

Museum Pieces

By Robb Wilson, Curator
Columbia County Historical Society Museum

Memorial Day reminded me of a few persons I want to talk about.

Ellen Divine recently passed away; she and her husband Sam, were curators here at the museum from 1969 through 1972 and were active in preserving the history of the area.

I wrote once about how names are sometimes lost and forgotten when a person dies. The Spencer name, that was here in the valley for over 112 years, is now silenced. Ben Spencer, who was born here in 1914, recently passed away. He being an only son and having no sons of his own, means that the Spencer name has come to a standstill.

Charlie Biggs came to the area in 1920 and was a farmer. Farming was and always has been a hard way to make a living in the upper Nehalem Valley and he came upon a way to make his land and acreage pay. In 1926 he helped start up and operate the valley's first golf course, on his land. Another thing that Charlie should be remembered for, is that he is the last of the World War One veterans who lived in Vernonia.

Hanging in the museum is a framed certificate dated 23 Oct. 1917, with the name Maynard Grunden on it. It is a certificate for Grunden's promotion to "Sergeant of the National Army of the United States". It is tagged with a note stating that he was "the first deceased member of Vernonia Barracks 2525 of World War One," but does not give the year of his passing. But he was a Veteran all the same!

There are a few other reminders of veterans on display, too, a few items belonging to a man who was in the war between the states in the 1860s; photos of some of the Civil War veterans who settled this valley after the war. There are some pictures, a uniform and per-

sonal items from WWI veterans. But the most striking thing is the Honor Roll that hangs on the wall just as you enter through the museum's front door, which memorializes World War Two veterans who worked at O-A Mill. It is a chronological listing of the men who worked at the mill, giving their names, the department of the mill each worked at, and the branch of the service they entered. Remember that this building was the office for the mill and it was the company's president, Judd Greenman, who honored these men as they went into the armed forces. Here too, in the old board and meeting room, is another big list on the wall, this time in alphabetical order, with the names of 310 fellows who served. The significance of this list is that there are nine names with gold stars behind them, these are the men who did not come home, the ones who died for their country.

With the fifty-year remembrance of D-Day on television and in the papers these past weeks, I have taken note of this event, as well as all of World War Two. My interest now is far different than what it was in my youth. Then, as children, the TV shows and movies that dealt with the war made it seem exciting and kind of romantic. I have learned from the personal experiences told of by veterans of the era, that no war is romantic and all war is an awful thing. I have started talking with people in the area about their memories of the war in the 1940s and will relate that in the next column. If you have stories or memories to share, please contact me.

Summer Hours (June through Sept.):
Thursday through Saturday noon to 4:00 p.m. Sundays, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
For appointments or information, phone 429-3713.

Even Start celebrates first efforts

Parents, friends and representatives of social service agencies and schools celebrated families' accomplishments at the end of the first year of the Even Start Family Literacy program. Celebrations were held at Vernonia Head Start, St. Helens High School and Rainier Methodist Church.

The program, a part of Community Action Team, Inc., provides adult education, and help with job search, life skills and parenting skills for Columbia County families with children ages birth to eight years. Parents improve their own basic skills, while they learn about child development and parenting. They also learn how to become more actively and positively involved as a partner with the public schools and many spent a number of hours as volunteers in their children's classrooms.

Classes are held at St. Helens High School, Vernonia Head Start and Rainier Methodist Church.

Most of the parents enter the program to earn a GED, but some adults who have high school diplomas participate to improve reading, math, writing and problem-solving skills to help them-

selves compete successfully for jobs.

Adults from the 33 families involved in Even Start completed the following steps toward self-reliance:

- Seven earned GED certificates.
- Six more have taken and passed some of the five GED tests.
- Six entered other job training or education programs.
- Five registered to vote for the first time.
- Nine became employed.
- One was removed from public assistance.
- Eight received library cards.
- Seven got their driver's licenses.
- Eight sought counseling.
- Sixteen signed up for the Oregon Health Plan.
- Fourteen earned First Aid and CPR cards.
- Seven earned Food Handler's cards.
- Seven found housing or improved housing.
- Two families enrolled their special needs children in early intervention services.

Even Start is funded through the Oregon Department of Education with a federal grant, with additional support from the Columbia County Commission on Children and Families, United Way of Columbia County and a variety of community organizations, school districts and social service agencies.

The program staff is composed of Coordinator Cathy Lindsley, Family Advocate Phyllis Castle and Adult Education Specialist Barbara Kern.

Families interested in being a part of Even Start in the fall, may call 556-3736. Community groups interested in having a speaker on family literacy and Even Start may call the same number.

COLCO SCHEDULE

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Tuesdays - St. Helens
Wednesdays - Forest Grove, Cornelius, Hillsboro
Thursdays - St. Helens

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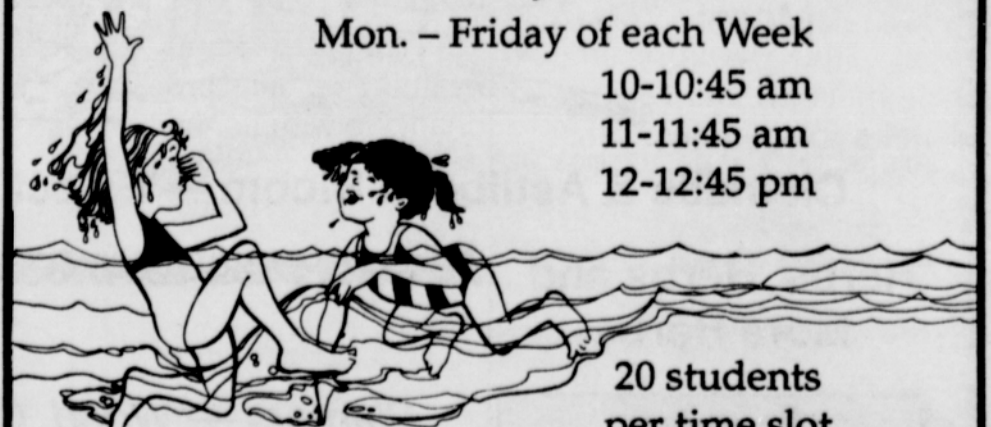
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