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The Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society meets on the second Saturday of each month at 9 AM. We gather at the Clayton Drive-In, located just off Highway 395 on Railroad Ave.

THE

CLAYTON/DEER PARK  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Mortarboard

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## EDDIE NORDBY AND LYNN (RED) HOLCOMB GROWING UP IN CLAYTON DURING THE 1950s

By Eddie Nordby

Free — Take One

We were just little guys when we first met and soon became buddies on into our teen years. Of course, we usually were the only two boys our age in the whole town, so forming a friendship with this new Lynn kid was like finding the missing link! Once in a while another boy would show up, but he never made the inner circle before moving on. Oh, one bigger guy stayed several years (his name remains a secret, because he is still big), but he couldn't run fast enough to make good his threats, and we had more hiding places than Bonnie



Lyle, Lynn (in front) and Izzie Holcomb. The east side of the Ramble Inn in the background.

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and Clyde. The mere thought of becoming his punching dummy drove Lynn and me deep into hiding more than once. One such hiding place was the narrow space between Matt's Tavern and the old post office. It was always damp and cool in there with an off color, yellow green covering over the dirt. Later we surmised that narrow place of refuge was the secondary toilet area for the men from the tavern if the outhouse was occupied! Oh yea, it stunk a pretty bad but that helped make that hiding place more impenetrable.

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I called him Linnie but a lot of adults nicknamed him Red, for his red hair. Yes sir, he was Red Holcomb, and what a Red Holcomb he was! Full of energy, daring, and life, he made a great partner in what I remember as the good, bad, and ugly of growing up in Clayton. The “good,” means our young years were spiced with a lot of adventure, freedom, love, and laughter. The “bad,” mirrors the contrived plans, projects, and adventures that fizzled out. Such as whenever we planned to cook on a big hot rock tomorrow...it would cloud up and often rain on that tomorrow.

Another bad was when we built a soap box derby car in my dad’s garage. We found the wood, wheels, rope pieces for steering, etc. in his scrap pile, but lacked axle rods, so we used lag bolts to fasten the wheels onto the ends of 2x4’s. Finished, I started to sit in it when we noticed the wheels doing the splits, so I quickly abandoned the sitting test. Scratching our heads, we decided to load it on my big coaster wagon. Being young dreamers, we knew if we could just get it to the top of Simshauser’s Hill (about three miles from my house) the lag bolts would surely hold up for a few trips to the bottom. Just for insurance, I dropped a 6 inch Crescent wrench into my back pocket. Now I am ahead of myself on our age chart, but this particular “bad” is too good to tuck away in the back of my writing! Honestly, after sixty years, I just can’t hold back this confession any longer. Now that our parents are gone and



**Lynn in about 1948 in front of the Ramble Inn.**

Lynn has recently left me alone with this haunting saga, I am relieving my mind of this “screw up” so I won’t have to feign perfection any longer. Now, from Clayton we slowly pulled that wagon with our “prized derby car” piled on it down the sidewalk, across the highway and RR tracks and turned east onto Mason Rd. which led us past the dump. We were giddy as we turned north onto Furzee Rd which continued over Simshauser’s Hill...until we looked up from the bottom. My gosh that sucker looked like a mountain through the eyes of two young boys! On weakening legs and with our back parts draggin’, we finally reached the top and unloaded the “prized car.”

“Your garage, your wood, so you should be the first to go down,” reasoned Lynn. (He was a master at putting me first at times like that.) With my heart pounding yet faking confidence, I gingerly lowered myself into the seat while digging my heels into the gravel to hold the car back. Suddenly I jerked up my feet and shot straight down that hill for about ten feet before the wheels collapsed! With the wrench we tightened the lag bolts which temporarily straightened up the wheels. I don’t know how many times we repeated those forced pit stops, but I finally made it down with another bad dream ready for the junk pile. I would like to say we left it at the dump on our way home, but the parts came from Dad’s stuff and he had a sixth sense that alerted him to even a missing cotter key from his garage treasures! To conclude the story now would omit the “ugly” from this adventure. (“Ugly” is what

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happens in your life that your parents never directly hear about from you....) Now, my wagon was still at the top of the hill...yep you guessed it. Two boys aren't going to pull a wagon down a hill! Leaving the crippled derby car at the bottom, we huffed and puffed our way back up Simshauser's Hill. Without thinking or blinking, we both piled into my coaster wagon and it immediately took off at a terrifying speed! Have you ever steered a coaster wagon at 100 mph? Dying didn't enter the picture, but the possibility of grinding hair, flesh, and bones into that sand and gravel road greatly encouraged me to hold the handle steady. Well honestly, I was frozen in terror! Lynn, with his arms wrapped tightly around my waist, had placed his heels under my knees, and now having reached

mach speed, he held on to me like a panicked crab. I don't remember how loud we yelled, screamed, and cried like babies, but I suspect the deer hunting around that hill wasn't good for about two years. Now at the bottom, with spent voices and wobbly legs, we loaded the failed derby car on "the prized" wagon for the pull back home. Pumped with the thrill of survival, our failed derby car project was soon forgotten...we had ridden down the monster hill in a coaster wagon and lived! (But couldn't tell anybody about it... shucks.)

Back from that diversion to the beginning years, Lynn and I daily prowled and played together in and around the town of Clayton. His parents, Elmer and Izzy, ran the Ramble Inn together, so our house was his second home. Dad, Mom, and I loved him and we took him with us on our fishing and camping trips. My twin sister Rosie kindly put up with the both of us. With Lynn's dog Herkimer (Herky) and my dog Mikey tagging along, we would start off early in the morning for another full day of adventure and discovery. Mikey was a grumpy red American Cocker Spaniel who would snap (bite) even the hand that fed him. Herky was some type of short bull dog with lower teeth that stuck out like a cow catcher on a train engine. Neither pooch was tough or terrifying, but faithfully "dogged" us everywhere we went. Our moms seemed to think us safe with the dogs along, but the truth be known, whenever Lynn and I really needed them the most...theirs were the first two butts flying under the fence or down the

road! One time those pint sized guard dogs did stick with us to bark and carry on (cheer) while Lynn and I, armed with long branches, poked a stubborn super sized porcupine from out of a deserted clay culvert behind the brick plant. Thankfully (in character) they kept their distance as the porky ambled off still snorting, growling, and huffing. Both dogs were genuine avid leg lifters and private parts sniffers. They seemingly had the address and phone number of every female cur dog in town, but got chewed up over that info

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**Lynn in about 1949 in front of the Ramble Inn.**

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more than once when the scent of love was in the air!

Television and video games weren't around yet, so we recklessly created our own entertainment. At that time Lynn's Uncle Homer was the "World's Champion Rodeo Clown" and Elmer, Lynn's dad, was Homer's rodeo clown partner at the local rodeos.

They were really good to say the least! They had two very well trained small black mules. One was named "Mortimer Snerd" after one of ventriloquist's Edger Bergan's puppets. The other mule was "Parkyarkarkus," which was the nickname of successful comedian and writer Harry Parke. Did you know that Homer's mule was the first large animal in the United States to be flown on an airplane? "That's right, stoop and bow America, we are talking about Clayton here!" Those two mules would almost stand on their heads during a performance. It was a classy and funny show! Homer and Elmer would also compete with the tie down ropers. For short legs, those mules could catch a calf in a heart beat! Now during the summer, Mortimer and Parkyarkarkus would be tied to long ropes in a vacant lot north of our house. In our early school years Linnie and I would sneak up on them through the grass and tall weeds. Now, they would see us coming and turn their backsides to us on purpose. I can still remember one mule had a white painted circle around his rear end. While we were putting on the sneak, every once in awhile a mule would glance at us around his front shoulder or between his front legs as he pretended to eat. It was actually a game for all four of us! As they were secretly watching us move in closer, we focused on only one particular part of their anatomy. You see, before they would quickly spin around on their back legs to run at us, their tails would snap up and down. When those tails moved, we would run like #\*!!! I can still hear their thundering hooves as they bore down on us until they ran out of rope! I

don't know what would have happened if they did catch us or we tripped and fell. At that young age wisdom and experience were in short supply and not in demand. Anyway, what a hoot it was to scramble as fast as our little legs could carry us for safe ground!

Oh Linnie and I lived on the edge quite a bit in those days. Book matches were handy around his place, so we would help ourselves and often build a small fire in a grove of fir trees on the east side of town, while talking and acting like big shots. One day we found a big fat cigar butt along the sidewalk that ran in front of the Ramble Inn. Hiding it in a pocket we headed for our little fire site in the woods. Thankfully, mom soon called me for dinner, so I left Linnie in a cloud of cigar smoke. I ran home to eat but several minutes later there was a weak little knock on our door. White as a sheet, reeking of cigar smoke and all sweaty, he told mom that he was sick so she gently helped him onto the couch and placed a blanket on him. Of course, he turned down (for the first time) the invitation to eat with us. Me? I didn't say a word and kept my mouth full of food to avoid answering any questions. That was the same day I placed my new comb like a makeshift grill over our little fire and then realized I still had to use that melted object for a long time! You just didn't report those mishaps to your parents but instead gritted your teeth every morning when you combed your hair.

Thankfully there were several things that our mothers only pondered in their hearts and chose never to reveal to our fathers. In those days dads were only two or three notches under the grim reaper. Don't believe me? Each one of them owned a thick worn leather razor strap and I even heard some had the words "I need thee every hour" on the front! Mothers were different, yet they could totally obliterate a fine and wonderful day with these few words..."I'm going to tell your father about this

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when he gets home.” That one sentence could quickly force Lynn and me to become “angelic” for the rest of the afternoon in hopes of lessening the

work. Women, were inwardly rejoicing...now, flakes of jet black soot would no longer fill the sky on wash day! They had to often run outside to pull their washed clothes off the line or re-wash them



**Elmer Holcomb, Lynn’s Father, during one of his dangerous rodeo clown performances**

certain invasion of our hinder parts.... Actually we felt a lot of love from our parents. Of course, there was old fashioned discipline when needed, but it taught us what and where the limits were and made it safe and comfortable to live within those limits. It sure beat getting yelled at constantly...or having a waffling parent standing in a public place, counting to ten like lots of kids endure or ignore today!

With our upper grade school days upon us, the Clayton brickyard closed forever. It was a sad day for our town’s future and for all the men out of

whenever the kilns were fired up. (What’s a dryer?) Our snow was usually polka dotted with black soot so we never ate it or wore white snow suits! For Lynn and me, the plant closing with inventory and machinery removed, opened a whole new world of old buildings to explore. The awareness of men and history permeated that place; not in a haunting way, but a single glove in the dirt, an old footprint, a greasy rag, a worn out cap, spoke of a living someone with a purpose who had been there before us and we revered those finds. Lynn and I eventu-

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ally knew that place like the back of our hands. We would cross the highway and railroad tracks and then hide to watch as Scotty, a service station owner and plant guard (self appointed we were told) would drive his car to the brickyard to look for us. In a few minutes he would drive away and this world of adventure was ours. [I can proudly and honestly say that in all the years Lynn and I adventured in and around Clayton we never even once defaced, damaged, or destroyed anything that wasn't ours. Our parents taught us respect and value. We had a good time with lasting warm and wonderful memories rather than regrets.] Our folks knew we frequented the brick plant, and felt there was nothing left that anyone wanted and little there to get hurt on.

There were favorite places in and around that old brickyard that drew us like flies to honey. It was the woods and water and especially a small cart on a set of rails leading into a dark tunnel that probably was used to deliver bricks to the kilns. It had a waist high horizontal pipe brake across the front to stop it. We would push the cart up to the top of the track and then ride it down into the darkness. When we judged we were almost out of track, we would slam the brake bar down and stop on a dime... fortunately we never hit the end wall.

Springtime had us designing and making small wooden boats to float in the winter run off between the plant and Main Street. It meant wet feet and pant legs, but I can't remember getting into trouble for it. Spring also meant it was time to find two good gunnysacks plus my coaster wagon and hike the highway to Deer Park and back picking up discarded bottles thrown from car windows during the winter months. We would nearly fill both sacks up with those empties. We always headed to Matt's Tavern where Matt or Kate would count them out and pay us. Some bottles were dirty, wet, and a little barfy, but those two folks were always kind and generous to us. We had permission to go into

Matt's beer can storage shed behind the tavern to find cans that had been opened on both sides of the top of the can (no pop tops then). We would then retrieve wire loops from the newspaper box in front of the post office. By running one end of the loop through those holes and up to join the other end, we could grab those loops with each hand and walk on the cans like short stilts. Those cans were made of tin and very tough. It took a real man to crush one of those cans with only one hand! Well buddy, Clayton didn't have a movie theater, video game store, or YMCA; but it was a place in those days where every kid was made to feel important and special. At least, we thought everyone liked us!

Summer meant streams, lakes, and ponds. We swam in the lakes and floated the old brickyard clay ponds. It was a Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer life for us. I fell off a makeshift raft one day and really took a dunking. Not to worry, we both could swim like fish, but that time it led to virus pneumonia and a lifetime of related allergies. Back then it seemed a small price to pay for our hours of floating fun.

Now, we loved swimming in Loon Lake, and my mom drove us up there for swimming lessons at Cedar Beau Bay each summer. I can still hear the Juke-box and the "thump, boing, rattle rattle, boing, rattle rattle, boing, kalooooop" of the pinball machines...and wow could Lynn rack up the points! He was one clever and experienced gamester and I was proud to be his friend and stand beside him as he played!

I can still recall one of those summer days at Loon Lake when the little bit of pride and macho we had earned in life nearly went south! We were being tested for our Junior Life saving badge. While standing on the dock with the other kids, it took just one look at the person we were to rescue in water about 20 feet deep, to suddenly face true fear. I can imagine Lynn's white freckled legs were trembling

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like mine were (we probably even held hands for a moment) as this girl/woman sauntered out onto the dock. Towering at least two feet above our heads, she wore a real adult bathing suit and filled it out quite well, thank you. The instructor said, "Now, I have told Miss (name withheld to protect the writer) to act like an actual drowning person! She is going to fight you, kick you, and pull you under..." Under the water! We both knew we had finally gotten in over our heads so to speak. Now as I stood there shaking in my suit, I rehearsed in my mind the procedure that would require me to at the last moment dive down and turn her around by her feet, putting me at her back side and then I would quickly grab her under the chin and pull her onto her back. Next, skillfully I would just to throw my arm across her CHEST (which lacked any meaningful suit covering), grab her armpit and gracefully pull her in like any skinny life saving water knight in a tight brief-style bathing suit would do. I watched the others and it appeared to be not so simple...I was petrified with fear to say the least! Several of the kids couldn't "git er done" and boy she was enjoying each personal victory. At that rate it didn't take long until it was my turn, and I timidly resolved not to be the loser of this thriller in the water, or better yet, the "drownee!" I jumped in (proper procedure) and swam to the girl/woman. She began thrashing like a barn cat in the horse trough...I mean everything was moving at once! I thought about a right cross to her chin (not proper procedure) rather than diving for her legs which looked about six feet long and were striking viciously. All of a sudden she violently kicked me under the water and wow did I feel it! I gulped air before I went under, yet knowing there was no way she was going to let me turn her around! Grabbing at everything in that churning water that was kicking, slapping and punching me I luckily latched onto a flailing arm and all of a sudden I was at her backside. Clawing my way to the surface I grabbed the stunned girl/woman under the chin while des-

perately pulling her onto her back in one panic induced motion, then I shot my right hand into the air and threw it over her chest and oops...my kid length arm couldn't reach her armpit! Quickly I grabbed her by a suit strap and any loose skin I could pinch with my fingers. I'm telling you it was desperation time...I was out of options! Boy, did that take the fight out of her! With slight progress, I swam and swam and swam while trying to pull her to the dock. Finally the instructor declared me successful. The girl/woman, although still painfully stunned, was alive. I released my grip, but was afraid to look back as I weakly swam to the dock. She certainly didn't smile or look my way as she walked by after the test either! Some gotta win... some gotta lose. As I remember, that was one adventure Lynn and I never again talked much about. It was a close match, but we both shivered away from there knowing win or lose, we had survived a fight with the wild girl/woman in deep water!

During the summer at around 9 or so years of age we decided to build a straw fort with the few bales left in a small abandoned plant building along the railroad tracks. The fort actually was just a small cave, but nevertheless a fort in our minds. It also afforded another secret hiding place from the big kid in town. That is, until he found it and started taking his girlfriend over there! Her new boyfriend found out! So next, this new kid actually beat the "loving urges" out of the big kid and that made the little kids (Red and Ed) a bit relieved. I do look back and shudder to think that we actually smoked straw stems and even one or two cigarettes in our straw cave! God must have had a special Angel watching over us from His heavenly fire department with a large bucket of water in each hand....

I was with Lynn as we watched his father use a long bull snake (whip) to cut off a cigarette sticking out from a man's lips. I was rattled for several

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minutes after hearing that big snake crack like lightning and pieces of cigarette float in the air. I can hear it clearly now some 60 years later, and it still makes me tense up!

I was with Linnie when he picked up a rock and threw it towards a creek only to hit my mother in the head, and boy did the blood run...so did Linn!

I was with Linnie on one of our family camping trips when he waved a flaming marshmallow in the air to put the fire out, only to stick it to the side of my face! Another time and place Linnie offered me a tablespoon of sweet and wonderful sauce from the Ramble Inn. At his urging, I swallowed it down in one big gulp...it was Tabasco Sauce! Acting so concerned, he handed me a glass of water to put out the flames!

I was with Linnie sitting on the back of his dad's mule which was tied to a post at the Colville rodeo, when a bigger smarty acting kid walked up and said something like "anyone could sit on a trained mule like that." Elmer lifted us off and put that smirking kid up on the bare back of that mule. I still can't figure out what Elmer did, but that Mule promptly bucked big smarty and his cheesy grin off onto the ground! Then Elmer reached down and put us back upon the mule without saying a word. Heartless and rough maybe, but it sure made two little guys feel big and important at the time...but we did a lot of looking back over our shoulder the rest of the afternoon.

I was with Linnie when his dad saw us in the barn loft sitting on a stack of canvas tarp covered boxes that just happened to be dynamite and primer caps... didn't know a man could yell so loud and boys jump so high and far! However to our defense, Elmer earlier had talked us into eating some boiled road kill porcupine at the house. I think we were actually just sitting in the loft trying to keep it down.



**Lynn dressed as a rodeo clown in about 1951.  
Clayton Brickyard is in the background.**

I was with Linnie at Camp Cowles Boy Scout camp on Newman Lake when the recruited army shooting instructor, in our first session, asked the question "what breed of cow looks like a deer?" Our hands shot into the air, but by the grace of God "Ole Sarge" chose another scout to answer the loaded question. That kid read our minds and shouted out "a jersey cow!" With that, our instructor exploded in a shouting temper infused lecture about the difference between a cow and a deer! I mean, he came unglued and I almost did a childish thing in my pants! You should have heard him...I believe the ground actually shook; and he could yell a stream of five hundred words without taking a single breath! Linnie and I did a lot of campouts with the scouts and attended most of the meetings, but that one moment defined scouting for the rest of my life! The

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moral of the story to my knowledge is that Lynn and I never shot a jersey cow by accident or on purpose while hunting deer.... Scouting in Clayton was full of adventure and learning. Lynn and I learned early that you didn't let the scoutmaster's boys take off their Converse sneakers in the tent! Those tear gas/garbage cans they wore on their feet nearly brought on temporary blindness! Honestly, that leader and his sons were some of the kindest and most helpful people I have ever met.

I was with Lynn fishing Beaver Creek almost every day in the summer while avoiding the mud bogs (tub springs,) snakes, and catching many brook trout. My sister recently asked me "what were mud bogs?" I explained that they were like quick sand but only deep juicy mud. Some of them were over 10 feet deep and 3 or 4 feet in diameter. We had long poles standing in some of the larger ones, just to poke in them for fun and as a reminder of their presence. "Do you mean Dad and Mom let you go down there alone she asked?" "Yes, sort of...Dad made certain we knew our way around before ever letting us venture alone" was my answer. I seriously doubt Mom ever knew of the danger. In one area near Olson Rd. there was about an acre of lush green meadow ground that would roll up and down like waves when we jumped on it. The cows walked on it and, so did we! Lynn and I would take turns fishing the holes in the creek with a small spinner tied above our hook and worm. The fish we took home averaged between 6 and 10 inches, but one particular hole was home to a big one. We each had him on a couple of times, but above the water only once. He would always break the line or pull the hook out.

I was with Lynn when along the creek, cattle would invitingly stare at us from behind barbed wire fences.... One day, since the fish weren't biting, we belly crawled into a herd of cattle with our dogs sneaking along behind us. Without warning, while still on our bellies, we were suddenly

confronted by a semi-circle of black faces mooing and snorting as they pawed the ground to within a yard in front of our faces! One glance at Lynn and we were up and running with fishing lines and worms flying in the summer air. The dogs were barely under the fence when right behind them we dove headfirst between the ground and lowest strand of barbed wire! Reaching back into the pasture, before even catching our breath, we grabbed our fishing stuff as big black faces arrived, blowing snot and grinning at us just a fence strand away! We were only funning, but they must have been having a bad day!

I was with Lynn another time on Beaver creek, with arms and fishing poles above our heads to avoid the chest high grass and stinging nettles, I parted some of the tall grass with my foot and suddenly my brain switched to "panic!" Right in front of my toe was a large skunk! When I abruptly stopped, Lynn knew something wasn't right, so he cautiously poked one eye around my shoulder just as the skunk was preparing to spray! That black and white stinker jacked his rear end up in the air, laid his tail flat on his back and with a pssst, shot a gray putrid fog right towards our bug eyed faces! Immediately turning and burning, we left him a half mile of that creek bottom to play in before stopping! Phew...What a mess!

I was with Lynn the many times we shinned up 20 foot tall young Aspen trees until they bent over with our weight, and then would hang on until touching the ground or the tree broke off. By the next week they would be upright again and we would be back for more tree floating! I believe some call it skinning cats.

Now, in the winter months it was Lynn, Rosie, and yours truly sledding down a tall snow covered clay hill without a snowmobile to pull us up...a what? Sometimes a country kid's dad or grandpa

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would volunteer to pull us behind his car or tractor on the county roads with our sleds all tied together. The front sledder sucked in exhaust and the back guy was covered with snow...but when they took a corner too sharply, we all ate grass, rocks, dirt, water, and sometimes a fence! After just one horrific terrifying trip through a deep county ditch behind a maniacal or senile driver, we would yell "corner" and anyone with a lick of sense would roll off to avoid another bruising! We then ran and screamed for what seemed like miles before the driver would finally stop and let us flop exhausted onto our sleds. Guys, can you still see that grinning

a big hill at Gettman's farm, my sister was hit in the head by a toboggan. A couple hours later in the farmhouse light, we could see that her hair was a bloody mess and she required stitches. Now, everyone felt sorry for her...even me. We may have been small town kids, but tough came with the package!

There weren't many cuts or bruises that sent us home for a band aid or a kiss on an "owee." You know, I just can't remember that little red head running home for any reason but one...a new boy named Steve moved to our town for a short time during the winter. Lynn and I first met him one

afternoon after pulling each other thru the snow on a spade shovel. (We should have patented that ride...ha!) Lynn was standing on the upper side of the street corner, leaning on the shovel handle when Steve must have said something Lynn didn't like. Today, I can't remember any part of the conversation, but Lynn suddenly snatched up that shovel and threw it like a spear at Steve. It was so quick and unexpected that it hit across the bridge of his nose before he could get his hands up...creating a haunting sound of crunching bone and cartilage. Steve, grabbing his bloody nose, ran south for

home and Lynn ran north to the Ramble Inn. I stumbled east for my house with the shovel and a sick feeling inside. As the sun was setting in the west, I saw Elmer heading down to the new kid's house to possibly "make things right." I can't remember what Lynn received from the same "make it right" department, but you can bet it wasn't a Opat

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Rosie and Eddie Nordby and friends dressed for Halloween. Lynn Holcomb is in the middle with the stocking cap. Marvin Calicoat's garage is in the background.

face and hear the chortle as the driver poked his head out of that warm pickup cab while pretending he hadn't heard our yelling? If your sled didn't sag in front and have black tape on it or a board missing, then you were a newcomer to county road sledding or foolishly had your new Christmas sled with you. One night, while Linnie, my self, several other kids and parents were sledding by firelight on

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on the head! Steve didn't stay in Clayton long (who would blame him), but I do remember seeing his taped up black and blue face a few times. Wow, that was a rough day, and it is hard to write about it even now.

The main highway went right through our town at that time, and brought quite a few visitors and activity. The war was over and Clayton, USA was on the rise! Lynn and I saw a lot of life's other side in Clayton. From fistfights behind the taverns to men and women relieving themselves on the back porch of the bar because the outhouse was occupied or they just couldn't stumble that far! Actually we witnessed more smiles, hugs, and handshakes than the other stuff. On early summer evenings we used to walk the short streets and sidewalks that were called the main part of town. While Hank Thompson blared over the juke

box in the Ramble Inn, the click of the pool balls and loud laughter poured thru the screen door of Matt's Tavern just down the street. Ray, Carl, and Don kept the service station open for late travelers. Why, we even had a barber shop in town owned by Sam Morris. He would let us sit in there, on padded chairs that prevented our feet from touching the floor, and eaves drop in on the conversations and look at magazines, while sniffing in the lotions and tonics that wafted in the air. Those memories hold a lot of fond thoughts for me, and I thank God that Red Holcomb was by my side in those days.

We had a small post office along the front sidewalk in which hung a poster that must have been put



**Mrs. Nordby, Rosie, Eddie and Lynn having a picnic on Boyer Mountain.**

there before we were born. Through the fly spots on the poster, we studied the lesson of the wise hard working ant and the lazy foolish grasshopper. The pictures that mesmerized Lynn and me however, were the mug shots on the post office wall! Mug shots and a description of wanted criminals were posted in every post office back then. They all looked mean and menacing to us. We would however, go back day after day to look at those most wanted...and once in awhile there would be a woman thug on the wall! We had one black man living in Clayton who lived on the south end of town near the barber's house. Although we learned

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many years later that at that time black people were being treated poorly in southern states, he didn't have to sit in the back of the room, drink at another hose, or use a special broken down outhouse in Clayton. He was another friendly guy to Lynn and me. He didn't live in a mansion, yet when we visited him, it was clean and warm. We had a large general, grocery, and meat store that stood where the Post office is located today. It burned down one day because of a fire in the meat lockers. Since our house was located right behind the store, it didn't take my father long to get home from the sawmill in Deer Park once he received word of the fire!

In the fall Lynn and I helped my folks rake up the leaves and then roasted apples and potatoes in the burning pile. We listened to the whine of the buzz saw as neighbor helped neighbor cut up his winter supply of wood. We threw a ball over the house roof to whoever was "it." After catching the ball, he/she then ran around the house to tag someone else. You had a 50/50 chance of running the right way around the house.... We slid down grass hills on cardboard pieces, played catch with a baseball while using mitts handed down by our dads. Mine was thick, black, and as flat as old road kill. We didn't catch a baseball as often as we just simply slapped it out of the air with our flat mitts...or threw them at the incoming ball. For hours we played cowboys with cap guns. I still have a red handled Gene Autry cap pistol that probably shot holes through Lynn back in those days. Dad was given an antique single shot .22 by my uncle, and dad soldered the breech solid and let us play with it. A stack of folded caps behind that hammer made a deafening noise. When my uncle wanted it back... he was a little ticked off at my dad's cleverness. Sometimes we got to take a BB gun after birds around the town buildings. As I can remember we shot just one sparrow. With a big lump in our throats, we swore off ever doing that again. We took out a swallow with a lucky shot and just

looked at him laying on the ground in stunned fashion...like one looks at a dead comrade. The shooting that stopped the killing spree was when after about 200 shots from a BB gun we knocked a red winged blackbird off a cattail on a pond near the school. That event wiped out his song and sent him and his beautiful colored feathers to a watery grave below. He used to bounce around from cattail to cattail singing to us as we walked to school...we had killed a friend and it was the last song bird murder we ever committed. For me, that still holds true today....

Clayton was always small during our growing up years, like the wild roses that bloomed along the sidewalk leading to the school, but like the scent of the roses, the life impact of that little town and one little red haired boy still lingers in my mind and heart....

I think of skating in the firelight on ponds behind the brick plant. I reminisce often on the beautiful memories of Lynn, Rosie and my self. With our parents old used skates tied on over many pairs of socks, we became skaters when we finally quit using the ankle leather as part of our skating technique, and actually balanced on the blade itself! Our ankles were like cast iron before the end of skating season from hours of balancing on those adult size skates. Down the road a few years, when our feet stopped growing, we bought our own skates that fit right and improved our skating about 50 times over! It was the creaking and popping of the freezing ice in the darkness, the cold cheeks and laughing voices that echoed across the ice and not the size of the skates that made it so sacred. The bonfire, the stars and moon, and great Clayton friends....ah what simple and sublime times.... I've skated in several rinks since those days and they just don't hold a candle to the old brickyard ponds on a squeaky cold night in Clayton!

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I think of our bicycles, which topped the chart when it came to owning used stuff! They usually sported several hand brushed paint jobs in pastel blue, yellow, or pink. Our own first bikes were fat tired girl's style bicycles from our cousins in Spokane. Oh boy, one had a basket and faded streamers hanging from the handle grips! Could have come right off the set of Wizard of Oz! In those days we were thankful for anything, and those bicycles sounded pretty good with clothes pins holding playing cards against the spokes...sounded like a swarm of bees. At first a girl's bike made for easier riding, but honestly, if a kid showed up with a true "boy's bike", I felt like hiding my girls bike in the woodshed! The first bike I saw Lynn ride other than our bikes was a tall boy's model with skinny tires. I swear the seat was just below his chin and the bar at his chest level! "That bike is way too big for him," I thought as he pushed it towards me. Lynn had a knack for pulling it off, even in his early years. He could fix his own meals and fend for himself as just a little squirt in Clayton. He was a star at resourcefulness, and true to form he put on a bike riding clinic that day! Without hesitation, he reached across that chest high center bar and grabbed a handle with his right hand and the nearest handle with his left. He placed his right foot under the center bar and onto the right pedal in its upper position. With his entire body hanging off to the left side below the seat and bar, he gave a push and caught the left pedal as it came up...riding off like a circus monkey clinging to the side of that big bike! That is the way he always rode the thing (which was probably his brother Lyle's) until he could reach the pedals while sitting on the seat. All of us tried doing that later and found it harder than you could imagine. If you want to really tweak your body or pull a hamstring, just try it.

I can hear our laughter and sometimes pain...once in awhile we were afraid, but life was mostly good...Clayton embraced us...we were friends...

and we went to church. Mrs. Stelting, the Sunday School Superintendent, gave us Christmas and Easter verses to learn and recite at the Clayton Community Church programs, and she was a stickler about holding to a theme and honoring Jesus in those events! Brother, did it become awfully embarrassing when we got older and put off our memorization until the last minute! It was tough to act noble and intelligent in a packed out church when you with your pant legs above your white socks, followed a curly haired 4 year old reciting her piece perfectly and later you just mumbled and stumbled through yours! One Easter we were almost off the hook. A young visiting kid, at the last minute, was volunteered by relatives to sing. Mrs. Stelting introduced the cute little addition to her well planned program, and he launched into a loud solo rendition of "Here comes Peter Cottontail". No one dared laugh, there was some applause, Mrs. Stelting was visibly embarrassed, and I think Lynn and I hoped the rest of the program would now be cancelled before our turn. Of course, no such luck.... The preacher did let us ring the large church bell on alternating Sundays unless some other wet eyed kid asked to do it. Pastor would stand there staring at his watch and than give a nod. At the first Gonnng of that bell, we became despised by every person in Clayton still suffering from a Saturday night hangover, worked a late shift, walked a screaming baby all night, or were just skipping church! It was a tough assignment and a heavy bell rope to pull too...almost lifting our feet off the ground, but we pulled that rope with one of us watching on, until he gave another nod. It made us feel really important...and that was good for both Lynn and me.

Prominent in my mind is my last visit in his home, Lynn said, "You never knew this, but I dressed myself and fixed my lunch for the first day of school with you and Rosie, but my birthday (Nov. 2, 1944) made me late by two months...so they sent

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me home alone.” In life he often walked alone and took a lot of undeserving licks along the way, but never strayed from being a good man of principle and kindness. He fought battles over the effects of the Viet Nam War and the grip of the bottle and won! He was a big big man.... Give me your best definition of a friend and then let me add Lynn’s name and picture to it...with a gentle handshake and a sly grin, he always made you feel like you

really mattered to him and I was always sorry when he quietly walked away....

I have a framed calendar from 1944 with a picture of two boys and one girl with a dog at their side, sitting at the edge of a lake. I pointed it out to Rosie in a Bozeman, Montana, antique shop and she secretly bought it and had it framed for me after I said, “that looks just like you, me, and Lynn...to us it is priceless and to us so was Lynn Holcomb.

### Lalia Williamson Update

In the May and August Mortarboards of 2012 there

were articles about Clayton residents Elmer E., Laila Williamson and their children. At that time



Clayton Home Ec group circa 1948. Front row l to r- Lulu Twidwell, Pearl Christianson, Lena Berger, Dorothy Steele, Lalia Williamson. Back row- Alma Berger, Ella Gibson, Lucy Berg, Edith (Christianson)Welch, and Ammi Higgins. *Courtesy Don Berger*

we hadn't found a good picture of Laila Williamson. Don Berger gave us the picture, on the previous page. It is a picture of the Clayton Home Ec. group from about 1948. Laila is in the front row on

the right side. Don Berger's, mother, Alma, is in the back row, left side. Bob Gibson's mom, Ella, is next to Alma Berger. Alan Berg's mom, Lucy, is next to Ella.

## Clayton/ Deer Park Historical Society Minutes — October 12, 2013

In attendance: Lonnie Jenkins, Ella Jenkins, Sue Rehms, Marie Morrill, Betty Burdette, Bill Sebright, Sharon Clark, Pete Coffin, Judy Coffin, Don Reiter, Mary Jo Reiter, Penny Hutten, Roxanne Camp, Kay Parkin, Marilyn Reilly, Mark Wagner, Mike Reiter, Norma Calmes, Grace Hubal, and Lorraine Nord.

Society President, Bill Sebright called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. He reported: 1) The next Heritage Network meeting will be on Monday, October 21, at 9:30 AM at the Clayton School, Room # 105. 2) He picked up four 1936 and one 1940 *Deer Park Union* newspapers from Heidi and Lorne Inman. 3) Welcome to Gary Ross of Phoenix, AZ. He joined this month. Gary has many relatives in the area including the Inmans. We have been emailing back and forth discussing our memories of the people and places of the area. 4) Nicolas Dahl contacted us about his relatives in the area. 5) Wally Parker sent an email from Linda Munson. She is looking for information on Costantinos of Clayton. We are hoping that Duane Costa can give us some information.

Treasurer, Mark Wagner reported: The regular checking account stands at \$3,638.46. Activity for the month included \$32.15 check written to Sharon Clark for supplies. Web hosting account had \$117.17 with a \$10.95 withdrawal for web hosting. The CD will be maturing soon and we'll renew.

Grace Hubal, Secretary, report that she sent out several 'thinking of you' cards.

Vice President, Pete Coffin reported: 1) Provided historical land ownership data to Ms. Tammy Connelly on Section 36-T29N-R41EWM in Williams Valley. 2) Provided digital *Deer Park Union*

newspaper clippings to Mr. Jim Gyovai of Albany, Oregon covering the Bug Hill Gold Mine, also the Quartz Mountain Silica Mine South-southeast of Mount Spokane. This mine was reported to the Washington Department of Natural Resources this summer. They were unaware that the Quartz Mine was once considered a gold mine. 3) Scanned a picture of the Arcadia Orchards Castleman Packing Crew at a resolution of 1600 dpi so individuals can be recognized. 4) Provided historical land ownership data to Mr. Denny Fleenor of Seattle in sections 11 and 14 of Township 29 North-Range 41 EastWM that he had inherited from his grandmother. 5) Had the folio sized Metsker Township Ownership maps digitized. The object is to use them to draft a set of readable sized ownership maps at one scale for all years ownership data is available (homestead owners, 1905, 1912, 1930, 1940, 1950, and 1957) for review in our booth and for easy reference. 6) Sent Ken Westby a set of the *Deer Park Union-Tri-County Tribune* PDF file digital newspapers.

Print editor, Sharon Clark reported: The October 2013 Mortarboard #66 was distributed. Articles included: 1) DRAG RACING AT DEER PARK by Greg Fury and Peter Coffin. 2) WALTER M. LEUTHOLD and SAM LEUTHOLD.

Webmaster Director, Penny Hutten reported: She's still searching for someone to take over the website. 2) The October Westerners' meeting will be on October 17 at 7 PM at the Holiday Inn Spokane-Airport Hotel. The theme will be on Evolution of the Women's Club in Spokane. The speaker will be Rosanne Small.. 3) Spokane Valley Heritage  
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Museum's 9th Annual Heritage Program & Silent Auction. It'll be on November 16 at the Opportunity Presbyterian Church from 11:30-1:30 PM. The theme is 150th anniversary of the Civil War. There will be a Civil War re-enactments.

Sharon Clark announced that she'd like to step down as Editor. It's become difficult for her. Dis-

cussion followed. Suggestions are warmly welcomed.

Clayton Day was discussed. We are looking for ideas and volunteers.

Next meeting: Saturday, November 9, 9 AM at the Clayton Drive-In.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 AM.

The meeting minutes submitted by Grace Hubal, Secretary

## Editorial Policy Regarding Correcting Errors and/or Omissions

Information published here is compiled from many sources, including personal memories. It is often difficult or impossible to verify such recollections through outside documentation. Our editorial policy toward the veracity of personal recollections tends toward the casual – since little harm is normally done by such errors. But our editorial process also invites public review and input regarding the accuracy of the information we publish, and when such review either suggests or reveals errors or items open to dispute our “Letters” department will act as a forum allowing the airing of such disagreements in an effort to ascertain the truth and correct any probable or demonstrated errors. We also believe it’s important that such disagreements be recorded, even if they can’t be settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

We encourage everyone to submit any arguments as to fact to the editor in writing — since the written form reduces the chance of further misunderstandings. As is standard policy, all letters will be edited for spelling, word usage, clarity, and — if necessary — contents. If advisable, the editor will confer directly with the letter writers to insure that everyone’s comments and corrections are submitted in a literate, polite, and compelling manner — as best suits the editorial image of this Society’s publications.

## Society Want Ads

**WANTED:** Information and photos regarding the history of the Brickyard/Ramble In Tavern

**WANTED:** Any stories and photos of your family’s history in connection with their occupations and settlement in the Clayton/Deer Park Area

**WANTED:** Any stories and photos from Williams Valley #452 and Gardenspot Grange#78 Contact: Ann Fackenthall, WVG

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**Visit our Web Site: [cdphs.org](http://cdphs.org)**