



Prairie Gazette

Winter 2025

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One Local Family's Brushes With History

*History isn't just a subject for academics, recorded in dusty volumes and relegated to seldom-visited library shelves. History is an experience we're all living through, for all our lives long. This came home to me in a big way as I finally got around to sorting through the **hundreds** of family photos my late mother left behind...*

...starting in her granddad's day (that's him, Tom Jackson, on the left). He's barbering out of a tent due to an historical event I'm sure he would rather *not* have experienced—the **Great Seattle Fire** of 1889. Along with hundreds of other businesses, his wood-frame shop had been reduced to ashes.

The other side of my family also has a tale from local history's catastrophic side. Alerted by a phone call from a friend running a tavern overlooking the Sound, my dad left work and arrived in time to see the original **Tacoma Narrows Bridge** collapse in the windstorm of November 7, 1940.

Nine years later, Yours Truly gets into the act—a babe in mother's arms as she rushes out of the house during the 7.1 magnitude **earthquake** of April 13, 1949 (still the strongest in state history). I was present for the **quakes** of 1965 and 2001, too.

Sticking with natural disasters, the author was a pudgy adolescent when the **Columbus Day windstorm** struck in 1962.



lost eight enormous trees that night, one of them falling just a few feet behind my dad's car as he was pulling into the driveway.



The north and south towers were all that remained of the bridge until it was rebuilt and opened in 1950. Dad took this photo from the hastily re-instituted Gig Harbor ferry in 1941.

Rounding out our list of nature's connoption fits: the **eruption of Mt. St. Helens**, 1980. By then, wife Betsy had arrived on the scene—and would have left it, along with hubby, if we'd timed our trip to the volcano just a bit differently.

Looking through photos of the May 18 cataclysm in the *News-Tribune*, we recognized a distinctive knob—the very one we'd climbed a week earlier to view the smaller, but still spectacular, eruptions preceding the Big One. Our vantage point was now littered with giant trees, blown down by the pyroclastic flow that took more than 60 lives. It would surely have taken ours as well.

Betsy's late brother, Weston Wilkins, had an even closer call. Setting out on the bright, clear morning of May 18th, he was only stopped on his quest to take pictures of St. Helens from as



A possibly unique photo of the Seattle Fire found among my great-granddad's effects.

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A super-storm resulting from the freakish combination of *two* typhoons, it remains to this day the strongest non-tropical windstorm ever to hit the lower 48. My folks' property on Gravelly Lake

See *HISTORY* pg. 3



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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

President's Message

Welcome to the New Year!



Ed Voie

It has been my pleasure to be President of the Lakewood Historical Society for the past two years. Participation of my fellow officers, our volunteers, members and guests have made this a great experience. At our last Annual Board Meeting, I agreed to fill the Vice President position while Phil moves up to the 2025 President position.

Be assured, we will continue to have interesting programs, special events and new displays. Best wishes, we are in good hands with "**Historical Phil**" as your 2025 President.



Phil Raschke

Hello Everyone.

Hope your 2025 is off to a good start!

I'd like to kickoff this update by giving outgoing **President Ed Voie** a big "Shout Out" for his hard work and dedication over the last two years. Moreover, Ed is great to work with and I am looking forward to working with him in his new Vice President position. I would also like to give a heartfelt hug to the December donors who collectively contributed **over \$2,200 to the Museum in UNSOLICITED donations**. Thank you so much for your loyalty and financial support .

As some of you may know, our five-year building lease expired at the end of 2024. Your Board of Directors was able to negotiate a new three-year lease which included a moderate increase in cost, but then what doesn't cost more lately? Good news is we are set for the next three years.

First large project coming up on our radar is a board-facilitated 17 foot long mural depicting an historical timeline of the lovely area we call Lakewood. Our mural artist is **Mindy Barker** and she is doing amazing work. Plan now is for a February installation in the main hallway with a "ribbon cutting" celebration in early March. We will keep you updated.

Also, happy to report our Museum Collections Team of **Katharine O'Leary** and **Rachel Watson** are nearing the end of their project to inventory and record all of the Museum's collection items that were lost when our computer system was stolen. This includes not only what is on display, but also what has been stored in our back rooms. This was no easy task and would you believe Katharine got us a grant that covers almost the entire cost of the project. Now that's what I call a good deal.

During the recent holidays, a jolly chap in a red suit visited the museum and drew the names of two 2024 members. These members had entered our "Membership Renewal and Add a Little Extra Promotion". **Carol Moreno** will be receiving a \$75 gift card for breakfast or lunch at Lakewood's "Moon Rise Café". **Joe & Patricia Candiotta** will also receive a \$50 gift card for "Moon Rise Café". Thank You and Bon Appetite to both Carol and Candiotta family.

Lastly, a big Boy Scout salute to Lakewood BSA Troop 53 who will celebrate their 100th birthday 15 Mar. More info at 253-318-4645.

Blessings and Happy Trails to All,

Phil

"Knowledge Comes, But Wisdom Lingers."

HISTORY from pg 1

close as possible by roadblocks that had suddenly appeared on I-5 just north of the suddenly raging, mudflow-swollen Toutle River. Even from that distance, though, he was able to get a few good shots—like the one to the right.

Backing up a bit—it's November 24, 1971 and my bride-to-be and I are watching TV in Old Tacoma when...**NEWS FLASH!!** A man claiming to have a bomb is hijacking a plane at Sea-Tac! The ensuing report includes the moment the plane takes off—supposedly bound, at the hijacker's demand, for Reno.

"Hey," says I to the future Missus, "If the plane's heading southeast, there's a chance it might fly right overhead. Let's take a look!" And sure enough...



...there was no mistaking the plane carrying the man responsible for the 20th century's most infamous unsolved crime. Its unique flight path over Commencement Bay, speed (*slo-o-ow*) and alarmingly low altitude—the open door from which the perpetrator would soon jump was easily seen—left no doubt it held the man known

today as Dan (AKA **D. B.**) Cooper fly his way into the hearts and minds of millions of true-crime aficionados, many of whom *still* obsess over his unknown fate.

There you have it—a personal parade of historical happenings as witnessed by my kinfolk and I. You and yours most likely have a similar (and unique) collection. Care to share it? We'd love to hear it, via email (contact@lakewoodhistorical.org) or by post: Lakewood Historical Society, 6114 Motor Ave SW, Lakewood WA 98499

Prairie Gazette and Texas find historic city of Mons, Belgium

Story and Photo by Phil Raschke

The beautiful and historically significant city of Mons lies atop a gentle hill in southwestern Belgium. It is a French-speaking city with historical ties all the way back to the Neolithic period (FYI, Belgium has three major languages: French, Flemish and German, although English is pretty much understood everywhere). Mons became a "fortified" city in the 12th Century and quickly grew. Today it has a population of just over 96,000. Key landmarks are the exquisite Saint-Ghislain Cathedral and the large pedestrian plaza with the eloquent, Gothic-style City Hall. Also located nearby is SHAPE (Supreme Headquarter Allied Powers Europe) the military arm of NATO.

Besides SHAPE's military presence, this historically rich city currently has a most unique feature. Just off the grand plaza is a popular coffee house called TEXAS which specializes in delicious fresh waffle sandwiches. Belgium is known for its waffles and TEXAS blends this unique item into a down-right tasty sandwich.

In the photo, customer **Marylise Verstrecken** and coffee house owner **Anoushka Bulthe** happily display our very own *Prairie Gazette*. Both are looking forward to receiving a copy of this American newsletter featuring their photo.

Trust me partner, if you're from Lakewood, WA you will always be welcome in TEXAS!





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