

Rainier Valley HERITAGE NEWS



Volume 20, Issue 1

Spring 2011

Get Together! The Annual Meeting of the Rainier Valley Historical Society

Saturday, April 16th, we will hold our annual meeting for members and friends. All are invited to this free event – Join us!



SESCO staff c. 1976 including executive director Greg Galluzzo (2nd row left), organizer Jim Diers (bottom right), organizer Ed Jones (bottom middle). RVHS, SESCO Collection.

The morning's program includes a special presentation by historians Mikala Woodward and John Hoole on civic activism in the Rainier Valley during the 1970s and beyond. Learn how local folks came together to protect and change their community in the face of opportunism and indifference.

The morning will also feature additions to our collection, a report on our newly reborn oral history program, the Buzz Anderson Volunteer of the Year Award, and some special announcements!

Stay for lunch and to browse in our travelling gift shop and mini-museum!

This year we will meet again at the Lions Club Charles Lamb Memorial Hall, next door to our Ferdinand Street office.

If you have not received your personal invitation to the Annual Meeting, please contact us at 206-723-1663 or rvhsoffice@aol.com or just come on down!

Saturday, April 16, 2011
10:00 a.m. to Noon, Lunch Follows
Lions Club Charles Lamb Memorial Hall
3712 South Ferdinand Street

Raise your voice!

Current members of the historical society are eligible to vote in board elections during the annual meeting.

News and Notes

Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 16
10:00 a.m. to noon, Lunch follows
Lions Club
3712 S. Ferdinand Street

Guided Walking Tours

This year's guided walking tours are scheduled for "First Sundays" at 11:00 a.m. No charge for RVHS members; \$5.00 for all others. No reservations necessary.

May 1

June 5

July 3

August 7

September 4

October 2 (The Back Alley Tour)

Office Hours:

Wednesday, 1:00–4:00 p.m.

Friday, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Sunday, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

3710 S. Ferdinand Street

Check our voice mail (206-723-1663) for last minute changes to this schedule.

E-News:

Opt-in to our E-News, Past is Present. Just send your email address to rvhsoffice@aol.com.



RVHS is now on Facebook!

Find the latest news, announcements, and photos on our Facebook page: Rainier Valley Historical.



Welcome Sheila Harvey

RVHS is pleased to welcome Sheila Harvey as our newest Board Member. Sheila has been appointed to fill a vacant board seat; she will be nominated to a 3-year term at this year's annual meeting.

Sheila Harvey and her husband, Tom, moved to the Lakewood Seward Park neighborhood in 2006 after returning to Seattle from Los Angeles. They are happy to have found a home in this vibrant and diverse Rainier Valley community. Sheila currently serves as Executive Director of the Lakewood Seward Park Community Association, where she manages rentals for the 100-year-old club. She has always been interested in keeping history alive and is looking forward to helping us present a view into the rich history of our community. When not working, she can usually be found being pulled around Seward Park by her two terriers who also love living in such a beautiful place.

Seward Park Turns 100!

2011 marks the 100th anniversary of the City of Seattle's purchase of Seward Park from private ownership. Local organizations are hosting centennial events throughout the year to celebrate this milestone.



Pie-eating contestants, Pow Wow. Photo, The O'Brien Family

You are invited to attend the events, which will be held in and around Seward Park:

April 23 – Cherry Blossom Festival

June 4 – Trail Dedication Day

June 5 – Tweed Bicycle Ride

July 16–17 – Centennial Festival

November 10 –Book Release Party and Art Show

For event information, please visit www.sewardparkcentennial.org.

The centennial committee is looking for photos of Seward Park from the 1950s to the 1970s. If you have photos to lend, please contact Karen O'Brien at 206-760-1304 or sewardpark100@gmail.com.

—Karen O'Brien

In Their Own Words

Last fall we were able to reactivate our dormant oral history program. Thanks to board members Nancy Dulaney, Karen O'Brien, and Teresa Anderson, we were able to obtain taped interviews with long-time valley residents Martin and Rosemary Byrne and Don Bearwood. In addition, I interviewed nonagenarian Lila Bulen in her Mount Baker home.

These three interviews join dozens of others obtained over the last two decades, including "Food Stories" which celebrates traditions of the many immigrant groups in the valley.

All interviews are on hand for researchers; in some cases, typed transcripts are available. For a complete list of our oral history program, visit our website.

—Eleanor Boba

Many hands...

We thank all our fabulous volunteers who have, indeed, made our labor light over the past year.

Debra Bartram
 Anna Bergman
 Sam Carpenter
 Mike Cox
 Evelyn Fairchild
 Chris Graham
 Stephen Hultberg
 Alan Humphrey
 Alida Humphrey
 Ryan Maddock
 Airik Myers
 Claudio Oliveira
 Steve Olsen
 Chelsea Rodriguez
 Donna Schubert
 Bernice Sisson
 Alby Vale
 Jean VeIDyke
 Mikala Woodward
 Connie Yun
 And all our wonderful board members!

Days Gone By: Hillman City's Irish Heritage – Marty Byrne

Note: In the fall of 2010, as part of the RVHS Oral History Program, Martin James Byrne was interviewed by Nancy Dulaney. The following article is based on information collected during those visits.

Martin and Dorothy Byrne have lived on Morgan Street since 1952, when they moved from an apartment building on Queen Anne hill. They married in June of 1945, took their honeymoon on the Kalakala to Victoria, and drove on to Nanaimo and Vancouver. They loaded up on an extra 15 gallons of gas before they returned to Seattle where war years rationing ruled.

But Martin was no stranger to Rainier Valley. He had been born on the kitchen table of a little house in Hillman City in 1914! – the oldest child of Martin Thomas and Mary Agnes Byrne and of Irish ancestry on both sides.



L-R, Dorothy, Bill, Mary Agnes, Martin Thomas, and Martin James Byrne (in front of father). Photo, Estate of Martin James Byrne.

Martin's father built a plumbing shop on Rainier Avenue at Mead Street in 1919. Martin recalls it was a big outfit employing seven plumbers and utilized a tractor to carry tools. His father drove a Model T. For a number of years business was good as families had their first indoor plumbing installed.

But Martin recalls that, later, "Work got pretty scarce. My dad, he was great at those days for trading. He put the plumbing in offices and repaired the plumbing equipment

for dentists. The dentist would pay us by having our teeth repaired for nothing. There was a lot of trading and bartering in those days."

After two years at St. Mary's Catholic School, Martin attended St. Edward School in Hillman City. In 1932 he graduated from O'Dea High School wearing a tuxedo. He is especially proud of a report card from St. Edward – straight As. When he wasn't busy studying, Martin and his brothers often stopped by the pool hall their Uncle Nick ran in Hillman City where he always had a Hershey chocolate bar with almonds for the boys.

When the fire bell rang at Fire Station #28 on Orcas Street, the firefighters slid down the pole. The horses were trained to run right into position, and the harnesses hanging above would drop on. Martin says, "Everybody had their job to do. You'd see them coming around the corner at Orcas heading out to the fire. The streets were all brick on end, paved brick. Steel plates were along the wagon wheels. The horses had steel hooves too. And nothing but sparks as they wheeled around the corner! And bells clanging! And the firemen running behind the fire engine! "

At age 18 Martin lifeguarded at the Alki Natatorium where Olympic medalist Helene Madison trained. Then he was at the Frye meat-packing plant on Airport Way for about three years on the loading floor where the butchered beef was shipped uptown for Seattle shoppers.

Finally Martin landed a job as an apprentice shipfitter at Puget Sound Bridge & Dredge after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The industry transitioned from repairing wooden merchant ships to building steel war ships, ferries, ice breakers and oil tankers over the years. Martin retired

from Todd Shipyards at 70. When he first started he made about \$50 a week thanks to the boilermakers union; groceries took \$15 of that according to Dorothy.



Kids Kick the Can. L-R (standing,) Frank "Fritz" Byrne, Bill Byrne, Martin Byrne (holding the can), Pete Lanier, Ed Byrne; (sitting in front) Mary Byrne and Nick Byrne. c. 1924. Photo, Estate of Martin James Byrne.

For recreation, Martin enjoyed spending time at Empire Bowling Alley and he has the trophies to prove it. Or you might have found Dorothy and Martin dancing on the freshly waxed pecan wood floors at the Genesee Community Hall which his cousin Frank Byrne managed for many years. But much of Martin's time was spent outdoors – camping at Lake Wilderness, playing horseshoes and baseball, salmon fishing – "Fishing was good in those days. Fish would jump right out of Lake Washington."

Martin and Dorothy's five children – Maureen (deceased), Kathleen, Rosemary, Martin G., and Stephen – followed in their father's footsteps in many ways, enjoying Rainier Valley's signature celebrations and pastimes including Seafair parades and hydroplane races, baseball at Sick's Stadium, and adventures in "rabbitland."

On February 10, 2011, at 96, Martin Byrne passed away at his home with his wife, Dorothy, by his side.

Many thanks to Rosemary Byrne for contacting RVHS and making this oral history possible.

—Nancy Dulaney

HONOR ROLL

Many thanks to our members and supporters who make our work possible! Below are those who gifts we received between September 1, 2010 and February 28, 2011. Help us keep the record straight. Send corrections or omissions to us at 206-723-1663 or rvhsoffice@aol.com.

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Teresa Anderson (Oral History Program)
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Fairchild
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Mr. and Mrs. Ken Taggart *in honor of Brian Fairchild*
Deehan Wyman, Wyman Youth Trust
**History Makers are those who have given \$250 or more in any category.*

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**RAINIER VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2010 TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY**

Operations Income		Operations Expense	
Member Dues	\$4,770	Personnel	\$15,312
Sales & Fees	1,189	Programs	1,880
Endowment Interest	3,000	Marketing/Fundraising	722
Annual Donations	5,925	Facility	4,551
King County 4Culture Sustained Support	8,500	Administration	1,702
Historic Columbia City Walking Tour Map	1,701	Historic Columbia City Walking Tour Map	1,642
Operations Income Total	\$25,085	Operations Expense Total	\$25,809
2010 Donations to Endowment		\$60	
Endowment Value 12/31/10	\$181,633		
Special Project – Bringing World Religion Home	Income	Bringing World Religion Home	Expense
	\$3,000		\$4,194

Note: Completes this Special Project begun in 2008 and funded by a 4Culture Heritage Cultural Education grant.



This handsome studio portrait of barber Lee Gardner was donated to us by the grandchildren of Menzo LaPorte.

REPORT FROM THE COLLECTION

Our big collections news is that we have completed the move of our archival collection to a new, larger room at the old Columbia School (now Torah Day School). We will continue to have displays in the lower level of the Rainier Valley Cultural Center.


Our thanks to both Torah Day School and the Cultural Center for accommodating us. And special thanks to the many volunteers who helped with the move and with organizing the collection in its new space!

Thanks also to The Byrne Family, Atlantic Street Center, Wellspring Family Services, and Neighborhood House for lending us photographs for use in our work.

Additions to Archives

Recent additions to our archives include:

- Weiss Family photos. Donor, Stuart Weiss.
- Scrapbook of Seafair floats. Donor, Roger Ford.
- Rainier District Record*, No. 33 (1928). Donor, Barbara Aya.
- Photos of Menzo LaPorte and friends. Donor, The LaPorte Family.
- Photos and documents on a variety of topics, including Boy Scout Troop #213 and the Southeast Seattle Lutheran Forum. Donor, Don Bearwood.
- Proctor and Gamble Naphtha soap. Donor, Mary Iszley (display collection).
- Modern Woodmen of America songsheets. Donor, Christine Muonoke (research collection).

<p>Rainier Valley Heritage News Editor and Layout..... Teresa A. Anderson</p> <p>Rainier Valley Historical Society Office location*.....3710 South Ferdinand Street Mailing address.....PO Box 18143, Seattle, WA 98118 OR 3710 South Ferdinand St., Seattle, WA 98118 Phone and fax206-723-1663 Emailrvhsoffice@aol.com Website..... www.rainiervalleyhistory.org Office hours.....Wed 1-4pm, Fri & Sunday 10am-1pm RVHS Executive Director..... Eleanor Boba *The Rainier Valley Historical Society office is an accessible facility. Auxiliary aids and assistance are provided upon request to persons with disabilities.</p>	 <p>Thanks to King County for their operating support</p>
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Support History

If you haven't joined the Rainier Valley Historical Society this year, we urge you to do so now.
All membership dues and donations are tax-deductible within the limits of the law.

Please fill in this form and mail it with a check to:

Rainier Valley Historical Society
P.O. Box 18143
Seattle, WA 98118

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