

The C/DPHS is an association of individuals dedicated to the preservation of the history of our community. To the preservation of the region's oral history, literary history, social history, graphic and pictorial history, and our history as represented by the region's artifacts and structures. To the preservation of this history for future generations. To the art of making this common heritage accessible to the public. And to the act of collaborating with other individuals and organizations sharing similar goals.

THE
CLAYTON/DEER PARK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Mortarboard

All Rights To This Material Reserved By C/DPHS

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

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

... firing from the hip ...

Tuffy's 3rd Battalion led the Regiment's thrust into Germany proper as part of a massive incursion of men and machines all along the western front. The 3rd Battalion's first target was the small town of Feusdorf. And then the regiment leapt through town after town, the three battalions of the 347th rotating in leading the assault. Because

little resistance was met, it became apparent that the enemy had moved its primary forces deeper into Germany — probably to a more defensible position.

It was assumed that more defensible position would be the northward flowing Mosel and Rhine Rivers.

On the 14th of March the entire 347th Regiment was trucked to a position about fifty miles east of the German border — trucked to a staging area not far from the Mosel River. Contemporary ac-

From the National Archives and Records Administration collection — Crossing the Rhine



Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

counts state that the sun was bright and the roads muddy — all this a welcome relief from the previously unrelenting winter cold. All along the roads to the Mosel lay the abandoned equipment of an army in full retreat.

The primary objective of the coming attack was the town of Koblenz, located on the wedge of land just south of the junction of the Mosel and Rhine Rivers. The 87th Division's 345th Regiment would cross the Mosel to attack Koblenz directly. The 347th would attack on a much wider front to the south of Koblenz, its intent to cross the Mosel, and drive the German forces to the east side the Rhine. The objective after that was to regroup, resupply, and then pursue the Germans over the Rhine and on into the heart of Germany itself.

The triangle between the two rivers was just over two miles wide where the town of Koblenz had grown. Just five miles to the south of that, the space between the two rivers had opened up to over six miles.

Since the normal tactic was to demolish bridges as the Allied army's approached, the assault, scheduled for 3 AM on the morning of the 16th, would require crossing the Mosel by boat — doubtless against enemy fire. In preparation, the battalions spent a day practicing with plywood assault boats. The 1st and 3rd battalions of the 347th would be provided with seventeen of the barge-like boats each. Intended to carry fifteen men, each boat would haul twelve assault troops, with three combat engineers to guide the boat over, and then row it back across the river once the troops had disembarked.

The assault teams would be packed into the boats in three rows, four soldiers in each row. The soldiers on the outside rows would man the oars. One engineer at the back would steer with a paddle, and one engineer would be positioned on each corner at the front of the boat.

Since the element of surprise would be lost as soon as the first wave of boats was detected, and quiet would no longer be an advantage, the last battalion across, the second wave would use power boats — larger barges with outboard motors attached.

After the opposite shore was secure, motorized rafts — barges joined together to act as pontoons beneath large platforms — would start moving light vehicles and supplies over.

The plan was for the 3rd Battalion to cross

the Mosel in the vicinity of Kobern. The 1st Battalion of the 347th would be crossing simultaneously about two miles to the northeast, near the town of Winningen. The Mosel made a north to east loop between these two towns, so the 1st Battalion was to push southeast to higher ground once across, while the 3rd moved directly east to higher ground. The 2nd Battalion, using the motorized boats, would cross at Kobern as soon as Tuffy's battalion had secured the opposite shore, then push southwest against the town of Waldesch.

Other elements involved in the attack were from the 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 735th Tank Battalion, and the 35th Engineers Combat Battalion.

Tuffy reported that Company M wouldn't be taking most of their heavy weapons over with the first wave. The troops would be carrying M1 rifles and carbines.

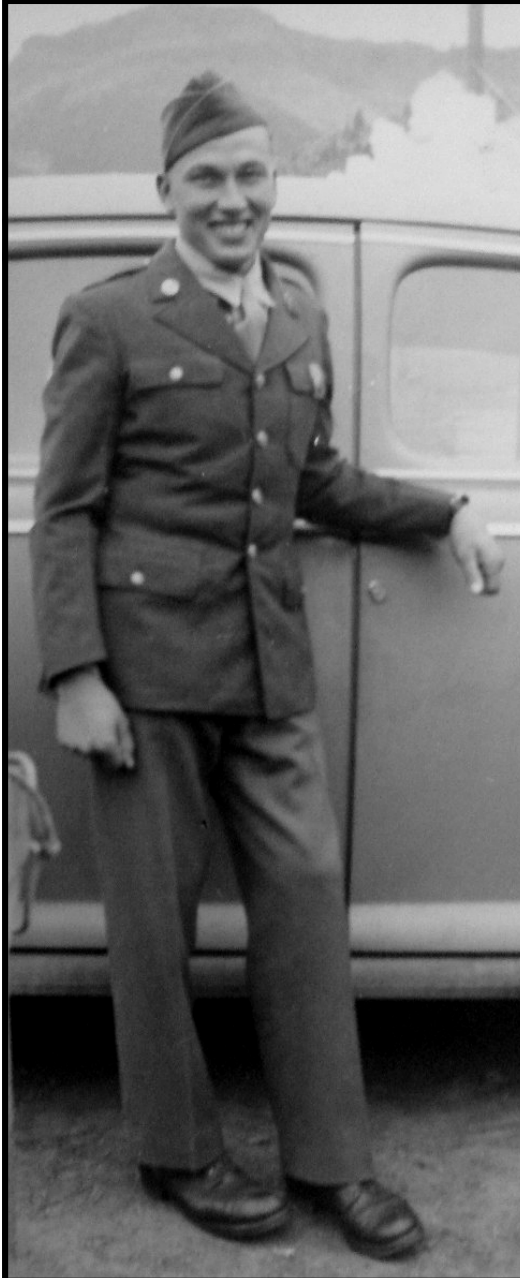
The M1 rifles, .30 caliber machine guns, and Browning automatic rifles were all designed to use the same ammunition — suggesting that the military could occasionally get things right the first time.

“We opened our machine gun ammo canisters, pushed the .30-06 cartridges out of the 250 round machine gun belts, and loaded them into empty rifle clips — eight rounds per clip. M1 ammo belts held ten clips. We figured each of us would need at least 400 rounds of ammo since we had no idea how long we'd be on our own once we reached the other side. That meant we'd each need to pack five ammo belts.”

If a boat went down in the river, those five belts would add another 26 pounds to each soldier's weight. The belts, along with the rest of his equipment, would have to be stripped away before he would have any chance of treading water.

The .30 caliber carbines many of the men carried used a different cartridge. While the M1 rifle's eight round clips were pushed into the top of the weapon, and ejected automatically when the last round was fired, the carbine's fifteen-round magazines were snapped into the underside of the smaller weapon, and had to be manually ejected. The troops using the carbines loaded lots of extra magazines, taped them together in pairs — taped them such a way that as one magazine was emptied, the pair could be ejected, flipped, reinserted and another rapid volley of fifteen shots fired.

From the Alvin "Tuffy" Luhr collection.



*Private 1st Class Alvin "Tuffy" Luhr
Patton's 3rd Army, 87th Infantry Division,
347th Regiment, 3rd Battalion, Co. M*

"I had an M1," Tuffy said. "It was the best rifle you could imagine."

Beginning in darkness, the attacking battalions carried and dragged their boats through hedges and barbed wire to the cobblestone beaches. The first wave of the 3rd Battalion made the crossing with little resistance. "Once on the beach," Tuffy said, "we spread out about four feet apart, and then, firing from the hip, we pushed up toward the high-ground. You can imagine what kind of noise that was."

The second wave began to receive some light machine gun fire. By time the first wave of the 2nd Battalion began, the enemy was fully awake and engaged. "The engineers trying to move equipment got caught out in the middle of the river. The Germans were firing all kinds of illuminating devices overhead so they could see them, so the rest of the guys had one hell of a time coming across. And once the engineers got over with a load, they'd just have to go back to pick up more men and equipment."

By noon the Americans had pushed far enough inland that pontoon rafts could cross the river under a minimum of harassing fire. And by evening the high ground had been secured. The next day's objective for the engineers would be the construction of a pontoon-treadway bridge for the rapid movement of men, jeeps, trucks, and tanks over the Mosel.

And then, over the next several days, it was a matter of taking the towns between the rivers one by one.

Tuffy recalled, "The local residents had taken refuge in their cellars. They tried to keep out of sight as much as they could — just like us. At night we'd take shelter in the upper parts of houses — some abandoned, some not.

"It seems our company's Captain had gotten wounded, so we got a new one — a 90 day wonder. When our new Captain sees us bedding down in the houses, he rouses us out saying, 'By God, you can't go living in these houses. That's against regulations. Assemble out in that open space and put up your tents.'

"We did as we were told.

"That night about twenty Germans came in and poured all the fire they had into our tents. They withdrew into the night and our new commanding officer decides he's going to set things right, so he

Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

grabs a captured German bazooka and goes after them. The Jerries manage to shoot off one of his fingers during the hunt, so he's evacuated back behind the lines. That rids us of him. I know all this because we put up our tents just like we were told—but it was crazy to be bunched up in the open like that, so we bedded down in the houses as first intended. When the Germans came in to blow our tents all to hell, we were watching from the second story windows of the nearby houses.

"It was around that same time that that I took protection in one house, and up on the second floor I found this young woman and her year-old boy. All she had to feed the kid was potato soup. I got some ham from the cook so there'd be something else to add to the soup.

"One night I was taking some food up for the kid and a fire-fight broke out below. I grabbed the kid and dropped to the floor. His mother joined us a second later. So we spent part of that night huddled together on the floor.

"The boy's dad was fighting Russians on the eastern front. There's no way to know if he ever made it back from there. Not that many of them did."

Eight days after storming the eastern banks of the Mosel, the 347th Regiment sat ready for another river crossing. This time the entire 87th Infantry Division was gathering to play their part in a massive assault across the legendary Rhine — the last great river barrier on the western front. The assault was intended to drive up the eastern bank, and eventually through the very heart of the Fatherland.

... as cold as hell ...

Allied armies began their assault on the Rhine River on the 22nd of March. Along the 87th Division's stretch of river, the crossing was scheduled to begin at midnight, March 24th. Surprise was not part of the plan since the enemy was fully aware of what the GIs intended to do, and troops in the Division's other crossing areas were receiving fire before they even got their boats into the water.

The disembarkation point for the 3rd Battalion of the 347th was near the small town of Brey. After crossing, the intention was to penetrate into the village of Braubach.

Less than an hour after midnight, Compa-

nies L and K of the 3rd Battalion were over and engaged in street fighting. But at that point things began to fall apart.

By time the boats had returned to collect the second wave, the Germans had zeroed in on the crossing point. A constant barrage of German flares illuminated the river. Attempts to obscure the boats with chemical smoke were having little effect. What was to have been a crossing under darkness dragged on toward the daylight hours.

"We were packed into a barge like boat. I recall it as a metal boat powered by an outboard. The Germans had us zeroed from the start. They had anti-aircraft guns in the hills above. They were using those to fire flak — exploding shells — down at us.

"Something hit our boat. We were going down fast. The engineers spun us around and headed back for the shore — trying to get us into the shallows before we went down. We were still under heavy fire when the barge hit bottom — quite a ways from shore. We went over the side. It was shallow enough that we could walk to the front of the barge. We huddled there, using what was left of our barge for protection — machine gun tracers splashing all around.

"We tried to make it to shore a couple of times, but there was just too much incoming. I don't know how long we were in the water — but it was colder than hell. It was long enough that I could barely feel my legs — and wasn't sure if they would carry me anymore.

"We finally made a dash for the shore, then up and over the raised railroad tracks. Once across the tracks we could drop down using the railroad for protection. And they were shooting at us all the time."

With the situation disintegrating, both aircraft and artillery were called in to strike the embedded German positions on the east shore. The 2nd Battalion of the 87th Division's 346th Regiment had successfully crossed to the south, and was moving north to engage the German defenders at the 3rd Battalion's crossing point.

Later in the day treadway pontoon bridges were thrown across the river at more secure positions, and tanks and tank destroyers, as well as munitions, equipment, and men began flooding onto the east bank. Somewhere in all this confusion Tuffy finally managed to cross the Rhine and join the fire-

Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

fight to clear Braubach — a task that went on throughout the next night, but was completed by noon on the 26th.

With the western front crushing inward, the German military went into general retreat. From this point forward, the chase was on. But Tuffy's war still had a few very brutal weeks to go.

... it was the damndest thing ...

"When they could, the army used small airplanes to check the accuracy of our artillery by flying over the target area and watching to see if things were landing on target. The army's usual spotter plane was a military version of the Piper Cub. Other than the olive drab paint and radio, it was the same unarmored wood and fabric airplane I'd learned to fly in.

"While we were in the Rhine River area, German small arms fire managed to hit our spotter plane's pilot — the bullet penetrating his leg between his knee and his hip. He had to land. The brass came to me and said, 'We see you've got flying time in a Piper Cub. Would you fill in until we can bring in another Army Air Corp pilot?' They said the replacement should be forward that afternoon. So, for the next five hours I was a pilot.

"I don't remember snow on the ground when I took off, probably because I was at a lower altitude. But at higher altitudes, there was plenty of snow. To see the ordnance hitting, I had to fly within 500 feet of the ground. I'd radio in, and the artillery would correct their aim.

"I wasn't aware of any ground fire being aimed at me, but I'm sure it was. After all, the other guy had been shot.

"I don't recall thinking about getting hit by our own incoming. As far as I know, none of light planes that the Air Corps had spotting artillery for us had ever been shot down — by either side.

"And I didn't get my Air Corps wings either. Just my usual ten dollars a month extra for combat pay."

By the 1st of April Tuffy's regiment had settled into a rest area located near the German town of Villmar — about 25 miles east by northeast of the 3rd Battalion's Rhine River crossing point. For the next week this became the marshalling point for the Regiment's next big push.

The events of the days after the crossing

are hard for Tuffy to separate. So much was happening so quickly. Sources indicate that during this time period, as the Regiment moved through town after town, numerous captives — both prisoners of war as well as slave laborers were found.

"We drove up to this camp," Tuffy reported. "It was a slave labor camp with a factory for making munitions right inside the compound. All the prisoners were women — mostly French and Russians. The German guards were long gone, and we weren't too worried that they might want the camp back.

"None of us could understand what the prisoners were trying to say, but the women were making gestures that seemed to indicate that they wanted us to cut the wires so they could get out. They didn't have anyplace to go, but it didn't seem right to leave them penned up that way. So we cut an opening in the wire.

"Some of them came out and started crowded around us — still trying to talk. We just kept shaking our heads, trying to show them that we couldn't understand.

"One of the women was making a gesture indicating that she was hungry. That's when we made a mistake that I still regret. One of the guys pulled out a K-ration and tossed it to the woman. And all hell broke loose.

"It was like throwing a bone into a pack of starving dogs. They were fighting tooth and nail to get to that little bit of food. We started throwing every scrap of food we had to them — just to keep them from killing each other. It was the damndest thing I had ever seen. It was ugly — terrible.

"Finally the truck with our kitchen stuff came forward, and by dark we had fed the bunch.

"Like I said, they had a munitions factory in the compound. It reminded me of when we had been resting in the basement of a church. We were ready to head down the road, so we were moving toward the stairs when a German mortar round landed on the top of the church, rolled down the roof, and dropped right into the basement stairwell.

"It didn't go off.

"We called the munitions demolition squad, and they came and took the thing apart. There was no firing pin in the shell. It may have been that some slave laborer decided to leave the pin out, and very likely saved our lives. You can only imagine what would have happened to that person if

Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

they'd been caught doing that.

"They had a Gestapo Headquarters in this camp. In one of the sheds near the headquarters we found a car. It looked like something out of a movie magazine. It was a big convertible, and it had a big rudder — tailfin — rising up on the back end. It seemed so funny to find something like that in a slave labor camp."

... this damn sergeant major ...

On the 6th day of April the 347th Regiment assembled in its bivouac area near Villmar — a few miles east of Limburg — and began pushing by motor caravan 200 miles east by northeast into central German. The objective was the area around the small but well known winter resort of Oberhof. Moving rapidly and against little resistance along the four-lane autobahn, by that evening the 347th had obtained its objective.

"We set up our company headquarters in a hotel in Oberhof. Oberhof wasn't very big, but they had ski runs and toboggan slides and stuff like that. We dropped a bunch of communication wires — had them running out from our hotel to all our other locations.

"While we were getting set up, we had this young kid come in as a replacement. He'd been drafted when he was seventeen and a half years old. He had his 17 weeks of training, and they shipped him right to the front. I told the Captain, "That isn't fair to the kid. Why don't you keep him at headquarters for awhile? Let him answer the phone or run errands — at least until he gets some idea of what this is all about." And the Captain said that sounded like a good idea since he needed somebody to do those kinds of things anyway.

"It was night, and my turn to go into the building and get my feet dry came up. I was there when the damn Jerries — Waffen-SS — counterattacked, overrunning the headquarters. All day this German woman had been watching what we were doing. We think she was the one who told our attackers what we had done, so the Germans just followed the telephone wires to headquarters.

"They killed the kid right off the bat. When the war ended the kid's folks wanted to meet with us, wanted to know what had happened to their boy. We couldn't turn them down, you know. So I told them just how it happened.

"Anyway, I would say that there were probably a dozen of our guys in the building when the Germans attacked.

"They came in fast and shooting like hell. And then the lights went out. It was basically hand to hand in the dark. When you grappled with somebody, if his uniform felt like it was made of German material, you tried to kill him.

"After the German's started their attack our artillery got the great idea that as long as most of us were probably already dead they might as well get rid of a bunch of Germans too — so they started dropping mortar shells on our position.

"Of the dozen guys we started out with, by next morning there were just three of us left.

"I'd been having ongoing problems with this sergeant major. When the Germans hit the house, the only weapon I had was my .45 automatic handgun — that was my personal weapon ever since I'd been put in charge of my own machine gun. During the attack, this sergeant major, having lost his sidearm, demanded my pistol. I refused. He was threatening me, so I shoved my gun in his gut and said, "Get down in the corner and stay there!"

"Somehow our Lieutenant had made it down into the building's basement. I went down, found him, and brought him back up. The concussions from the mortars had deafened him — he couldn't hear. And of course there wasn't anyway to see anything down there in the dark — so he was just lost. His hearing came back the next day.

"This sergeant major was going to court-martial me for disobeying an order — which was strange since losing his weapon could also be a court-martial offence. My Lieutenant countered that he wanted to write me up for a Silver Star — for going into the basement after him. The Lieutenant suggested that if I turned down the Silver Star, and the sergeant major dropped his intent to have me court-martialed, we would just call it even.

"I fought with that sergeant major all the time after that. After all, I had called him a yellow son of a bitch. It seems his dad was a congressman or something, so he figured he could do pretty much as he pleased."

The next day the 347th pushed off toward the Czechoslovakian border, its eventual target the town of Plauen. In the next week and several days the Regiment met varying degrees of resistance, though for the most part the remains of the German

Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

army seemed more interested in surrendering than fighting.

“My final run-in with the sergeant major was somewhere along our push toward Plauen when he demanded I pick two guys and go out to stop an expected counter-attack. I told him “I know I have to go, but I don’t have to ask anybody else to take on an impossible situation like that with me.” I refused to pick, and was ready to go myself when two other guys — all I can recall was that one was Jewish and the other Italian — came up and said, “We’ll go with you, Tuffy.”

“We packed everything we thought might be useful onto a jeep and trailer, and, taking some help to unload the stuff, drove out along the road we expected the Germans to come down. We saw a ledge area above the road. From there we could see the Germans coming, and when we opened up, they’d be below us, with a creek below that and the ground rising steeply on the other side. There wasn’t really anywhere for them to go except back the way they came. We piled all our stuff on the ledge — a bazooka, a mortar, and all our ammo. And we took the .50 caliber machine gun off the jeep too. The help took the jeep back down with them. We climbed onto our ledge and waited to see what came.

“A while later we see this Tiger tank coming down the road. Behind it, the tank’s supply truck. And behind that more trucks. When the Tiger passed below, we laid into it with everything we had. The thing was so damn big, the only place we figured we could do it any damage was in the sprockets and wheels that drove the treads, so that’s where we were concentrating our fire.

“I think we were far enough up the embankment that they couldn’t get at us. They were churning up dirt and rocks trying to turn the tank on that narrow road, and all of a sudden the tank just stopped. We didn’t know why.

“It just sits there, and we just kept pouring shells into it. The supply truck pulls up and the guys start hopping out to see what’s wrong with the tank. We gave them hell.

“Tracers from our machine gun set the

barrels of tank fuel in the truck on fire, and as soon as it started to burn, the supply troops took off running, with the tank crew piling out and joining them.

“Next thing the explosives in the truck stated going up. It was one hell of a mess, and the Germans weren’t waiting around to sort it out. They all took off — the ones we hadn’t killed anyway — running back down the road. Their other trucks were backing away too.

“We sat there though the night — and nothing else happened. Next morning this guy — one of ours — came sliding down the bank from above. He said, “Let’s get back.” Nobody had to ask us twice. Whoever he was, he knew where our company had settled in — how far back they had moved in anticipation of the counterattack.

“So we’re back, and along comes this damn sergeant major. “You aren’t supposed to be here,” he yells! I guess I was supposed to be dead.

“I said, “I was told to come back, so I came back.”

“About this time a full colonel comes up and says to me, “Tuffy, what’s your problem?”

I said, “This damn sergeant major’s my problem.”

“So the colonel asked me what had happened. I told him we had stopped the counter attack, and when somebody who seemed to know had come along and told us to return to headquarters, that’s what we did.

“The colonel asked the sergeant major, and the sergeant major said, “These men aren’t supposed to be here. They’re supposed to be up there watching for a counterattack. They’re supposed to stay there and hold that position.”

“The colonel says to the sergeant, “Let’s go take a look at just what happened up there”

“And right where we said it had happened, there was the Tiger tank. Apparently all the explosions along with the Tiger trying to turn on that narrow road had dislodged a rock from the embankment. As it rolled, that rock was just the right size and shape to wedge into the drive wheels of the tank, jamming the works up and stopping it dead.

“I know we were being watched over by



Tiger I

Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

some higher power that day.

“I don’t know what the sergeant said to the colonel while they were gone, but when the colonel and sergeant came back, the colonel turned to the sergeant and said, “I’ll give you 15 minutes to gather up your stuff and get the hell out of here. I don’t care where you go, but don’t stop anywhere in General Patton’s army. Nobody wants you here. If you’re here sixteen minutes from now, you might just end up a casualty.

“And that’s the last I saw of the sergeant major.”

... like some kind of toy ...

“Those Tigers were nasty things. I can’t remember when or where it occurred, but I recall we were staying the night in this little town — sleeping in the buildings — and we heard this tank roll in. By the sound we figured it was a Tiger.

“It sat in the street awhile, motor idling, like it was waiting for something. After a while we heard it turn around and clank off into the dark.

“After the tank left, everyone started moving around and talking and such. Then all hell broke loose. Another Tiger tank fired up and started shooting all around.

“We were firing back from the houses — even though it was kind of pointless to shoot bullets at a Tiger tank. But some damn fool in the upper level of one of the buildings started firing his machine gun — using a belt with tracer ammunition. That Tiger turned its big 88 toward the glowing stream of tracers and blew the entire upper floor off that building.

“What we figured the Jerries had done was tow the second Tiger in behind the first. They used the idling engine to cover the sound of them unhooking the second tank, then the first tank took off and the second just sat waiting for us to give our positions away.

“As soon as they’d done their damage, they left.”

As the 87th Division moved toward the Czechoslovakian border, it was constantly liberating foreign prisoners — including captured American soldiers — and taking large numbers of Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS troops prisoner in turn.

On April 16th the 3rd Battalion of the 347th rolled into what was left of the city of Plauen. Just

six days before that an estimated thirty thousand of the one-hundred and ten thousand residents of the city had been killed in a massive air attack. The German military had largely abandoned the town, all that remained were dazed citizens and liberated slave laborers.

The 347th took control of the surrounding towns and settled in, as ordered, to hold their positions and await the arrival of approaching Russian forces. Sitting within spitting distance of the Czechoslovakian border, elements of the 3rd Army had effectively cut Germany in half. The Russians were pushing toward Berlin from the east, and the Western Allies were pushing across northern Germany from the west. Though fierce fighting continued elsewhere, things were relatively quiet where Tuffy was bivouacked.

On the 6th of May the Battalion was ordered to begin offensive operations again. By that evening, after progressing against little resistance, they were ordered to hold positions again.

Word came that the German High Command had surrendered unconditionally on the 7th, and, though all offensive operations were to cease immediately, the surrender would actually become official on the 9th. In the mean time, all Allied forces were to remain at high alert and respond to any provocations using the usual wartime rules of engagement.

At that point it became the Regiment’s job to process the thousands of German soldiers coming forward to surrender. And it finally became apparent to the American GIs that the war in the west was really over.

Likely it was within a week of the official surrender that an order was received from “higher headquarters” asking that several “volunteers” from each company of the 347th Regiment be sent to the recently liberated death camp at Buchenwald “to bear witness to the unspeakable atrocities which had been found there.” The death camp was approximately 100 miles northwest of Plauen.

As Tuffy recalls, “Three of us were assigned a jeep and ordered to drive to the camp. I can’t recall any prisoners still being there. The German guards had largely abandoned the place a week before it fell into American hands. The only living people I remember were other GIs.

“The camp had an odor to it. It wasn’t like rotting flesh. It was just different. The only way I

Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

could describe it was to say it was a human smell.

“I remember the railroad cars — just like the kind used for hauling coal or gravel. The cars were sitting on a railroad siding and piled as high as they could get them with bones from the furnaces. It was the damndest thing.

“And in one of the offices they had this tub kind of thing down on the floor. It was long, like a coffin, but covered with glass. It was full of a liquid — alcohol I would guess — and floating in that was this naked girl — maybe eighteen years old at the most. They had pickled her.

“She was on display like some kind of toy — like something they kept because they liked to look at her.

“It just made you mad — and pretty well explained all in itself why this war had been necessary.

“I know I should remember more about the place. But it’s something I’ve pushed out of my mind for so many years now. I just couldn’t envision humans who would want to do that kind of stuff to other people. But what really makes me mad are the people who now go around saying it didn’t happen — those damn idiots who say the reality of the death camps was all made up. I was there. I know it was real. And everyone needs to remember that.”

Though the war in Europe was over, the Pacific was a different matter. For the 347th Regiment's remaining time in Germany, the unit began a schedule of training exercises intended to prepare the troops for entering the Pacific war against Japan.

On the 15th of June, Tuffy’s regiment began a three day motor convoy to a redeployment camp in the vicinity of Rheims, France. And on the 26th of June another redeployment to Camp Lucky Strike just a few miles from the French port city of Le Havre.

On the 4th of July the 347th Regiment left the European theater on the American luxury liner ‘West Point’ — steaming past the Statue of Liberty into New York Harbor on the 11th of July.

The regiment reassembled at Fort Benning, Georgia. There it was learned that the regiment was being disbanded, its men to be reassigned



*The furnaces at Buchenwald.
Photo from the National Archives and Records
Administration collection.*

into units headed to the Pacific.

“They put me in Regimental Headquarters — doing paperwork. The main thing was to issue transfers. We were moving people as fast as we could. Each transfer would have two weeks to report to their disembarkation point on the west coast. That would give the men at least a few days to spend at home while in transit.

“When they came, my own papers said I was to report to Fort Lewis, and from there to a ship headed toward the South Pacific.

“It was the 6th of August when we heard the news. I had gone home to Loon Lake — waiting until the last possible minute to report to Fort Lewis. Marjorie and I were taking some time to drive to Warm Springs, Oregon, to visit her folks. We had just started southbound down the old highway between Deer Park and Spokane and were passing through the Dartford area when the announcement came over the car’s radio. They were talking about a Japanese city being wiped out by one bomb. Everybody seemed really excited, but it was something you just couldn’t quite understand.

“A few days later the Army Air Force dropped a second bomb. Everything was in turmoil then. And it came out shortly after that the bombs

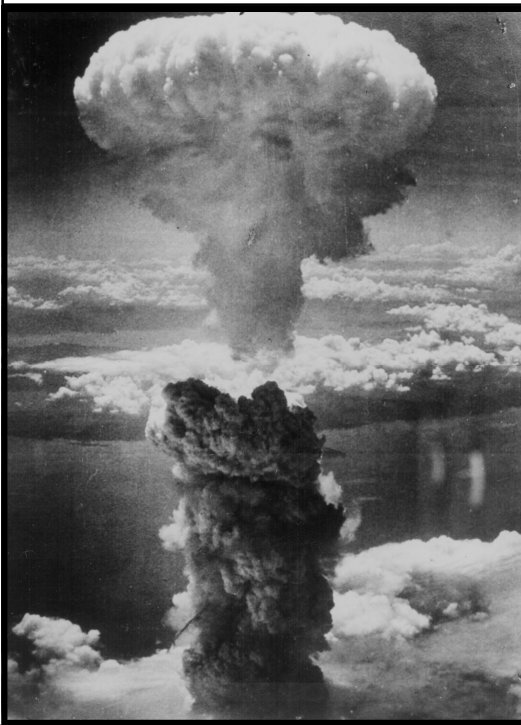
Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

were likely a fatal blow.

“That was a terrible thing to do – but ...”

It must have been a bewildering shock to the world. For years everyone knew that the real mass of American power had been thrown at the Third Reich — that it was America’s official policy to win the European war first. Now all available power was to be concentrated on Japan. Our citizens understood how difficult this was likely to be. The navy had already endured wave after wave of Kamikaze attacks, and the general understanding was that the Japanese were preparing to throw every remaining man, woman, and child at any invader — even if that constituted an act of national suicide. The estimates suggested as many as a million American casualties were yet to come. And then, without warning, out of this dismal certainty that the war was likely to stretch well into 1946 came an official report of what appeared to be a super-weapon. Considering that the bomb project was one of the best kept secrets of the war — at least from the public’s perspective (if not from the knowledge of certain

Nagasaki, August 9th, 1945.



temporarily allied foreign powers) — it’s reasonable to believe that people were initially at a loss to understand the implication of what was now being said. Within hours President Harry Truman was clarifying the confusion, and people began to understand that the war might actually be — through some miracle of science — coming to a swift and welcome end.

The President’s news release was finalized before the bomb was actually dropped. Since it wouldn’t be known whether the bomb would be dropped on the primary target, Hiroshima, or the secondary target, Kokura, until the attacking bomber had a chance to evaluate the target’s visibility from the airspace over Japan, the prepared news release left a blank space for the name of the city struck.

The statement began by saying, “*Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on () and destroyed its usefulness to the enemy. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of TNT. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British ‘Grand Slam’ which is the largest bomb yet used in the history of warfare.*

“*The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In the present form these bombs are now in production and even more powerful forms are in development.*

“*It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.*”

After detailing the history of the development of the bomb, the President’s statement continued, “*We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan’s power to make war.*

“*It was to spare the Japanese people from utter destruction that the ultimatum of July 26 was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum. If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air the like of which has never been seen on this earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such numbers and power as they have not yet seen and*

Photo from the National Archives and Records Administration collection.

**Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009**

with the fighting skill of which they are already well aware.”

On August 9th the city of Nagasaki was obliterated. And on the 15th, Japan surrendered.

“With that our planned deployment to the South Pacific was scuttled,” Tuffy said, “and I was

transferred to Baton Rouge to work in the headquarters and wait out my discharge — which officially arrived on the 1st day of November, 1945.

“And then I went home again.”

... to be concluded in *Mortarboard* #14.

Over the Kitchen Table

The Editor’s Thoughts Regarding Fundraising & The Ongoing Society Mission

This is not the best of times to contemplate starting a fundraising project. Most every charitable organization is facing tough going, and some of these organizations deal with critical human necessities such as food, clothing, housing, and medical needs. People are going to keep that in mind when deciding where to place their limited charitable dollars — at least those people who still have a place in their budgets for charitable dollars.

Fundraising is usually a competitive undertaking — a fact that’s easier to overlook when times are good. This is not to say that we shouldn’t fundraise, but rather that an organization like ours should try to avoid playing on the same field as charities directly assisting the needy.

We also have to remember that fundraising involves more than just constantly badgering people for money. Sending out a constant stream of letters requesting money is likely to do little more than annoy — and even more likely to cause a rapid dissipation of whatever goodwill the Society may have developed within the community over the last several years. Fundraising needs to be a thoughtful process. And thoughtful processes require an appropriate amount of time and knowledge to design and implement. An ill considered word or gesture, a mistake regarding federal or state regulations, or a defect in our record keeping that obscures the transparency we need in order to maintain the public’s trust in our organization can place the entire effort in jeopardy.

Deliberations in the last meeting of the Society’s Board of Directors produced an outline for a permanent fundraising committee. The idea was that the individuals interested in serving on this committee would begin a series of meetings during which they should become familiar with the laws and regulations specific to fundraising by non-profit organization — and otherwise educate themselves on how to be fundraisers. If it becomes advisable, the Soci-

ety should pay a professional fundraising consultant or a knowledgeable attorney to appropriately educate and caution the Society regarding these matters.

After getting an idea of what all is involved, the committee should decide what the Society’s general approach to fundraising ought to be. Then the committee should outline the process as they see it, and submit this plan to the Board of Directors for approval. All the above should be done before any actual fundraising activities are undertaken.

The above is what the Board of Directors clearly indicated must be done by those Society members willing to become fundraisers. It was the Board’s expectation that it would be well into summer before the above qualifications could be met and the Society’s fundraising campaign actually begun.

Because of the extraordinarily large amount of capital needed to build a museum from the ground up, this is likely to be a very long fundraising campaign — especially in a community with as small a population as ours. Over time our enthusiasm is likely to grind down. One antidote against campaign fatigued is to continue doing what we’re doing now — only more so. More research, more publications, more data posted on the website, more Society involvement in community events. Another is to keep the campaign as enjoyable as possible — for both the membership and the community at large.

The first step in increasing enjoyment is to avoid as many headaches as we can — or at least finding ways to lower the severity of those headaches we can’t avoid. That’s the entire reason for educating ourselves regarding fundraising rules and regulations beforehand, and then religiously following those rules and regulations after. We can choose to ignore them if we want — after all, following an apparently pointless set of state and federal regulations does tend to reduce the fun factor. However — since ignorance of the law is not considered an appropriate defense — unless we actually like head-

**Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009**

aches the compound interest likely to accrue by ignoring fundraising regulations until our violations are brought to light might be the shock that finally convinces everyone except a few diehards that wisdom requires taking things a bit slower — that wisdom requires we move forward in a more thoughtful manner.

Enthusiasm, when well tempered by knowl-

edge, tends to develop a thick patina of discretion. And fundraisers can always use a thicker coating of discretion.

Letters to the Editor should be sent to

**Wally Lee Parker
6904 N. Stevens
Spokane, WA 99208-4015**

Letters, Email, and Chatter

<p>Please Note: All comments, corrections, and criticisms printed can and will be edited by the society for clarity, brevity, and — if necessary — content.</p>
--

Chris M^cDoniel, an internet aviation buff who has assisted us with certain aspects of the Orland Luhr story, recently sent an Associated Press clipping from Tucson's *Arizona Daily Star* dated August 21, 1944, describing the incident at Luke Field. The six paragraph story, drawn from accounts of the individuals at Luke Field at the time — including personnel with the motion picture company — gave an account of the incident that varied from the official Army account only in certain interpretive detail.

The most important fact gained from the article was that the AT-6 aircraft being used — such as the one flown by 2nd Lieutenant Luhr — were described as having been “*camouflaged to resemble Jap Zeros*”. This means that Orland's aircraft was painted with Japanese insignia, and that the canopy covering the rear seat had been painted the same color as the fuselage — just as shown in the few close-ups of the AT-6s seen in the ‘God is My Co-Pilot’ movie.

Regarding an article that appeared in Mortarboard #4, page 39, titled ‘*In Search of Clayton's Spokane Pottery Company*’, and specifically to a quote from the March 6th, 1901 issue of the *Spokesman-Review*. That quote mentioned Dan Raymond as taking “*full possession of the pottery works at Clayton, Washington, owned by the Standard Stoneware Company.*” The article states that J. H. Spear of the Washington Brick & Lime Company sold the pottery to Raymond and his partner, L. J. Hankim “a

year ago” — which would suggest 1900.

An article appearing in the ‘History of Santa Clara County, California’ states that Daniel Raymond was born in Wellsville, Ohio, on the 31st of October, 1868. He was the youngest of fifteen children. His father died in 1871. He supported himself from the age of eight.

He apprenticed as a potter, and according to the article became the foreman of the Clayton Pottery Company of Clayton, Washington, in 1900. The article continues “... *which position he filled for one year. He then embarked in the pottery business on his own account in that locality, but trade conditions were unfavorable and in 1904 he left that place and came to San Jose ...*”

Once in San Jose Raymond began his own one man pottery operation, building a kiln with one hundred and sixty five dollars worth of capital. Within a short time he had become a well-to-do man, had married, and went on to raise his family in comfortable circumstances.

The article also states that “*Mr. Raymond is a veteran of the Spanish-American War, enlisting with the Washington Volunteers and becoming a member of the First Washington Infantry. He saw active service in the Philippines under Generals King and Lawton, receiving his honorable discharge at the end of two years.*”

The details of Dan Raymond's military service coincides with material stated in the Spokesman-Review. However, the ‘*History of Santa Clara*’ article also indicates that Raymond “*located in Washington in 1900*”, but his service with the First Washington Infantry in the Spanish-American War of 1898 suggest he was located in this state prior to 1900. This in turn suggest that the Santa Clara material, published in 1922, may have been less accurate than the Spokesman-Review article which was written contemporary to Raymond's stay in Clayton.

**Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009**

However, we can't rule out the possibility that prior to Raymond and Hankim's purchase of the Standard Stoneware Company from J. H. Spear, the company may have actually been known as the Clayton Pottery Company. That Hankim and Raymond together renamed the company the Standard Stoneware Company, and that the *Spokesman-Review's* reference to Dan Raymond taking "full possession of the pottery works ... owned by the Standard Stoneware Company" may have been in reference to the company Hankim and Raymond had renamed when they bought it from Spear, and that Raymond was then taking full ownership of.

This is all conjecture, but if it were true we would need to look for traces of the Clayton Pottery Company when it was owned by Spear prior to 1900, for the Standard Pottery Company when owned by Hankim and/or Raymond in the area of 1900 to 1905, and for the Spokane Pottery Company thereafter.

We know that another Clayton Pottery Company existed — but at least eighteen years later. That was the pottery operation on the Wind family farm near Clayton. According to Wind family descendant Susan Simpson, we can be fairly certain that pottery was being produced under that name on the Wind property in the fall of 1918. If there was an earlier Clayton Pottery Company on the Standard and Spokane Pottery site, there's enough time separating the Clayton factory and Wind family operations that no confusion should arise if confirming records of either are found.

On March 23rd Bill Sebright received and posted to the membership the following email from Alicia Duckworth of Deer Park. Alicia wrote, "My husband, our three-year-old, and I are still pretty new to Deer Park. We moved here from the Seattle area almost two years ago. We love it here.

"I stumbled across a cool old 1960s photo of the Deer Park drag strip on craigslist and purchased it for my husband. One of his favorite things is racing, and I wanted to be able to give him some history of our new community. I was wondering where this race track use to be and the dates it was open. Is there anything else you can tell me about the Deer Park drags?"

Society member Pete Coffin replied, "Just

after receiving my driver's license in 1958 I started driving my dad's 1950 Plymouth to the track at the Deer Park airport. Of the three runways the one oriented from southwest to northeast was the one used for drags, with the starting line close to the southwestern end. I think the show was run by the "Spokane Timing Association, in conjunction with several of Spokane's car clubs — including the "Dukes". They rented the runway, sold the tickets, and ran the electronic speed and timing equipment."

"The races usually started about 10 o'clock Sunday morning with 'class eliminations'. Class finals lasted until around 4 in the afternoon. I can't remember if it was only one weekend a month, or if every summer Sunday was race day.

"In the beginning spectators could park along the southern side of the runway and watch from inside their cars.

"1957 Chevrolets, with their new 283 cubic inch engines, were the prominent cars when I first started going to the drags — especially the ones with fuel injection or dual four-barrel carburetors. Stock classes began with 'A' — the fastest speeds and elapsed times — and all the way down to 'K' or 'L' class for the older Chevy, Hudson, and Plymouth 6-cylinder cars. The classes were also split up if a car had been modified or used an exotic fuel. Race speeds probably averaged about sixty to eighty miles per hour over all, with elapsed times of 15 to 20 seconds. In later years Plymouths, with their new V-8s, were well represented.

"I believe Deer Park holds the record for the first dragster to exceed 150 miles per hour. Now speeds over 300 miles per hour are common nationally. The Prufer family has an early 1930s Ford that they raced at the Deer Park strip — they bring the car to the annual reunion at Deer Park's Parkway Chevrolet. I have a first cousin who set a record of 125 miles per hour on a modified Harley Davidson in the late 1950s. I've been told he still owns the cycle.

"In the 1960s some grandstands were either built or transported along the side of the runway. I seem to remember that a boy sitting in the grandstand was killed when a race car blew an engine or transmission and parts ricocheting off the pavement flew into the stands. I think that may have slowed things down a bit.

"I was going to college and working summers out of town in the 1960s, so my attendance

**Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009**

dropped off. Racing became a temptation that I just couldn't afford.

"I don't know if this will be much help, but this is what I recall."

The Society would be interested in hearing

other recollections about the drag strip, and in seeing any photos area residents may have taken of the races.

Society Minutes — April, 2009

The April 11th meeting of the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society was called to order at 09:03 AM by Society president Bill Sebright. In attendance were Mark Wagner, Rob Higgins, Patricia Parker, Wally Lee Parker, Bob Gibson, Robert C. Lemley, Bob Clouse, Mary Clouse, Sharon Clark, Marilyn Reilly, Betty Burdette, Ella Jenkins, Lonnie Jenkins, Warren Nord, Lorraine Nord, Peter Coffin, Karen Meyer, Cliff Meyer, Grace Hubal, Art Stelting, Eldon Hutchins, Florene Moore, Marget Burdega, and Ray Hall.

The Treasure's Report was received from Mark Wagner and filed in the official record.

Regarding the ongoing discussion of obtaining a museum for the Society, Bill Sebright reported that Howard Richards had approached him with yet another suggestion, this time proposing that an existent structure be moved onto Grange property just east of the current Grange Hall — the former Clayton Moose Hall.

The idea of approaching the Grange Association with the concept was readily dismissed since the same cluster of difficulties associated with the previous proposal to use Fair Association property would likewise apply to the use of Grange property. The C/DPHS Board of Directors has determined that ownership of the property on which any museum structure is sited is an absolute necessity.

Board member Rob Higgins further investigated the structure that was suggested as being ready to be moved onto whatever site the Society found, and discovered that the owner was Clint Vander Hoof. Clint said he would sell the house for three thousand dollars, and move it to whatever property the Society might find for another two thousand dollars. He also stated that the Society could purchase the acre of land the building currently rested on for another twenty thousand dollars.

Although Howard Richards was of the opinion that the Society would not need to worry about meeting commercial codes with its building, Rob Higgins talked to the County and found that we

would indeed have to follow those far more rigid codes — and that we would need to pay for an environmental study and file an environmental impact statement as well.

As before, it was decided that the expenses involved were far beyond the Society's current ability to meet. While the Society appreciates ideas regarding ways to address our desire to have a home of our own, we would suggest that those wishing to make proposals first familiarize themselves with the stipulations the Board of Directors has made. The first of these states that the Society must be the sole owner of the property our museum is constructed on. The second is that the Society will incur no debt when building its museum — the Society must be in a position where it can pay for everything in full at the time of purchase. If these first two requirements are met, we can move forward from there. If these first two stipulations are not met, it is pointless to bring the rest of the proposal to our attention.

A suggestion was floated that the Society might be able to obtain a grant to state land if any were available in the area. The likelihood of such grants to non-profit groups had not been seriously investigated, and no suitable state land is known to be available with the area anyway.

Art Stelting brought a 1937 Clayton school annual to the meeting. He is allowing Society member Pete Coffin to scan the annual for our electronic archives. Many of the book's photos have the students and teachers identified.

The Society's Editor of Print Publications, Wally Lee Parker, reports that a website has posted material from the Society's booklet about the Deer Park missile site without permission. It appears that the Seattle based company invites individuals registered with their website to post information about certain areas of interest along with GPS data on how to reach said areas. We are assuming that the hosting organization was unaware that the person submitting the material was using it in violation of civil copyright code.

Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society
Newsletter — Issue # 13 (May) — 2009

The particular page in question is titled “Atlas Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Site — Deer Park, WA.” The offending website has reproduced paragraph after paragraph of quotes drawn from various parts of the Society’s booklet — more than fourteen hundred words in all out of the twenty-four thousand word manuscript. The copied paragraphs are obvious clip and paste reproductions in that they exactly replicated the contents of our booklet.

An email has been sent to the hosting site pointing out that they are clearly in violation of copyright. It was suggested in that letter that the page in question could be brought into compliance with our standards of permission by first stating that the material has been extracted from “Standing Watch: the story of Deer Park’s Atlas Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, 1961 — 1965”. Next they will need to indicate that the actual author of material is Wally Lee Parker. It will need to be stated that the material is under copyright to the Clayton/Deer Park Historical Society. And lastly, a link to our Society’s homepage will have to be added to the page in question. If all the above is done, we will consider the material as being used by permission.

We believe it in our best interest to allow reasonable use of our material whenever a prior request had been made. If the infringing site would prefer not to make the changes we have requested, we are assuming they will voluntarily removed the infringing material as is customary when such violations are demonstrated. We will continue to monitor the site for further developments, and will continue to move toward whatever resolution is required by the response we receive.

On other matters the first serial to appear in the Society’s publications, “Tuffy’s War”, will be concluded in the June issue of the *Mortarboard*. The Society’s first interview with Don and Lorraine Ball has been recorded, with the intention of doing as many as necessary over the next year to obtain an overall image of the couple’s life as dairy farmers in the Clayton/Deer Park area. Also, tentative discussion are underway regarding a ‘Drag Strip Project’

intended to collect and preserve the history of Deer Park’s once famous raceway.

Webmaster Bob Clouse reported that a new record of 934 individual visitors signed in to our website one or more times during the month of March. Bob has designed and had printed a new Society business card. And the website continues to receive inquiries and data as individuals from throughout the country contact us in response to what they’re finding on the website — the latest being Ed Kingery and Jo Ann Cornelius.

Bob announced that Catherine (Baker) Truman and her husband Cliff have donated a painting Catherine completed in 1980 to the Society. The subject is a barn located on the Big Foot Valley property of Randy and Taffy Long. The barn was built in 1890’s by Scandinavian immigrants, and Catherine’s painting attractively captures the uniqueness of the structure.

Bob Clouse also passed around an actual homestead certificate for the Midwestern land settled by Bob’s grandfather. As Bob took care to point out, the certificate bore the original signature of Teddy Roosevelt — a Republican at the time.

Sharon (Boyd) Clark has taken point on the Society’s ‘Old Schools Project’. She brought several notebooks containing copies of student census records from a number of the small rural schools once located in this area. The collecting and replicating of these documents is part of the ongoing research Sharon and Florene Moore have been conducting at the Washington State Archives at Eastern Washington University’s Cheney campus.

Marilyn Reilly reported that Leno Prestini’s painting of Christ on the cross was used as a focal point for the Good Friday service at Deer Park’s Catholic Church. The painted was believed to have been donated to the former Clayton Catholic Church by Leno himself.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 AM. The next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, May 9th, at 09:00 AM at the Clayton Drive In.

Society Contacts

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

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

Wally Lee Parker, editor of print publications —

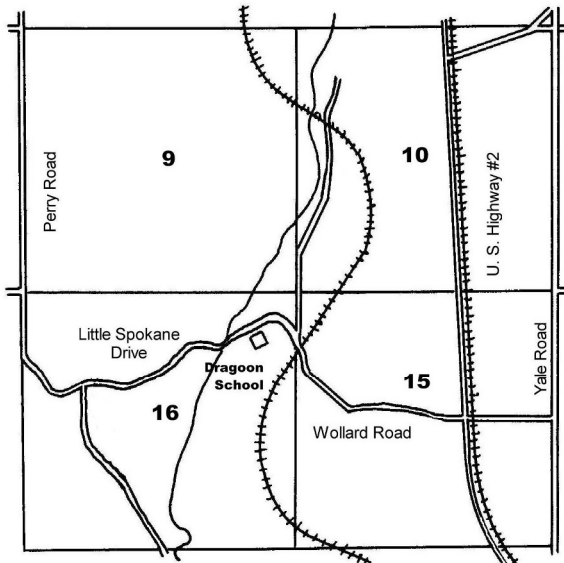
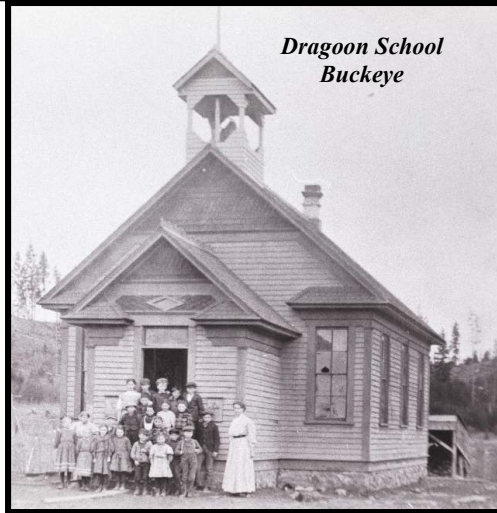
(print_publications@claytondeerparkhistoricalsociety.com)

C/DPHS, Box 293, Clayton, WA 99110

‘Old Schools Project’ Underway Effort Intended to Collect and Collate Data About Area’s Historic Schools

During the last several decades of the 19th century a number of small rural schools were established to serve the needs of the area’s scattered population. During the late 1930s and on into the 1940s, as transportation ceased to be such a problem, these small rural schools were absorbed into larger schools such as Loon Lake, Riverside, and Clayton/Deer Park consolidated. Over the years since, not only have the physical structures of many of these former rural schools been lost, but in some cases even their actual names and locations have been forgotten.

There is so much nostalgia and history associated with these buildings that the Society has begun a project intended to gather as much information as possible about the old schools. We’re intent on pinpointing the actual locations and cataloging any remaining structures. We want to copy for our archives any surviving photos of these schools. We want to duplicate



Dagoon School Location
S/2 NE NE Section 16 TWP27N-RGE43EWM

and archive any records associated with these schools. And we want to gather any personal recollections of these schools as living institutions. All this data is to be collated, cataloged, and ultimately made available to researchers, historians, genealogists, and anyone interested in the subject.

Sharon (Boyd) Clark and Florene (Eickmeyer) Moore are taking the lead on the archival research part of this project. Pete Coffin is involved with indentifying and creating maps of the school locations (see an example of Pete’s work to the left), and photographing the sites and any surviving structures associated with those sites. Wally Parker is currently involved in attempting to catalog and archive the data as it arrives.

The Society would enjoy any assistance the community could offer in this endeavor. Anyone willing to participate in collecting oral histories or any other aspect of this project would be welcome. You can contact us through the email address posted on page 175, or by asking any of the Society members listed at the beginning of our Society Minutes on page 174.

We wish to thank this month's volunteer proofreaders — Jay Habal, Sharon Clark, Charles Stewart, Sue Newell, and Patricia Parker