in 1926 when we came to Oak Harbor, Goldie Road began where the Chimes Corner is today, northward on today's Midway and past Easy Street!

It wasn't difficult to remember that 700 Avenue West became Neil Road when Grandpa Neil and his logging camp team of horses built the road from the farm (Roller Barn) to the high school/elementary school. The Neil's two youngest boys helped with the milking *et al* on the farm, and had a difficult time getting to school on time, so their Dad bought them a Model T Ford

and carved the road straight through to the school!

The roads of Oak Harbor which honored the pioneers have succumbed to numbers, removing a historical feature deplored by residents and visitors alike.

Barrington Avenue, today's Pioneer Way, honored the red-bearded sea captain Ed Barrington, who championed the local Indians and rescued them from the warlike Haidahs. He also ran the first General Store.

Izett Avenue, named for a Crescent Harbor family of pioneers who were responsible for a gift of land for Mapleleaf Cemetery and for the pioneer Methodist church, is now "300 Ave. West," a bumper to bumper thoroughfare at times!

Telephone Hill was the lower two blocks of Midway Blvd., down the east side of Oak Tree Park, when the telephone office was located at the top. The park was later named Smith Park after the man who donated the land to the city.


Heller Road was named for one of the first Holland families to settle here, and Crosby Road for the early Crosby family. Seth Crosby was City Judge for some years, and with his son-in-law Jake Wardenaar, built the little stone house on 400 Ave. East, constructed of beach rocks hauled up from the bay.

Eerkes Hill since WWII has housed Navy families, an area named Victory Homes by the Navy but dubbed Honeymoon Cottages by slightly envious townspeople and civilian workers. It is bordered by 70th NE.

Cackle Corner's name has been preserved, along with Freund's Hill. But we are waiting to hear that Freund's Hill will become Pelican Plaza or ThreeTree Mall.

God forbid!

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