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THE
CLAYTON/DEER PARK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Mortarboard

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Part Three of
Tuffy's War: The Alvin "Tuffy" Luhr Story

— told by Tuffy Luhr —
— written by Wally Lee Parker —

... pieces of airplanes falling ...

Having received notice of his brother's death in a telegram from his step-father, Tuffy was given immediate leave from basic training to return home.

Tuffy recalls, "Orland's accident occurred on Saturday, August 19th, 1944. Military personnel had priority over civilians on the airlines, and the Red Cross arranged to have a colonel going on a golfing holiday bumped off a flight so I could get home.

"Orland's wife, Holly, had been living down in Arizona. A young lieutenant by the name of Borick escorted her up to Clayton.

"A few months before Orland's death, Orland had escorted the body of another boy killed in Arizona home to Oregon. That was something they did. The Army Air Corps would send someone to help the family make arrangements and such. Orland had stopped home after he had finished up in Oregon. I think Orland knew the boy he'd transported — just like Lieutenant Borick had known Orland.

"Lieutenant Borick and Holly stayed with the family out at Clayton. That's how we learned what actually happened to Orland. We asked the Lieutenant, and he told us. And from what I heard," Tuffy concluded with an anger still lingering sixty-four years after the event, "it just seemed so damn

*An Army Air Force AT-6 Trainer in flight — 1943. The 'X' preceding the plane's number indicates that the aircraft was based at Luke Field, Arizona.
Photo courtesy Trey Brandt — www.fadedcontrails.com*



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pointless that my brother died making what amounted to a Hollywood propaganda film!"

During World War II, residents of communities everywhere were understandably interested in hearing any news about local boys who were serving in the military. The upsetting story printed in the Monday, August 21st edition of the *Spokesman-Review* had most likely traveled all around Clayton and Deer Park before this article appeared.

"Orland Berg, son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Berg of Clayton, was killed in a plane crash Saturday on an Arizona airfield, according to a telegram received by E. K. Westby. He was an instructor and was up with a student when the crash occurred, caused when the student became panicky. Berg began his flying experience in Deer Park."

At that time, most local residents knew Orland under his stepfather's last name, as stated above. Any official notice coming from the military would have used the name appearing on his birth certificate — Luhr.

Tuffy Luhr, when asked why E. K. Westby's name would have appeared in the *Spokesman-Review* article, replied, "He owned Westby's Mercantile in Clayton, and I think he had a Western Union office in his store. So he would have been the first person to see any telegram about Orland's death."

On Thursday, the 24th, the following appeared in the *Deer Park Union*.

"Lieutenant Orland Luhr, son of Mrs. Peter Berg of Clayton, was killed in an airplane crash last week at an army training post near Phoenix, Arizona. He has served some time as a flying instructor there, and was instructing a student when the accident occurred that cost both their lives."

"He is survived by his wife, Holly, of Phoenix; his mother, Mrs. Peter Berg of Clayton, stepfather, Peter Berg of Clayton; four sisters, Mrs. Mildred Goodwin of Memphis, Tenn., and Betty, Bertha, and Mary Lu Berg of Clayton; and two brothers, Pvt. Alvin Luhr stationed at Camp Blanding, Florida, and A/s Allen Berg, stationed at Merced, California."

"The body will be received by the Lauer Funeral Home Saturday morning. Funeral arrangements have not yet been made."

The details of the accident itself, as printed in the two newspaper articles above, are almost to the letter wrong. At this point, the source or sources

of the incorrect information can only be speculation. What is known is that the Army Air Corps protocol was to first contact the wives of the airmen killed in such incidents, or the parents when the airmen were unmarried. Holly Luhr was living in Phoenix at the time, and the first notification regarding Orland's accident should have been directed to her — which government documents seem to confirm.

It is likely that the investigation into Orland's death would have begun before the telegram was received at the Clayton store. Since the *Spokesman-Review* article appeared on the Monday after the Saturday accident, it's probable that Westby's Mercantile received the telegram in question late Saturday or sometime Sunday. If the military was responsible for said telegram, it's doubtful there would have been time to gather sufficient facts to officially forward any conclusions as to circumstances. The details appearing in the above articles were probably speculative embellishments added to non-official telegrams from Arizona, or after the news had reached Clayton — since E. K. Westby was cited as the local source.

Early in 1943, Tuffy Luhr's younger brother, Orland, volunteered for service in the United States Army Air Corps. Orland had a high school diploma from Deer Park, the pilot's license he had earned in the cockpit of the local group's Piper Cub, plus the advanced flying lessons taken at Spokane's Calkins Field. All this, added to the government's frantic need for military pilots, allowed him to enlist as an officer candidate.

By March of 1943, Orland had completed his basic flight training at Lemoore Army Flying School in southern California. Flight training consisted of three or four levels — depending on the degree of prior experience. The first level, 'Primary', was often conducted by civilian contractors. The types of planes these contractors used were designs evolved from World War I bi-planes — two tandem open cockpits, upper and lower wings, single engines. These aircraft were relatively slow and forgiving — making them suitable for novice pilots. Orland's prior experience would have allowed him to by-pass this phase.

'Basic' or 'Secondary' flying school consisted of nine weeks and about seventy hours of airtime in craft such as the Vultee BT-13 - a single wing plane similar in appearance to a typical WWII fighter, though without the capability of retracting its

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landing gear. Again relatively slow and forgiving, the 'BT' in this plane's designation stood for Basic Trainer.

An April 18th, 1943, article in the *Deer Park Union* stated that Orland had just graduated from the basic flying school at Lemoore Army Flying School in California.

At the end of this training the pilot candidates would be well acquainted with the fundamentals of military flying — night, instrument, formation, and cross-country. A decision would be made at graduation as to whether the candidate would go on to either a single or twin engine advanced flying school. Single engine schools were intended to produce fighter pilots, twin engine schools were directed toward bomber and transport pilots.

War Department records state that, on May 20th, 1943, Orland Luhr — service number O-745245 (The first character in his serial number is the letter 'O', indicating a commissioned officer.) - achieved pilot status with the Army Air Force. An article appearing in the *Deer Park Union* stated that Orland "received his Army Air Force wings" and commission as a 2nd Lieutenant, "at a ceremony at Luke Field, Arizona."

Orland received special training as a Formation Flight Instructor and, in December of 1943, was assigned to the 3028th Army Air Force Base Unit — again at Luke Field. The function of the Luke Field training center — located approximately twenty miles northwest of Phoenix — was to teach future fighter pilots the basics of gunnery and combat tactics.

Orland's job was to steer pilot's through nine weeks of training in the single engine, tandem seat AT-6 — the 'AT' standing for Advanced Trainer. Candidates successfully completing this part of the Army Air Force curriculum would receive their wings and continue on to a course of transitional training intended to qualify them in the specific type of fighter they would fly in combat.

Beginning in late 1940, the majority of North American Aviation's AT-6's were built at the company's new facilities near Dallas — a fact that earned the plane the nickname 'Texan'.

Weighing just over two tons, the plane had a wingspan of 42 feet, a length of almost 30 feet, and stood about twelve feet high. It was powered by a 550 horsepower, air cooled, 9-cylinder radial engine. This was the first plane with a retractable landing

gear that most student pilots would have flown. A second set of controls inside the tandem cockpit gave the instructor the ability to fly the plane from the rear seat whenever necessary.

Although classified as a trainer, and never used as a combat aircraft by the military in World War II, military pilots considered this aircraft very much a war-bird. With a maximum speed barely above 200 mph, and a service ceiling of 21,000 feet, it was not as capable as fighters like the P-51 Mustang. But the general feeling was that in many ways the AT-6 was harder to fly than a P-51 — though much more forgiving to pilot error — and as such, once a pilot had mastered the Texan, he was ready for just about anything.

Most agree the hardest part of flying the Texan was landing. Once it touched the runway, if not held in a tight, straight line by a pilot quick on brakes and rudder, the plane wanted to "ground loop" — spin to the side and flip over. Because of this tendency, more than a few novice pilots ended up looking at the runway while hanging upside-down in their harnesses.

Due to a superficial resemblance, the AT-6 was often used in Hollywood movies as a stand-in for Japan's famous Zero fighter. So frequent did this occur that the AT-6 became known among filmmakers as the 'Hollywood Zero'.

The official Army Air Corps accident report — a document that in wartime arguably strived more for expedience than thoroughness — contains five eyewitness statements gleaned from the 30 plus pilots and at least 26 other aircrew in the air at the time of Orland's accident.

Perhaps the most inclusive single observation recorded in this document was the testimony of 1st Lieutenant Ralph L. Williams.

"I ... was assigned to the 5th Training Group on 17 Aug 44 for the purpose of flying for the motion picture unit of Warner Brothers assigned to this field for the purpose of making the picture "God Is My Co-Pilot". The first mission in which I flew was a formation of P-40's. We were briefed clearly and accurately for approximately forty minutes by Major Clark, Major Middleditch, and Captain Peterman. They used oral expressions, blackboard drawings, and model airplanes. The model airplanes were arranged on stands in the exact formation we would fly. This mission was successfully completed.

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“On 19 Aug 44, we were advised by Captain Peterman, our mission would be to make an attack on a formation of B-25’s using AT-6’s to portray Zeros. The entire formation was set up using model airplanes. We were briefed again by Major Clark, Major Middleditch, and Captain Peterman. During this briefing, which lasted approximately forty minutes, the fact was brought out by Major Clark that this was only a picture and that safety of personnel and equipment would be the predominant factor. We were to meet the B-25’s at the specified predetermined point. They would be on a heading of north at approximately ten thousand feet indicated altitude. We would be approximately two thousand feet above them heading south. We were to dive on them and make a head on attack from below. The spacing in our formation of Zeros was as follows: from the lead element, element two would be one hundred feet to the left, five hundred feet behind and approximately twenty feet below, and element three would be in the same position to the right, and so on through the formation of 18 ships. Major Middleditch, our Flight Commander, briefed us for about twenty minutes thoroughly and accurately on each man’s position while making the pass on the bombers. We were to come no closer than three hundred feet vertically to the bombers at any time. The lead ship of each element would break forward and down. Each wing-man would break out and down and reform our elements below.”

Lieutenant Williams’ above description of the formation groups the eighteen AT-6’s into six elements of three planes each – each element having a lead plane, and a left and right wingman.

Lieutenant Williams continues with an account that places Lieutenant Luhr on the left wing of the second AT-6 element at the time of collision.

“We had completed three successful passes in the morning. In the afternoon, we were to fly the same mission and were briefed again on same for approximately thirty minutes. We were coming in for the first pass of the afternoon. I was flying left wing-man, element four. As we pulled up to intercept the bombers, I saw an explosion ahead and above me. The following incidents happened so swiftly I cannot be sure of their accuracy. It appeared to me that the left wingman in element two had realized that he was too close to the bombers and started to roll his ship to the left and down when his right wing struck the right wing of one of the

bombers. The AT-6 rolled left and down in a slow spiral. The bomber’s right wing dropped immediately, and he started down towards me. I realized that if I followed through with the formation I would hit the debris or the bomber. I half-rolled my ship and went down and out of the way. As I rolled out of this, I was almost beside the spinning AT-6. I circled this ship slowly and called “Bail Out!” over the radio. The canopy of this ship was open approximately four inches and seemingly the pilot made no attempt to open it before he hit the ground.

“The two ships made contact at an approximate altitude of ninety-five hundred feet indicated. I circled slowly above the AT-6 until he struck the ground. As the AT-6 contacted the ground, I was in a turn heading generally north, and I saw another explosion approximately three miles north which I supposed to be the bomber. The AT-6 started burning. Realizing that I could offer him no assistance, I flew over to the other explosion. I determined that it was the bomber. It was burning furiously. I saw no indication that any of the personnel had escaped. I immediately returned to Luke Field to report the accident which occurred at approximately 1505.”

It could have been that Orland’s canopy was open the reported four inches before impact occurred. On the other hand, and more than likely, the shock of collision jolted it open.

Cruising speed for the AT-6 was 175 miles per hour. Cruising speed for the B-25C bomber was just over 225 miles per hour. It is conceivable that their combined airspeed at impact was above 400 mph. What effect a jolt of that magnitude might have on the pilot of the smaller aircraft is difficult to say — though unconsciousness is certainly a possibility. And although pure speculation, we could entertain the possibility that a lethal spray of metal fragments may have entered the AT-6’s cabin as the right wings of the two aircraft tore through each other. Either the force of impact or other injuries sustained in the collision might explain why 2nd Lieutenant Luhr, an experienced pilot inside an obviously doomed aircraft, didn’t bail out.

The other type of aircraft involved, the B-25, was already something of a legend. A twin engine medium bomber, the B-25 is often confused with the four engine B-24 heavy bomber because of the similarity of their tail and rudder configuration. Both bombers have upright rudders rising from each



*A B-25C leaving on Doolittle's Raid against Japan, April 18th, 1942.
Photo from the National Archives and Records Administration collection.*

end of a wide tail-wing. A quick engine count removes any confusion.

The B-25 was assured of a place in history in the spring of 1942 when 16 of them, under the command of Lt. Colonel Jimmy Doolittle, rose from the deck of the aircraft carrier Hornet to successfully bomb mainland Japan. Though they did relatively little physical damage, the propaganda value of Doolittle's raid was immense.

The B-25C bombers used in the filming of "God Is My Co-Pilot" were Plexiglas nosed variants of the approximately 10,000 B-25s built. With a length of 53 feet, wingspan of 67½ feet, and operating weight of approximately 13 tons, the craft needed two 14-cylinder Wright radial engines, each with 2,600 cubic inches of supercharged displacement spinning three bladed props into 12 foot diameter tornados, to achieve its maximum speed of 280 mph, and service ceiling of 21,000 feet. Those twin engines together produced 3,400 horsepower.

The normal combat crew for a B-25C was five.

Sources state that 12 B-25's were used for the movie's aerial scenes. The accident report does not clarify how many of those were in the formation of bombers the 'Zeros' were supposed to attack. We

do know that the bombers were from Mather Field — a twin-engine flying school located about 10 miles east of Sacramento, California — and part of the 3031st Army Air Force Base Unit located there.

Another viewpoint for the incident was the cabin of a Lockheed A-29 camera ship. The A-29's were twin engine aircraft normally used by the U. S. military for submarine patrol. The pilot of the A-29 stated that ...

"I, F. H. Nolte, Captain, AC, First Motion Picture Unit, AAF, Culver City, California, was pilot of one of the camera airplanes for the picture "God Is My Co-Pilot", working in conjunction with Warner Brothers Studio.

"At approximately 1505 on 19 August 1944 and approximately thirty miles north of Luke Field while flying the photographic airplane, I witnessed the accident involving an AT-6 airplane and B-25 airplane. I was flying approximately 300 yards behind and about at an angle of 30 degrees above a formation of B-25's when a flight of AT-6's approached from a lower angle, heading up toward the B-25's at which place they were supposed to level off and pass under the B-25's. One AT-6 on the left of their formation passed on into the formation of B-25's, striking the right wing of the B-25 with the

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right wing of his airplane. I saw the right wing was gone completely from the AT-6 and it had veered off into a dive, passing out of my sight under my wing. The B-25 continued straight ahead for a few seconds and then stalled off onto the right wing and passed out of my sight under my right wing. The cockpit of the B-25 was not touched by the AT-6.

"I held on to the formation for a few seconds until I realized what had happened and then I pulled up into a chandelle to the left and before I had finished making a turn to where I could see the ground underneath, the B-25 was on the ground and burning. I circled the place once at a higher altitude and then came directly back to Luke Field"

The "chandelle" mentioned in the statement above is a steep 180 degree climbing turn that trades airspeed for altitude. The probable reason for this maneuver was to quickly place distance between the camera plane and bombers below by climbing and reversing direction in relation to the bomber formation.

The "First Motion Picture Unit" — also known as the 18th Air Force Base Unit — was formed in 1942 to produce training, morale, and propaganda films. It was composed almost entirely of individuals with prior motion picture experience. Eventually producing 400 films of its own, the unit was also charged with assisting in the filming of Hollywood movies when those movies had an obvious propaganda value.

The pilot of the above camera ship, Captain Floyd H. Nolta — a World War I Army Air Corps veteran — occasionally worked as a motion picture stunt pilot. When the Second World War began, he joined the First Motion Picture Unit. Nolta had been a friend of Jimmy Doolittle since pilot training days — and his most famous stunt may have been piloting a B-25 bomber underneath the Golden Gate Bridge for a wartime movie about Doolittle's famous raid — a movie called "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo".

The following statement was made by Oscar winning aerial cinematographer Charles Marshall, who was operating his camera from Captain Nolta's plane.

"I, Charles Marshall, chief camera man for Warner Brothers, was behind my camera in the nose of the A-29 camera airplane when the collision between the B-25 and AT-6 occurred. I was 'shooting' at the time, following the formation de-

scribed by Captain Nolta in his statement. All of a sudden I saw the collision slightly on the right hand side of my screen. I kept 'shooting' the scene until Captain Nolta pulled up into a steep left turn and I lost sight of the two airplanes. I cut my camera and we returned to Luke Field."

One would expect that if the collision had actually appeared on film it would be a famous bit of cinema history by now. Our current assumption is that that particular clip, if it did actually show the collision, has not survived.

Charles Marshall's helper, Bert Eason, saw something more of the collision.

"When the accident occurred, I was behind Charles Marshall, watching the motor speed on the camera. When I looked up I could see the AT-6 hit the B-25. I then saw pieces of airplanes falling. The B-25 seemed to keep on going for a few minutes and then I lost sight of both airplanes. After Captain Nolta circled I looked down and saw smoke on the ground which appeared to be one of the airplanes."

It's interesting to notice the differences in estimations of passing time reflected in each individual sense of how long the B-25 remained in level flight — though the experienced aircrews are doubtless closer to being right in this observation.

And finally, this eyewitness statement from another AT-6 pilot.

"I, Charles S. Husson, 2nd Lieutenant, AC, was piloting an AT-6 on the right wing of the second element leader's airplane. We were making a scene where the AT-6's (simulating Zeros) were making an attack from below and head on, on a flight of B-25's. After noticing the lead ship push over I did the same and as I did so I looked to my left and saw the left wing man of our element veer off and start to dive toward the ground. It appeared that part of his left wing had been torn off in some sort of collision. I did not see any contact between two airplanes.

"I watched the AT-6 spiral down toward the ground and a few seconds later noticed an explosion followed by a cloud of smoke. At the time I thought it was the AT-6, not knowing whether the B-25 had actual crashed or not. The formation of AT-6's was scattered quite a bit. I continued on and picked up the lead ship and flew on his wing back to Luke Field."

Though the first reading of the above would make one wonder how close to the bomber
(Continued on page 136)



The photo above was taken at the site of 2nd Lieutenant Orland Luhr's crash, approximately 30 miles to the north of Luke Field, Arizona. The photographer, Trey Brant, states that, "one must hike over two miles of rugged mountain terrain" to access the site — the probable reason why so much of the wreckage remains. Trey explained, "Right after the war, when aluminum commanded a premium, many such crash sites were scavenged for metal." Beside wing and tail parts, other artifacts remaining at Orland's site include the Pratt and Whitney radial engine and various instruments such as the oxygen flow indicator — both shown below.

Photos courtesy of Trey Brandt — whose website can be accessed at www.fadedcontrails.com.



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flight all three planes in flight two were just before the moment of collision, we have to keep in mind how quickly the '300 feet vertical' safety zone between the flight of bombers and 'Zeros' would disappear at the speeds involved.

A summation of the incident, signed by 1st Lieutenant Glendon W. Stark, 1st Lieutenant Benjamin F. Knapp, and 2nd Lieutenant Robert F. Sherod, is as follows.

"On 19 August 1944 at 1505 MWT, 2nd Lt. Orland L. Luhr, pilot of AT-6 airplane, number 41-32833, and 1st Lt. George Hunter, pilot of TB-25C airplane, number 42-32383, were flying in two separate formations for the picture "God Is My Co-Pilot". The formation of B-25's was heading north at approximately 10,000 feet indicated. The formation of AT-6's was flying at approximately 12,000 feet, heading south. The AT-6's which were depicting Zeros in the picture were to dive down ahead of the B-25 formation and pull up, making a pass at the bombers from ahead and below. The pilots had been thoroughly briefed on the exact positions — both bombers and AT-6's — and at no time were to come closer than 300 feet vertically. Lt. Luhr was flying on the left wing of the second element of the AT-6's. As this element made its pass on the B-25's, Lt. Luhr failed to follow his element leader and passed on into the formation of B-25's, striking the right wing of airplane number 42-32383 with the right wing of his airplane.

"The collision occurred at approximately 9,500 feet indicated. The AT-6 rolled on left and down into a slow spiral then headed almost straight into the ground. The pilot in one of the other AT-6's followed the airplane down and noticed that the canopy was open approximately four inches but there was no attempt made by Lt. Luhr to bail out. After the collision, the B-25, number 42-32383, kept going in almost level flight for a few seconds and then stalled off on the right wing, heading straight down and exploding upon contact with the ground.

"Responsibility for the accident is placed 100 per cent upon pilot error on the part of Lt. Luhr, pilot of AT-6, number 41-32833, in that he failed to follow instructions in the simulated attack on the B-25's."

On Monday, August 21, a message was sent from Luke Field to Headquarters, Army Air Forces Office of Flying Safety, Winston-Salem,

North Carolina via Teletypewriter Exchange. The message contained a summary of the findings in the accident report. Included were the following phrases that solidified the military's official view of the incident.

It stated that Orland was alone in his AT-6C when he collided with the second aircraft, and then described the circumstance as "*pilot making simulated attack on B-25 for motion picture 'God is my Co-Pilot'.*" It went on to say that the AT-6C was "*demolished*", and that "*no material failure survey*" was done. This we assume indicates that no reconstruction of the aircraft was undertaken to see if some kind of mechanical problem could have contributed to the incident. The terse military phrasing doesn't make clear whether such a survey was even possible with what remained of the craft. It did report that Orland's remains had been identified.

Also noted was the fact that Orland's wife, Holly, had been notified at her residence in Phoenix. As to whether any official notice had been sent to Clayton, nothing is said. It does however suggest that if Holly had in some way been responsible for the Clayton telegram, the information sent would have not been so wrong. Holly should have known at least the nature of the activity Orland was engaged in on the day of his death — flying for the aerial scenes of a Hollywood movie — if nothing more.

Regarding the second aircraft, the status of the crewmembers was described as "*presumed fatal*". The reason given for the presumed status was "*inaccessibility of wreckage in mountainous terrain*".

The aircrew on the bomber were identified as 1st Lieutenant George Hunter, pilot, 2nd lieutenant Patrick D. Holland, copilot, and Sergeant James A. Ramey, flight engineer.

George Hunter Sr. of Glendale, California, was informed of his son's 'missing' status. Mrs. June E. Holland was notified of the situation in a personal visit by the Commanding Officer of Mater Field, California. And notice was sent to Sergeant Ramey's father, Jack A. Ramey of Pittsburg, Kansas.

The competence of the pilots involved can be evaluated from the number of flight hours logged by each. Orland had 1032:55 total Army Air Corps hours, with 874:10 of those hours in AT-6s. Lieutenant Hunter had 846:35 total hours, with 197:45 of those hours in B-25s. Neither of these men was inexperienced, and though the available material

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doesn't state such, doubtless all the pilots in the air that day — either AT-6 or B-25 — were instructors or other highly qualified flight personnel — and not students.

Regarding competence, the commander of the Luke Field installation, Lieutenant Colonel Graham M. Bates, concluded, "*This accident does not involve a violation of flying regulations.*"

As for the movie itself, review of the movie suggests any segments showing any part of the formation of 18 AT-6s as described in the government documents are momentary, and that any attempt to recognize Orland Luhr's aircraft from its position in those scenes would be speculative in the extreme. Since the movie is currently only available on VHS tape, a more revealing study might be possible if the movie is ever released in a high-definition digital format.

There is also some question, due to the distance between the 'mock' zeros and the cameras, whether the AT-6s in the mass aerial scenes were painted with Japanese insignias. Certain flying close-ups show AT-6s adorned with Japanese 'gumballs', and, uniquely enough, also show an attempt to obscure the greenhouse canopy behind the forward pilot's seat by painting over that part of the canopy's windows to match the body of the aircraft — an attempt obviously intended to turn the tandem seat 'Texan' into a single seat 'Zero' — an attempt that, on closer inspection, doesn't really work.

Two articles appeared in the August 31st,

1944, issue of the *Deer Park Union*. The first was the obituary.

"Military funeral services for Lieutenant Orland Luhr, who was killed in an airplane accident in Arizona, were held Sunday, August 27, from the Open Door Congregational church in Deer Park. The services were conducted by Captain Victor E. Walter of Geiger Field. An army firing squad and bugler participated in the ceremonies at the graveside."

Orland was buried at Clayton's Zion Hill Cemetery. His stone states, born 12-7-1921, died 8-19-1944.

A second article in that same issue of the *Union* stated the following.

"Lt. Borick, Mrs. Orland Luhr, Mrs. Pete Berg and Allen Berg spent Tuesday afternoon in Spokane."

"Lt. Borick and Mrs., Orland Luhr of Phoenix, Ariz., are spending a few days at the Peter Berg home, coming here for the funeral of Lt. Orland Luhr, who was killed recently in an airplane crash near that Arizona city."

Within a few weeks of the funeral, Tuffy had returned to Camp Blanding to start a new basic training rotation. And, at the beginning of the new year, to find himself knee deep in European snow as part of the allied army preparing to invade the German Fatherland.

... to be continued in issue #12.

Clayton's Sadie Mae Huffman-Fischbach

— her story as told to —

Wally Lee Parker & Bill Sebright

Charles Huffman was my dad, and Mattie Hensley-Huffman my mom. They were from the Carolinas — from North Carolina. Dad had five brothers and four sisters. In the family history book, just about all the Huffmans spell the family's last name Hoffman. Our side liked it better with a 'u'.

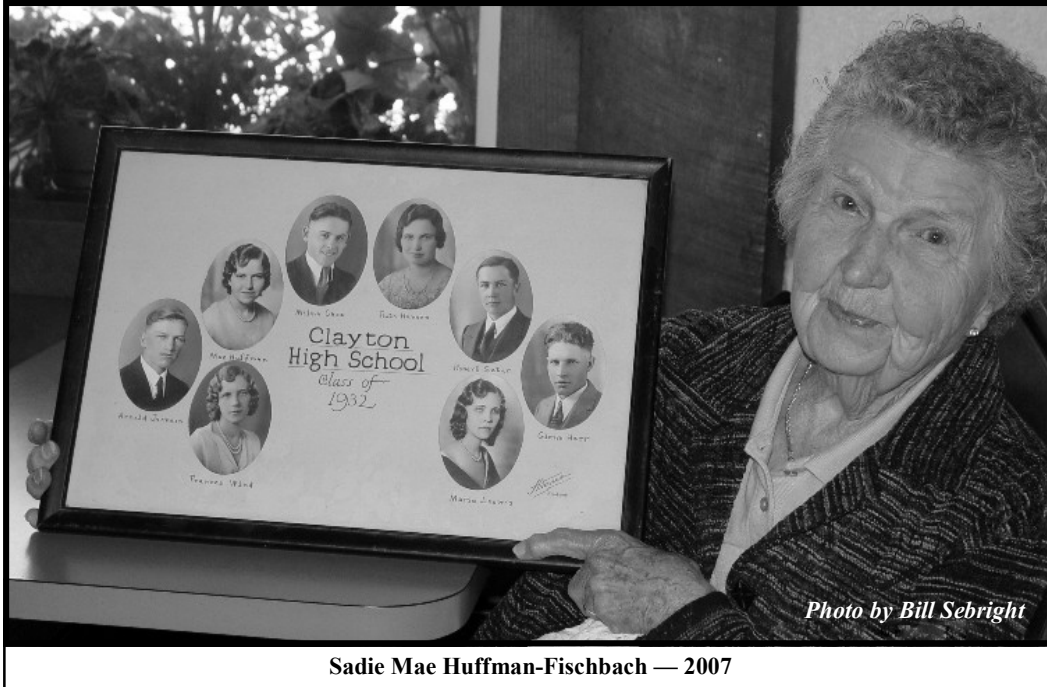
Dad was a Spanish-American War veteran. After the war, he worked as a mail carrier in North Carolina. At least two of my uncles, William C. and Joe, were in Clayton sometime prior to 1908. Quite a few members of the Huffman family lived there at one time or another, but it was so long ago I just can't keep them straight. I know I have a card post-marked 1908 that W. C. sent to Morganton, North

Carolina, asking my father when he planned to move out west.

The next year, 1909, mom, dad, and my older brother did move. The folks tried homesteading at Burns, in the east-central part of Oregon, but didn't like that much, so they migrated up to Spokane. Dad attended barber College in Spokane. After Dad was hired to be the first mail carrier in the Clayton area, the family moved again. The fact that my Uncle Joe owned a store — grocery I think — on Clayton's main street may have had something to do with Dad finding the mailman's job.

My brother, Robert, was born in North Carolina in 1906. I was born in Clayton on the 22nd

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Sadie Mae Huffman-Fischbach — 2007

of November, 1912.

For a long time Dad used horses on his mail route — horses he kept in the barn on the back of our Clayton property. That barn is still standing.

In the summertime he could finish his mail route by noon. So he'd deliver mail in the morning and cut hair in the afternoon. But the roads were so much more difficult to travel when covered with snow — so the mail was all he had time for in winter.

Because the snow was hard on the horses, Dad broke the mail route in two — half the route one day, the other half the next. The wagon had a cab and a small stove. In place of wheels, dad would fit runners.

Originally his route went up around Loon Lake, but not to the town itself. Next he drove around most of Deer Lake. He crossed back through Garden Spot, then south along Spotted Road. He looped down to Williams Valley, and then drove north along the Farm to Market road — passing the Klawunder and Casberg farms on the way. That was a 33 mile trip.

In the spring he put the wheels back on the wagon.

Later on he used cars — first a Model T, and gradually working up to newer cars.

I don't remember when he retired, but I recall that he carried mail for over thirty years. Burton Stewart took the route after my dad quit. And I think Harold Klawunder had it at one time.

While Dad was working, I know my brother helped him with the route once in awhile — driving the team. And my mom substituted for Dad a lot.

Mrs. Harris was the postmistress when my dad had his route. The Harris family lived by the old Grange Hall.

My brother went to work at the Clayton brick plant. Uncle Joe worked there too. Robert worked in the terra cotta shop 'til that shut down, then he got a job at the sawmill in Deer Park. Uncle Joe always worked the brick plant.

I was born at home. I was delivered by the town's doctor — his name was Searight. He was short and a little broad — chubby. He always wore a little black hat and carried his bag when he came to the house to see me or my brother. He had an office on Main Street. There was a grocery store, then a barber shop, a butcher shop, the post office, and then

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either his place or maybe one more building between. His office was a long, wood-frame building almost directly in front of our house.

When I was about 6 years old — just ready to start school — I came down with inflammatory rheumatism. I couldn't walk, move, or anything. It was so painful no one could touch me. My hands and knees would cramp, and everything was always sore. Doctor Searight suggested I be taken to Spokane, but the folks decided to have him treat me at home.

The doctor stopped by 'most every day. Him and my dad used a sheet to turn me side to side. Sometimes I was sat up in a rocking chair with boards pushed under the rockers so it wouldn't rock. And Doctor Searight kept seeing me till I got over it.

It seems like I had trouble walking — stepping up on curbs and things like that — for a few years. I guess I eventually grew out of it.

Another thing I recall having to do with Doctor Searight — do you remember those spindle things that teachers used to keep on their desk for holding papers — just a thin metal nail sticking up from some kind of base so you could impale papers on it? When I was in seventh or eighth grade, a bunch of us were talking to the teacher — standing around the teacher's desk. Somehow, I pushed my hand down on that spindle. It went through the palm and pushed the skin on the top of my hand up. It didn't go all the way through, and it didn't bleed. With the spindle still in my hand, my teacher walked me downtown to Doctor Searight's office. It wasn't that far from school — maybe three blocks. The doctor just pulled the spindle out and put some stuff on my hand.

He was Clayton's doctor for a long time. I was in the upper grades when he retired and moved to Spokane.

Anyway, I didn't get to start school 'til I was almost seven. That meant I got in with a different group — most a little younger than me.

Hazel Renner — she was a Schonfeld then — I went to school with her and Frances Wind. Frances was Vera Spalding's older sister. Vera still



Charles Huffman and his horses.

lives in Clayton.

Our house was one street south from Main Street. My uncle Joe lived in the house to the west of us. There was a big hotel building right next door, just east of us, that was owned by the Schindler family — Uncle Joe married one of their daughters. My grandmother and grandfather's house was on the other side of the hotel — that would be Sarah Jane and Francis Marian Huffman. Across the street to the east of him was a shed my grandfather kept bees in.

The hotel was 'L' shaped. They served meals to the guys that worked at the plant, and the rooms were always filled. After I moved away, my dad bought the old hotel building and tore it down. That must have been in the late '30's.

There was a rooming house in the triangle lot just west of the Moose Hall. Across from it — across the railroad tracks to the north — was a boarding house. My brother bought the boarding house and lived in it while he started building his brick home.

I lived in my folks' house until 1932, and we never had an inside bathroom during that time. We didn't even have water coming into the house. We had a well on the property. We used a hand pump to fill a bucket, and then we carried water into the house.

For hot water we had a reservoir on the side of the woodstove that we kept full all the time. If we had a fire in the stove, we'd have hot water.

Since we didn't have inside plumbing, we didn't have an inside bathroom. At night we'd use

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chamber pots — thunder mugs. We had an outhouse of course.

For heating and cooking, my dad would buy 3 to 6 cords of wood at a time.

I just can't see far enough back to recall oil lamps. I can sort of remember when we got electricity in the house. At first there was a generator at the brick plant that produced electricity for the town of Clayton.

I remember those first light globes. Long light bulbs — clear glass with a little point on the end. We didn't have nice globes like now.

We didn't have Christmas tree lights either. We had candles. We used little tin candle holders that clipped on the tips of the limbs. Of course, you didn't leave the room when the candles were lit.

We cut our tree just before Christmas, and put it up Christmas Eve — so everything was still moist. Still, I'm surprised Clayton didn't burn down every Christmas.

One thing though, I can't remember us ever having a Christmas tree in the school building itself.

We had some good times that time of year. We went sledding on that hill just north — just in back of the brick plant. We called it Hansen's Hill. We'd build a bonfire to warm up. And then we'd walk a mile up the hill just to slide back down.

Leno Prestini hand built a toboggan. I remember riding down the hill on that. And we'd ice skate on the ponds — those old skates you strapped on over your shoes. There were lots of those ponds around — clay pits and such. One time one of my girlfriends fell through the ice. The water was only about waist deep, but the clay on the bottom was so slick she had one heck of a time crawling out.

Other times we'd have hayrides and wienner roast — good times.

I can remember when we got our radio. It was an Atwater-Kent, and it used regular house current, not batteries. I was in high school — so it was probably 1929 or after. That first night, we stayed up all night listening to it — Fibber MaGee and Mollie, Rudy Vallee, and all those old programs.

My dad had a good job. We were never hurting for money. So we had electricity and a radio, but we never had a telephone while I was living there. Not many people did.

My folks went to a lot of dances down at the old Grange Hall — the wooden one. I remember I'd sleep on the Hall's benches while they were dancing.

We had a regular farm in our backyard. Not only horses, but chickens, fox, and mink too.

I recall my dad being bitten pretty bad by a fox one time. And one year my mother raised enough mink to make a full-length coat. Butch Ratkey did most of the killing and skinning for the folks.

The Arcadia Orchards Company was a big thing back then. We used to swim in the company's irrigation flume — the one that took water out of Deer Lake, ran it through Loon Lake, then crossed just north of Clayton on its way toward the apple orchards around Deer Park.

It was just a wooden box or trough sitting on the ground, maybe three or so feet high with maybe two and a half feet of water in it. We had to climb over the edge to get into the water. I can't remember how wide it was — although there was no way us kids could reach from side to side.

The water was just coming down at a nice flow, and going all the time.

Behind Clayton was the only place I remember seeing the flume. We never followed it around, so I don't know if it looked any different anyplace else. And I only remember swimming in it when I was younger — so that must have been right around 1920. Just keep in mind that I'm trying to think back eighty-five years or more.

My mom used to pick apples for the company. But everything's gone now — even the old packing shed that stood for so long at the Fairgrounds in Deer Park. Even that's gone.

Every day the passenger train made two trips back and forth on the track through Clayton. It went up to Colville and back to Spokane in the morning, and then did the same again at night. A lot of people rode into Spokane in the morning, and back out at night. There was a station in Clayton, so we bought our tickets there.

One time my brother was in a speaking contest being held at Colville. My mom took him and me up there on the train. I think we stayed all night in Colville, and then rode the morning train back. I don't recall how long it took to travel the sixty or so miles to Colville. At least a couple of hours I'm sure. The train had to stop at Loon Lake,

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Springdale, and Valley, and at every other little town all the way up and back.

Dad didn't go 'cause he had the horses to tend to, and the mail route in the morning.

I was nine or ten when my mom took me on a train trip to North Carolina. Five days and nights — we ate and slept on the train. We had upper and lower births, and I remember sitting our shoes outside the birth at night, and they'd be all polished shiny when we got up in the morning.

I wish I could do that again.

We spent a lot of time at Spokane's Natatorium Park. My folks went to the ball games, and they would let me take a friend along. Once there, they'd give me enough money that we could ride the rides all the time they were at the game. That was a great place to go, and you didn't have to worry about your kids and strangers like you have to now.

The ball diamond, the carousel, the Dragon Slide, and a nice swimming place too. That was all down there — and lots more too. And what is it now — a trailer park?

As for Clayton's new brick school, I recall that the first and second grade shared a room on the ground floor. It was the northeast room at the front of the building. The third and fourth graders were in the room right behind — the southeast corner. The lavatories and boiler-room were the same place as always — the southwest corner. And the room in the northwest corner was the game room and study hall. We didn't have a cafeteria back then.

Upstairs — the high school was in the northeast corner. And the southeast room was taken by the fifth and sixth grades. The seventh and eighth grades were just across the hall from the high school room. Typing and bookkeeping occupied the southwest corner of the second floor. And the principal had his little office upstairs, underneath the bell tower.

I remember we had double seats. It was usually a boy and girl together. And I can remember my first grade teacher — her name was Miss Sherwood.

Being close enough to walk, I always went home for lunch.

Most of the kids had to walk to school. They did have one bus that went up towards Loon Lake and picked up the kids at Granite Point — the Biddle kids and them. Then I think it went out in Williams Valley and Bigfoot Valley and picked up

the Klawunder and Casberg kids and such. But a lot of the kids to the northeast had to walk. The Johnson kids and Carr kids — they all walked.

All those little schools were scattered around the countryside for the small kids.

Some of the older kids would ride horses, or drive a sled or wagon in. There was a barn down back of the school, south about two or three hundred feet, where kids could put their horses to keep them out of the weather.

If we had parties or gatherings after hours the kids from outlying areas would have to walk home, then walk back again later. It wasn't easy.

We always had Maypole dances on or just after May Day. We'd walk around the Maypole holding these long streamers — ribbons, with every other person walking in the opposite direction. The streamers would weave down the pole somehow. It was nice, but I never saw that done anyplace else.

We had taffy pulls — now that's something you never hear of anymore.

Our high school teacher lived in a little two room house in Clayton, and she would have the kids over for taffy pulls at her place. The candy probably got pretty dirty with germs before we got done pulling it, but back then that wasn't a big deal. And it was fun.

We always had a big Valentine's Day box. I think most of the Valentines we gave each other were store-bought.

I think we always had some kind of Christmas program at school. I know we did when we got into the upper grades. After the Moose Hall opened up we had them down there because they had a stage.

And in spring the school had a picnic at Deer Lake. Those farmers would make homemade ice cream and bring it up.

We didn't dress up or go trick-or-treating for Halloween. But we did go running around the neighborhood after school.

Back then, tipping over outhouses was big. We never had ours tipped over because of the fence around our back yard. I never did any outhouse tipping myself.

We did have something we called a shivaree — and I got in on some of those. When someone got married, everyone would gather outside the newlywed's house that first night and make all the racket we could — even shooting off guns.

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It was a small town — we had to make our own fun.

Before we started using the Moose Hall's auditorium, the only auditorium we had was upstairs in the schoolhouse. Between the northeast and southeast rooms was a wall of folding doors. You could open those and make a pretty good size room. When you opened up the auditorium, you'd have to move the desks and everything. In the other rooms in the school, the desks were bolted down to the floor and couldn't be moved.

We had Christmas concerts at the Moose Hall — and school plays and dances too. We didn't have proms. I don't think the kids around Clayton couldn't afford things like that.

For the entire high school we might have twenty or twenty-five students between our three teachers. My class, the class of 1932, was the largest to ever graduate out of Clayton High School. There were nine of us. There were three or four in the class before, and only five in the class after. I think the smallest graduating class only had two students.

A year or two after I graduated, that's when some students started choosing to go to Deer Park High School rather than Clayton.

After graduation I attended business school in Spokane. Other than visits to my folks and my brother — who continued living there — 1932 was the last year I spent time in Clayton.

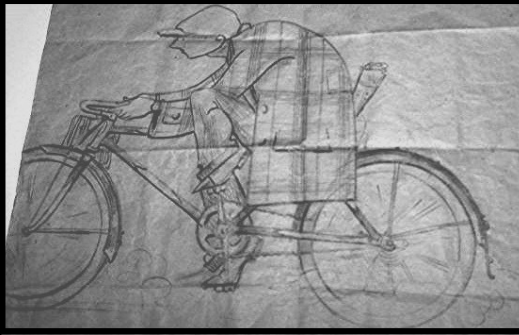
My future husband's dad was on the Clayton school board, and was the one who signed my diploma. My husband graduated from Clayton High School a year after me.

My dad wouldn't let me go down to Deer Park to mess around. He was pretty strict, and thought the kids down there were too wild. He was from the South, and me being the only girl, he was kind of bossy about things like that.

I recall Clayton artist Leno Prestini pretty well. It seemed like he kind of admired himself. I remember seeing him walk down the sidewalk in Clayton, combing his hair and watching his reflection in the store windows.

I think he went out with Mary Taconi some. She was Italian too, and her family lived in Clayton. I don't know if he went out with any other Clayton girls except maybe Frances Wind — that would be Vera Spaulding's sister

Sometimes, when they were around us, Mary and Leno would speak Italian to each other.



Ted Fischbach and his bicycle. Pencil on brown paper. By Leno Prestini. Circa 1931.

We often thought they might be talking about us — but we couldn't tell.

Mary's mother had a kiln in her yard for baking bread, and also made dandelion wine. So Mary's family was still very much Italian.

As for Leno, I think his mother talked mostly Italian at home. So at home, that's what Leno and his brother did.

My brother, Robert, is about six and a half years older than me. He was born in 1906, the same year Leno was born. But my brother and Leno didn't run around together much. They seemed to have different friends.

I don't think Leno graduated. At least I never saw his picture in any of the graduating class photos. I believe he worked in the terra cotta plant — back when that was open.

He had his little workshop out on the east side of town. That's where he did most of his art. But he'd also go off by himself quite often. He'd take his horse and ride up into the hills to paint.

One time, when I was still in high school, we were down at Leno's workshop — his little cabin — and he decided to draw a picture a picture of Ted Fischbach riding his bicycle. Ted's the boy I ended up marrying.

Leno took a paper bag, a brown paper lunch bag, and just pencil-sketches Ted and his bicycle from memory. While we were sitting there, he drew it as quick as that. That was at least seventy-five years ago, and I still have that drawing.

He never talked about where he learned to draw or sculpt. I guess it just came natural to him.

When I was attending business school in Spokane, Leno stopped by my apartment to ask the

Permission to use Leno Prestini image courtesy of Mae Fischbach-Huffman and Cathy Johnson (Prestini Estate).

Permission to use Leno Prestini Image courtesy of the Floyd and Shirley Tew family and Cathy Johnson (Prestini Estate).



“The Rural Mail Carrier.” Oil on canvas-board. By Leno Prestini — 1947.

other girl living there to go out. Apparently he didn't hit it off too well with her, because he didn't come back anymore.

Ted and I went to Leno's art show in Spokane. It seems like that was downtown someplace. He did do some real nice paintings. And some that just weren't good at all — at least I couldn't see anything good about them.

Leno did paint of picture of my dad with his mail wagon and horses. The horses were named Mink and Bob. Leno was going to sell it to me, but our son was in college and I couldn't afford it. By time I could, he'd already sold it.

I started at Blair Business School in Spokane. While I was there they changed the name to

Northwestern Business School — so I graduated from Northwestern. Right out of school I married Ted, so I didn't go to work. Ted was a musician.

We bought a house in Spokane. Three children and sixty eight years later, I'm still living in that same house.

My dad passed away in 1954, and mom in 1974. My husband, Ted, died in December of 1995.

I really liked my time in Clayton. It was quite the place when the brick and terra cotta works were going strong. Most of the people I remember from there are gone now, but it was a great place to grow up.

NOTE: If you have a piece of Prestini art that you would like to see featured in the Mortarboard and/ or on the Society website, please contact the Society via the email or mailing addresses found on the next page.

Society Minutes — February, 2009

The February 14th meeting was called to order at 09:02 AM. In attendance — Bill Sebright, Grace Hubal, Marilyn Reilly, Kay Parkin, Betty Burdette, Bob & Mary Clouse, Bob & Lilie Gibson, Rob Higgins, Mark Wagner, Pete Coffin, Florene Eickmeyer Moore (new member), Ella & Lonnie Jenkins, Margret Burdega, Lorraine & Warren Nord, Lorraine & Don Ball, Howard Richards, Sharon Clark, Cliff Meyer, and new visitor, Denise Wheeler.

Treasurer Mark Wagner reported that the check cleared for renewing the Society's incorporation papers. All else was reported in order.

Florene Moore brought "penny" leather postcards and a small photo album of possible Arcadia Orchard pictures. She is going to set up an appointment with Pete to scan those delicate photos.

Kay Parkin brought a photo album of Kelly's old house near Main & Crawford, which was later moved to East B Street.

Marilyn Reilly brought copies of the *Spokane Times*, the *Coeur d'Alene Nugget*, a Green Bluff book, and copies of two *Nostalgia Magazines* containing articles by Roxy (Zimmerer) Camp.

Howard Richards, a guest at the meeting, brought forward the idea of approaching the Clayton Fair Association with a proposal that the C/DPHS set up a museum building on the Clayton Fairgrounds. Howard had obtained an estimate from Evergreen Truss on a 30 by 60 foot metal pole-building package with attached lean-tos. The unassembled building package came to \$10,816.24. This does not include concrete, rebar, entry doors, windows, insulation, interior walls, ceilings, wiring and related hardware, miscellaneous materials — or labor cost for the actual erecting of the building.

The Board of Directors of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society will take Mister Howard's suggestions under advisement, first deciding whether the C/DPHS can presently afford such a project, secondly whether building a museum on

property not titled to the C/DPHS is in the best interest of the Society's long range goals, and lastly, whether to approach the Clayton Fair Association regarding their possible receptiveness to such a proposition.

(The Board will report to the Society regarding its discussions on this proposal at the Society's March meeting.)

Wally & Pat Parker were absent, so there are no publications updates at this time. Pat is recovering from a hospital stay. We wish her a speedy recovery.

Webmaster Bob Clouse reported, "In January, 2009, there were 914 visitors to the website, a new record. The most popular article was "Boxing at Deer Park High School."

Pete Coffin donated a new EPSON scanner to the Society. He also offered to scan delicate photos.

Regarding the ongoing "Old Area Schools" project — Lilie Gibson stated that there were two Pine View Schools, one in Spokane County, just south of Garden Spot Grange, and the other in Stevens County.

Pete Coffin had an old photo of several people. Lorraine Nord had possible clues on the names. We are still trying to verify the others beside Kate Coffin.

Betty Burdette reported on the Settlers' Picnic Fundraiser, Dinner & Auction which will be held at the Eagles in Deer Park on Saturday, February 21st — dinner at 5 PM and auction at 6:30 PM.

The next scheduled Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society meeting is slated for Saturday, March 14th, 2009, at 09:00 AM. The agenda will include board members and event insurances.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 AM — with the Minutes taken & typed by Grace Hubal, acting secretary.

Volunteer proofreaders for this issue included Jay Hubble, Charles A. Stewart, and Patricia Parker.

Society Contacts

Bill Sebright, society president — (president@claytondeerparkhistoricalsociety.com)

Bob Clouse, webmaster — (webmaster@claytondeerparkhistoricalsociety.com)

Wally Lee Parker, editor of print publications — (print_publications@claytondeerparkhistoricalsociety.com)
C/DPHS, Box 293, Clayton, WA 99110

The Society's Editor of Print Publications can also be reached by writing directly to Wally Lee Parker,
6904 N. Stevens, Spokane, WA 99208-4015