



Spring 2021 Prairie Gazette

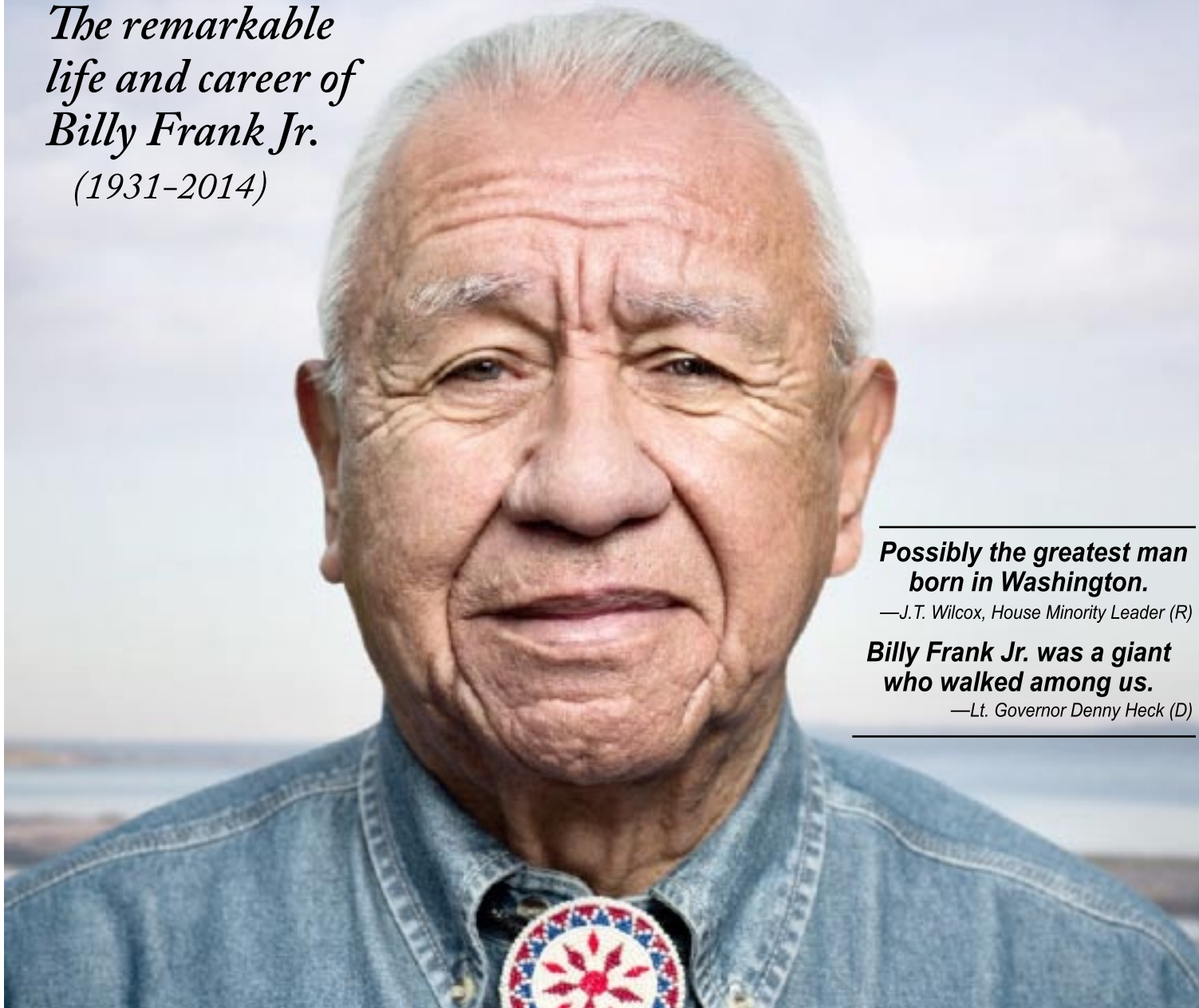
Official Publication, Lakewood Historical Society



From County Jail to Statuary Hall—

*The remarkable
life and career of
Billy Frank Jr.*

(1931-2014)



**Possibly the greatest man
born in Washington.**

—J.T. Wilcox, House Minority Leader (R)

**Billy Frank Jr. was a giant
who walked among us.**

—Lt. Governor Denny Heck (D)

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Sue Scott

President's Message

We are still working to finish up the new displays in the museum, getting the museum cleaned and hopefully re-opening this summer.

One good thing to report is that we have a new Board member: **Earl Borgert**. He is also on the Lakewood Arts Commission and I think a good fit for the Board. A couple of Board members have resigned due to other commitments so Earl is very welcomed. But as always, we are still seeking a few more Board members.

So if you are interested in Lakewood history and have a couple hours each month for a meeting and willing to help with some events, please let me know.

The 2021 membership renewal letter will be in the mail in a few weeks. As always, your support is very important to the Lakewood Historical Society.

Thank you!



A reminder: if you are an Amazon shopper, set up *amazonsmile* making us your charity of choice—making sure you designate **Lakewood Historical Society Washington** (there are a few other Lakewood Historical Societies!) We receive a small percentage of your purchase price at NO extra charge to you.

PRAIRIE GAZETTE

Prairie Gazette is the official publication of the Lakewood Historical Society. The newsletter is published four times a year. Distribution is directly to members and available at the Lakewood History Museum, 6114 Motor Avenue SW, Lakewood, WA 98499 • 253-682-3480

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



LAKEWOOD FARMERS MARKET

Summer Fridays at Fort Steilacoom Park
from 2 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

2021 season begins May 21 and ends Sept. 24
8714 87th Ave SW, Lakewood, WA 98498

Apples, asparagus, bok choy, bouquets, cherries, chocolates, decorations, desserts, eggplants, elephant ears, food trucks, free parking... we have it all! The Lakewood Farmers Market is a fun and safe experience for the whole family.

Billy Frank Jr: The Man Behind the Statue

April 14, 2021: Governor **Jay Inslee** signs HB 1372, a rare example in these troubled times of a bill passed with broad bipartisan support. It paves the way for placing, in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, DC, a statue of a man who, sixty years earlier, had been condemned as an outlaw by a number of state legislators—members of the very institution now honoring him.

That man was **Billy Frank Jr**; the laws broken, those that kept not only members of his tribe—the Nisqually—but *all* Indians in western Washington from harvesting the fair share of salmon runs promised in treaties signed 100 years earlier.

For more than a quarter-century Frank had worked tirelessly to see those treaties honored at last. Among his tactics: civil disobedience. In the 1960's he organized "fish-ins" along the Nisqually River. Tribe members defied state restrictions on when and where they could fish and how much salmon they could catch.

Billy was no armchair activist. He took a prominent part with pole, net and gaff in hand. First arrested as a teenager in 1945, game wardens emptied his net of its "illegal" contents, then shoved his face into the mud. That set the tone for subsequent confrontations, more than fifty of which ended with Billy arrested, usually followed by various stretches in the Thurston County jail.

Not only unbowed but more determined than ever, Frank kept at it until the fish-ins attracted national attention. America's "silent majority" contended with an unprecedented number of demonstrations and protests throughout the sixties, gradually becoming more receptive to previously ignored grievances like those Billy represented—but the road to true acceptance was a long one with many a rough patch.

In 1965, tensions between Indian and non-Indian fishermen boiled over into bloodshed. Salmon runs had been declining for years and, while it was eventually determined the reduced numbers were due in

large part to dammed rivers, habitat degradation and overfishing by commercial interests, whites found a more visible and easily understood culprit in the local Indians and their "fish-depleting" nets.

Nisqually fishermen and sometimes even their wives and children came under attack. Unsurprisingly, more than a few tribal members fought back—the fish-ins had morphed into the Fish Wars.

Violence, even if it takes place in a corner of the nation as obscure and remote as the Pacific Northwest was fifty years ago, is bound to catch the attention of the federal government sooner or later. And so it did: the U.S. decreed the fate of native fishing rights would be decided in federal court.

The resulting case of *U.S. vs Washington* was brought before **Judge George Boldt** in Tacoma in 1974. After a long and hard-fought trial, the judge issued his decree and its shock waves rocked the state. Virtually no

one had expected the government to come down totally on the side of the Indians—but there it was! In Boldt's opinion, the treaties couldn't have been clearer: tribes were entitled to half the fish caught with no restraints of any kind placed on efforts to get their share—no ifs, ands or buts.

In other words—total victory. Which would be a satisfying end to a life-long struggle for most men, but not for a visionary like Billy Frank Jr. Yes, the guarantee that a set percentage of salmon would forever go to the Indians was both important and gratifying—the US government finally being forced to honor at least *one* of its treaties in full even more so—but what set Frank apart was his insight. He was among the first to fully appreciate a certain issue, the importance of which was only beginning to dawn on the rest of mankind, but which today is seen as vital to the very survival of our world: the impact of western civilization on the natural environment.

Believing native populations have both the right and obligation to maintain ecosystems in a manner that



When snagging a salmon was an act of civil disobedience: Billy Frank Jr on the Nisqually River in 1973.

would guarantee a healthy yield of fish year after year, Frank didn't hesitate to battle giant corporations, oppose popular projects (e.g., freeways, port facilities built on pristine estuaries, etc.) or call for putting the brakes on development entirely if negative environmental impacts could or would not be mitigated. If some thought his tactics a bit overboard for the sake of a few more salmon, he was quick to point out that fisheries would hardly be the only beneficiaries of a policy promoting healthy habitats everywhere.

Frank realized so ambitious and all-encompassing a program would require more time, manpower and money than any one tribe or local agency could provide. He knew he needed to persuade tribes and governmental bodies to work together in a joint effort to conserve natural resources.

Chief among the foundations he established to facilitate cooperation was the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC), founded in 1975 to support the natural resource management activities of the twenty treaty Indian tribes. Billy chaired the NWIFC for over thirty years, from 1981 to his death in 2014.

Billy Frank Jr: Honors & Awards

- 1985: Common Cause Award for human rights efforts.
- 1987: Washington State Environmental Excellence Award
- 1989: American Indian Distinguished Service Award
- 1992: Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism
- 2004: American Indian Visionary Award
- 2006: Dan Evans Stewardship Award
- 2011: Native American Leadership Award
- 2011: Seattle Aquarium Medal
- 2015: Washington State Medal of Merit
- 2015: Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, awarded posthumously to Billy Frank Jr by President Barack Obama.



September, 2016: Sharing stories of his father's accomplishments as a leader of the Nisqually Tribe, Billy Frank, Jr's son **Willie** (inset, left) was the featured speaker at the Society's monthly program at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Lakewood. Evoking the unstoppable spirit of his father, Willy urged his audience to advocate the causes Billy championed. He was ably seconded by his aunt, **Annette Bullchild**, Educational Director of the Nisqually Tribe (far left above), and her husband **Merlin** (standing, right), who opened the evening with a prayer in his native Blackfoot language.

Recent Donors

Charlie Eckstrom
 Sylvia Sass
 Roger Jaenicke
 Pat & Darrell Nelson

New Members

Edna & Mike Wilson
 Jani Hitchen



Mother Joseph—Our state's other honoree in Washington, D.C.

The woman who was chosen in 1980 as one of Washington state's two representatives in Washington D.C.'s National Statuary Hall was born **Esther Pariseau** in Quebec in 1823. She took the name **Sister Joseph** (in honor of her father, a carriage maker whose carpentry skills she inherited) when she entered the convent of the Sisters of Charity of Providence in Montreal at age 20.

In 1856, the bishop of the new Diocese of Nesqually [sic] in Washington Territory, **Augustin-Magloire Blanchet**, sought assistance in his missionary work from the Sisters of Providence, who agreed and chose Sister Joseph to lead a small group west. After more than a month traveling by train from Montreal, the five missionaries arrived on December 8. Their first days were spent sleeping in the attic of the bishop's small home. Within a few months, however, the Sisters had built a home in Vancouver, Washington—a small cabin that served as both their convent and first school.



Statue of Mother Joseph in Statuary Hall by Felix W. de Weldon (1907-2003), best known for his sculpture of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima for the Marine Corps Memorial in Arlington.

Bishop Blanchet then gave them two acres on the St. James Mission Claim where, under Sister Joseph's efficient supervision, buildings soon sprang up: a convent, novitiate, infirmary, orphanage, boarding and day school, rooms for the elderly and insane and the first St. Joseph Hospital. The Sisters named their new home Providence of the Holy Angels and the bishop elevated their leader from Sister to **Mother Joseph**.

On January 28, 1859, Mother Joseph incorporated the "Sisters of Charity of the House of Providence in the Territory of Washington". It survives still, one of our state's oldest corporations and the parent of today's Providence Health & Services.

In the early 1850s, Mother Joseph designed and supervised construction of Providence Academy, a permanent home for the Providence of the Holy Angels in Vancouver. A stickler for detail, she inspected foundations, rafters and bounced on planks to ensure their support. Her efforts paid off—the Academy building still stands, looking much the same as it did on September 7, 1874 when the Sisters moved in.

Mother Joseph's growing reputation as an architect and artist—rare skills on the frontier—brought commissions for more buildings in Vancouver and elsewhere: St. Joseph Hospital (Vancouver, 1858), St. Vincent Academy (Walla Walla, 1864) and, of special interest to those in Pierce County, Providence St. Joseph school (Steilacoom, 1863).

A talented and tenacious fund raiser, her "begging tours" often took her away for months at a time. From the mining camps of Idaho and Montana, she

once returned with \$5000—a truly staggering sum in those days. Mother Joseph selflessly shared her hard-won bounty with other missions scattered throughout the northwest.

On January 19, 1902, she died of a brain tumor in Vancouver and was buried in what is now known as Mother Joseph Cemetery. Her legacy includes the planning and construction of some of our region's first institutions of learning and medical care—eleven hospitals, seven academies, five schools, and two orphanages in an area that now encompasses Washington, northern Oregon, Idaho, and Montana.

Her inclusion in Statuary Hall was not the only honor bestowed upon Mother Joseph by her adopted homeland. In 1999 her birthday, April 16, was made an official Washington state holiday.



The Providence School for Young Ladies, built by Mother Joseph, held classes in Steilacoom from 1863 to 1875. The building was demolished in 1908.

Did You Know “Tarzan” Attended Stadium High and UW?

By Historical Phil

...and that he also played in the Rose Bowl, won an Olympic Medal and went on to become a major Hollywood movie star? Yep, it's true. The man we're discussing is none other than Tacoma native **Harold Herman Brix**.

Harold was born in Tacoma on May 19, 1906. His parents were German immigrants and he was one of five children born into the Brix family. He attended Stadium High School and while there shortened his name to Herman Brix in honor of a recently deceased brother. He graduated from Stadium in 1924 and then attended the University of Washington majoring in economics. Athletic and 6' 3" he soon became a track and field star. He also played tackle on the 1926 Rose Bowl football team. After graduating from UW he attended the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam where he won a Silver Medal in Shot Putting.

1929 found Brix in Los Angeles for an athletic event where he became friends with the movie star Douglas Fairbanks Jr. Fairbanks got Brix a screen test at Paramount Pictures where he was cast in a football movie titled *Touchdown*. He was also cast in the upcoming film *Tarzan the Ape Man* based

on the writings of Edgar Rice Burroughs with noted director W.S. Van Dyke at the helm. Van Dyke had lived in Tacoma during his early years and is still remembered as the director of the classic Tacoma film *Eyes of the Totem*. Brix, however, broke his shoulder during filming of *Touchdown* and the Tarzan part was re-cast with Johnny Weissmuller who became a major star in the role.



Luckily, a second Tarzan film project came Brix's way—a twelve-part serial titled *The New Adventures of Tarzan*. Sixteen more films followed, but most of them were of “B” status. In 1939 Brix took a career break, did a stint in the Navy, changed his name to **Bruce Bennett** and gave Hollywood a second try. It worked—Bennett appeared in movies for the next 40 years, starring in such box office smashes as *Sahara* and *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* with Humphrey Bogart, *Dark Passage* with Bogart and Lauren Bacall, *Strategic Air Command* with James Stewart and many more.

Late in his career, Bennett turned to guest star roles in popular television series such as *Perry Mason*, *Science Fiction Theater* and *Daktari*. He was also a lifelong parasailing and skydiving enthusiast. Amazingly, at age 96 he made a jump from 10,000 feet over Lake Tahoe. Bennett passed away in February 2007 just short of his 101st birthday due to complications from hip surgery and is buried in Santa Monica, CA. Bennett's wife of 67 years, **Jeannette Braddock**, passed




away in 2000. They had two children, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

So, thanks to Herman Brix, Bruce Bennett, Hollywood and others, Tarzan is still with us on TV and film. And for that matter, so is Stadium High and UW.

Have a “wild” summer!

Historical Markers of Lakewood:
9th in a Series.

The Bronze Lily Fountain



Pacific Northwest artist **George Tsutakawa** (1910-1997) is remembered not only for his bronze sculptures and dramatic paintings, but for his positive humanistic outlook as well. Professor Tsutakawa brought together his childhood training and Japanese cultural heritage with American innovation and an independent outlook.

“Through...my studies of traditional Japanese arts I was able to reaffirm my conviction in the Oriental view of nature which sees man as one part of nature, a part that must live in harmony with the rest of nature.

My fountain sculptures are an attempt to unify water—the life force of the universe that flows in an elusive cyclical course throughout eternity—with an immutable metal sculpture.”



Provided by Lakewood Historical Society, City of Lakewood, Pierce County Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission, Howe Investments II LLC and the Howe family, the marker is mounted on the edge of the fountain's pool at 100th St. SW and Gravelly Lake Dr. SW and was dedicated in 2017.

Tsutakawa in his studio, mid-1960's. A preliminary study for the Bronze Lily fountain is behind him.

*Text adapted from
georgetsutakawa.com*

The Bronze Lily Fountain

This fountain was designed by noted artist and sculptor George Tsutakawa and placed in the Commerce Street Courtyard near the plaza entrance of the Pacific Federal Savings and Loan Association in Tacoma, Washington. The bank opened their new ultra modern building at 1102 Pacific Avenue in 1964, with the fountain. In 1974, the fountain was moved from that location to its Lakewood branch where it's currently located.

George Tsutakawa was born in 1910 and lived until 1997. He was known as the master of fountains and created more than 70 fountains for public places around the world. George Tsutakawa was on the faculty of the University of Washington's School of Art during 1947 through 1976.

Pacific First Federal Savings and Loan merged with Washington Mutual Bank in 1993 and later acquired by J.P. Morgan/Chase Bank in 2008. Alvah B. Howe and Howe Investments have owned this property since buying it in 1980 from Pacific First Federal Bank.



**Lakewood
Historical
Society**

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Check www.lakewoodhistorical.org for notices about upcoming programs.