Distinguished People of Port Orford

Eugene Leon White

Port Orford's Bicentennial Mayor

Recollections as told to Alan Mitchell by Leon White

Chapter 1

Port Orford's Bicentennial Mayor – 1972-1976

I had never imagined becoming Mayor because I did not think I could be elected. Then one work day at my job in the office of the Western States Plywood Cooperative on Elk River, I got a phone call from Mayor Adolph Windmaiser telling me there was an empty seat on the City council. He asked if I would allow him to put my name on the ballot. He said he would handle the paperwork required. I was so surprised. I paused, thought about it a bit, then cautiously answered "Yes". When the election came around, I discovered I was unopposed!

That was in September. I was elected for a term in office that began in January. Sometime before January, Mayor Windmaiser died and the Council members appointed one of their own, Jim Peterson, as Mayor. He was Mayor when I attended my first Council meeting. A couple of months later, the position of Mayor had become open after Jim Peterson had sold his grocery store and relocated to Eastern Oregon.

Before the meeting to fill that position, City Councilman Kent Wagner had phoned me at home to ask if I would accept appointment by the Council as Mayor. Kent told me another Councilman, Dick Goergen, would be seconding the appointment. Once again, I was so surprised. I told Kent I would have to think a little bit about this. I decided to accept because I had been born and lived my entire life in Port Orford. It was my Community and I wanted the best for it.

At the next Council meeting, I was appointed and took the Mayor's seat at the Council Table. Once seated, the first thing I told everyone was "I hope I will not let you down."

When I became Mayor, I was pleased to learn those who had served before me had done well. The Government was already in good shape. I was fortunate during my term to be able to add to that with a series of projects that have had long term benefit to Port Orford.

I am not a thinker of new ideas, but I recognized that when good ideas were presented to me, I needed to use my new position as Mayor to support them. I needed to encourage the City Council to take the necessary actions to move forward.

The office of City Mayor is interesting when you realize it has little authority by itself. It is the six Council members who have the authority. They make the motions and take votes for or against them. The Mayor cannot make motions, second them or vote on them, unless there is a tie vote. Only when a tie vote happens can the Mayor cast a vote.

I recall that Port Orford's City Council cannot meet and do business unless a quorum of at least 4 Councilpersons are present. The Mayor's presence does not count towards a quorum. I was impressed with how well this form of City Government, with its limited power of the office of Mayor, worked.

During my time in office there was mostly similar thinking. Nearly all motions made were seconded and passed. Amazingly, there were hardly any motions that received even one "No" vote. Maybe it helped that I tried to encourage thorough discussions before a motion was made. The downside was that could

take a lot of time. Fortunately, I had a Councilman who was really good – in a diplomatic way – of signaling me when he thought it was time for us to move on. Harold Robinson would catch my eye while rolling his hands over each other. That was his polite way of saying "Mr. Mayor, Wind It Up!".

I was also fortunate that when I became Mayor, I had 6 Council members who worked well with one another: Kent Wagner; Dick Goergen; Harold Robinson; Goerge Gehrke; Delbert Neal; and Aileen Smith. Kent owned and operated a commercial fishing boat and a D-6 Cat bulldozer for land clearing. Dick Goergen developed property. Harold Robinson worked as a custodian for the school district. Delbert Neal owned and operated the town's only Variety Store and had been a Western States Plywood shareholder. Aileen Smith was a real estate broker.

45 years ago when I was Mayor, we had no microphone for the public but they were seated in front of us so they could overhear everything. We did not have a tape recorder; instead we had a City Recorder to take and writeup the minutes of our meetings. Also in attendance would be our City's Attorney. His role was to evaluate the legality of all proposed actions and tell us what our options might be. We also had a Justice of the Peace – Georgia Dougherty.

We had residents who served year-round on our Planning Commission. There were other residents who served on our Budget Committee to annually create a budget for the City Council and Mayor to consider.

Vital City Employees

L to R: Harold Robison, George Gehrke, Fred Savage, Vernita Longton in 1976.

During my tenure I was fortunate to work with several excellent city employees who kept the City operational. They include, but are not limited to:

VERNITA LONGTON (wife of a Western States shareholder) was Bookkeeper and later promoted to Administrator/Bookkeeper. She did an excellent job of coodinating all of the City's Departments and preparing monthly reports for the City Council. Our City was small with only two other Departments.

Public Works Department (Water-Sewer-Streets): **VERN SONDERMAN** (former Western States Plywood shareholder) was department head and **DON COBLE** (former commercial fisherman) was his assistant.

Police Department: Chief of Police was **JACK WALDIE** (former Western States Plywood shareholder).

The City had a large, recently built modern building at 20th and Idaho so it could consolidate its Office, Council Chambers, Police Station, Fire Hall and Ambulance garage. Both the Fire Department and Ambulance Association were totally staffed by volunteers and vital to the City's safety.

When I began my term as Mayor I was pleased to find many good projects already moving forward. I kept them moving and then initiated a few new ones:

Port Orford's First Comprehensive Plan

The City of Port Orford Government approved and accepted the State of Oregon's then new LCDC (Land Conservation and Development Commission) advice to begin to implement the new law. Oregon was offering to pay all of legal and planning expenses necessary for us to work our way through the process. Cities with LCDC-approved Plans were going to be given preference for future financial grants. A key part of the planning process included the designation of land to the north, east and south of the City as an Urban Growth Boundary. After our Comprehensive Plan was accepted by the State, properties within the boundary would be guaranteed to be allowed to be urbanized as needed. Adoption of our plan also guaranteed that lands outside of our Urban Growth Boundary would be allowed to remain as open farmlands and open space.

I believe Port Orford's Comprehensive Plan was one of the first to be approved by the State of Oregon. In the year this happened the League of Oregon Cities named Port Orford the best Oregon City for communities of our size and honored us with a plaque. Our city sent me to Portland to accept it.

A Room for the Port Orford Library

The Port Orford Library is not part of the City Government. Before voters authorized a tax base for them, their original library was small, and located in a small old building in town. The City happened to have a fairly large, unfinished room in the new City Hall building. They asked at a Council Meeting for the City to complete the room for them to use as a Library for the public. I had to tell them that while I thought that was a good idea, the City did not have the money to cover that cost.

Every year the Curry County Government had been giving money to each of the County's three libraries for them to operate with. A plan was developed among the three libraries for the other two libraries to donate some of their county funds to Port Orford for one year, if Port Orford would reimburse them the following year.

The City's First Water Treatment Plant

The City's water was chlorinated, but otherwise untreated. Our City received a grant for a water treatment plant. It was built next the Old Mill Pond. A part of that project included dredging part of the Mill Pond and installing a standpipe for the Fire Department to use as a backup source of water in an emergency. While dredging the Mill Pond, a lot of valuable Port Orford Cedar 'sinker' logs left behind from Mayor Gable's TransPacific Lumber Company were recovered and traded with Tucker's Sawmill in Langlois for lumber used to build a new City Shop building at the base of Hensley Hill.

A New Water Reservoir

The City had only one reservoir in town. It was small, uncovered and quite old having been built during the Great Depression in 1935 when Mayor Gable obtained a Works Public Administration grant for its construction. The only other reservoir nearby was a small, elevated wooden water tank on the Heads at the end of Coast Guard Hill Road. It had been built by the Coast Guard also during the Great Depression to serve the Lifeboat Station crew's quarters and a couple of houses in 'Little America' for the officer's families.

Port Orford had been needing to modernize its water system for years but never had the money. Coincidentally, I became aware the Port District's Cannery could hire more people if the City could provide enough water for them to operate a hydraulic shrimp processor. The Port qualified for job-related grants for the equipment. Given our local unemployment situation, the City was also qualified to apply for Federal help, we just needed to come up with 50%. The City and the Port decided to coordinate our grant applications and give it a try. We still needed to come up with that 50% for the Federal match, but with a bit of persuasion the County agreed to give Port Orford the money we needed.

It helped that year was one of the rare years when Curry County received a large amount of the money from the sale of timber from Federally-own timberlands located in Curry County. The timberlands are referred to as 'O&C' (Oregon and California) timberlands, and the payments considered to be 'in lieu' of property taxes. Many other counties around the nation were receiving similar payments as well. The Curry County Commissioners would then distribute the money to fund various projects and fund the County Government.

I was pleased to see that soon as we had our modern water tank installed on Coast Guard Hill, there were many benefits for the City. For one thing insurance underwriters re-rated the City's fire risk because all that additional water in storage made our City more fire resistant. The re-rating lowered everyone's fire insurance costs. Another was that with more water in storage and greatly improved water pressure, people were finally going to be able to develop their valuable Coast Guard Hill properties into homesites. I knew this would eventually be a big boost to the City's tax base.

Public Spaces

BUFFINGTON CITY PARK: On behalf of the City, I accepted a large piece of property from a combined project by the Buffington Family and the Port Orford Lions Club. With streets on two sides, it is very accessible and has been named as the Buffington City Park. Over the years the City has improved the park with a picnic area, a baseball field, lighted tennis courts, basketball backboard, miniature golf, nature trail, horse arena, and skateboard park.

PORT ORFORD HEADS STATE PARK: The Oregon State Parks Department approached the City for its support in upgrading their Port Orford Heads Wayside into a State Park. The property had picnic areas, panoramic ocean views, nature trails, and historic 1934 Coast Guard Buildings. The City Council and I enthusiastically said "Yes", we support it. This agrees with Oregon's long time position that the enjoyment of all of Oregon's beaches and State Parks should be protected and remain open to everyone, rich, poor, or in between.

PORT ORFORD COMMUNITY CENTER: For some time there had been a need for a place people and organizations could rent for their gatherings and events such as the annual Christmas Bazaar. That's when the Port Orford Community Center with its stage at the south end was funded through private donations. I supported it as Mayor and then recall being asked to turn the first shovel of dirt to begin its construction.

Benj. Franklin Mobile S&L Service

While Mayor, I became aware of an article in Oregonian newspaper that mentioned the Benj. Franklin Savings & Loan was considering introducing mobile branch banking to the Oregon South Coast. Their plan was to serve Gold Beach, Port Orford and Bandon with a converted motor home. They were searching for the right community to be their home base. With interest rates spiking around 12-15%, those were very stressful times for everyone. Since I was always in favor of encouraging new businesses to locate in Port Orford, I reached out and offered my support.

I don't recall now if they responded back, but it wasn't long after they purchased the property south of what is now the Quilters' Corner. They built a free-standing lobby facing Hwy. 101 with a drive-up lane behind, right outside the south wall of the Quilters Corner. The drive-up lane was where the mobile bank parked. It was quite innovative. I found it encouraging that their Manager bought a home in Port Orford and hired local people for his staff.

From the Port Orford News (October 30, 1975) — "SOON to become a familiar sight on the southern Oregon Coast is the new mobile office of Benj. Franklin Federal Savings & Loan Association. The red and white van will serve the communities of Bandon, Gold Beach and Port Orford beginning this December, and is one of the first offices in Benj. Franklin's statewide system to display the financial institution's new corporate mark."

Similar free-standing bank lobbies were built in Gold Beach and Bandon. After the Savings & Loan was put into receivership in 1990, those buildings were purchased by other financial institutions and extensively remodeled. They remain in use today: Rogue Credit Union in Gold Beach and Bank of America in Bandon. In Port Orford, the Happy Tails Pet Supplies occupied the third building until 2022.

The Manager's home in Port Orford was then purchased by Robert Reinhardt, a retired aerospace Field Engineer. After his passing in 1999, 50% of the proceeds from the sale of his home established a Rotary Scholarship Fund, with the remaining 50% given to help build Port Orford's new Library.

Port Orford's Bicentennial Mayor

July 4, 1976, was our nation's bicentennial, and there I was, happy to be the City's Bicentennial Mayor. In addition to celebrating Independence Day, each 4th of July Port Orford celebrates the construction

in 1962 of a Jetty to protect the Port's dock. Without the dock, the town's commercial fishing fleet would have had to relocate to another port. 1962 is when Port Orford's Independence Day celebrations had been re-named the 'Jetty Jubilee' Celebrations. The day's grand finale would continue to be our Independence Day Fireworks, a brilliant spectacle launched from the beach by Port Orford's Volunteer Fire Department into the night sky, lighting up the breaking surf below.

If I had ever been asked, I would never have guessed the time would come when I was Mayor of the City of Port Orford. Some of my High School classmates predicted otherwise in our class yearbook. When I graduated in the class of 1955 from Port Orford High School, a group of students had imagined a range of futures for each of the 20 graduates. These prophesies took into account each student's aptitude's and interests, then projected them into some fantastic future – such as winning the Kentucky Derby. Their prophesy for me was I would be Mayor of Port Orford. I recall my puzzlement because I never imagined such a thing would happen.

The Gilbert E. Gable Council Chambers

Long before I was ever Mayor, it had occurred to me Port Orford had never done anything to honor or even remember the man who during the Great Depression had created so many for the town's residents. That same man – Gilbert Gable – then helped our town incorporate as a City in 1935. Here I was, 37 years later and our City had not even named a street after him!

Before I became Mayor, the City had constructed a large space for a future City Council chamber. The room was empty. It had windows and doors, but no ceiling, wiring and sheetrock. There was no money to finish the project. Unknown to me, Alan Mitchell was also concerned that Gilbert Gable's generous efforts for Port Orford during the Great Depression were going unrecognized.

Soon after I became Mayor, while Alan and I were discussing the historical importance of Gilbert Gable to the creation and development of the City, he asked what would happen if we reached out to the Gable Family for help in finishing the Council Chambers. I knew it was common in other cities for people to donate to a building in return for its naming rights. I mentioned to Alan that Gilbert Gable's son Bob had lived his early years in Port Orford. Could there be a chance he might be interested in helping us honor the memory of his Dad? Coincidentally in the room with us was Bob Gable's child-sized rolltop desk. It had been given to my father when Bob Gable's family returned to Stearns, Kentucky following Gilbert Gable's death in 1941.

Thinking 'out of the box', Alan wondered if Bob might be interested in reuniting with his childhood desk while providing Port Orford with the means to honor and remember Port Orford's first Mayor – his Dad. I thought it wouldn't hurt to find out, so I asked Alan to reach out to him. The thought occurred to me that if we succeeded, it would be like Port Orford winning the 'Kentucky Derby'!

Bob Gable had been recently mentioned in a Wall St. Journal as being Kentucky's Republican gubernatorial nominee. When Alan reached out to him, we got an enthusiastic "Yes" for an answer. Bob suggested the City obtain a contractor's bid so he would know exactly how much money would be needed. The contractor who was awarded the job was Port Orford High School's woodshop teacher, Glen Kadelbach.

Dedication Day was November 8th, 1976. The day before, the Gable Family had been greeted at the North Bend airport by Port Orford High School's band and their teacher, Mike Malakowski.

The day of the Dedication we had a standing room only crowd. In addition to former Mayors, Councilmembers, Recorders, and employees, there were many of the town's senior citizens who had known or worked for Gilbert Gable during their younger years.

They were there to renew old friendships and greet, honor and thank the Gable Family.

During his years in Port Orford during the Great Depression, Gilbert Gable had many accomplishments as a private citizen and then ultimately served as our first Mayor. Behind where today's Mayor sits in the Council Chambers is a large professionally made black & white photo of a then 50 year old Gilbert Gable. "Mayor Gilbert E. Gable Council Chambers" is the inscription above it.

Retired Port Orford Grade School teacher Margaret Meyers had known the Gables (Mayor Gable had upgraded the lighting system in Port Orford's old two-story Grade School building where a young Margaret Meyers was teaching). Margaret wrote up a biography of Gilbert Gable to present at the Dedication Ceremony. The following are few paragraphs from it:

"In 1935, he moved his family to Port Orford and brought a quarter of million dollars to develop his plans. Within a year he had raised a sawmill, blown half a million tons of rock from Graveyard Point to form a five-hundred foot long breakwater dock, constructed an Administration Building to headquarter his companies, and built thirty homes to form a new section of Port Orford called the Hamlet. [Many of the homes he built in the Hamlet are still in use today.]

On Labor Day, 1935, the dock was formally opened with Governor Martin, Secretary of State Snell, and two thousand Oregon residents attending the dedication. That night a message from the President was written in fireworks: "Prosperity depends largely on private industry. Congratulations to Port Orford. Franklin D. Roosevelt"

Mayor Gable used the rockblasted off part of Graveyard Point to build a dock for exports. Unfortunately, the jetty he built to protect the dock quickly failed beca use the rock used proved unsuitable. The dock lasted for a number of years, benefitting our commercial fishermen.

A month later the city of Port Orford became the only incorporated city in Curry County. On November 14, 1936, the city was given a charter and Gable was elected its first mayor, a position he retained until his death. The myrtlewood council table and chairs were likely to be designed by Gable himself. Within three years the city fathers repaid the cost of incorporation, repaid half of a thousand dollar loan, and installed a thirty thousand dollar water system under WPA. All of this was brought in under what the city budget called for. Also, within these three years, private and public development at Port Orford would total $750,000.

TransPacific Lumber was finishing lumber at the rate of twenty-five million board feet within a year of its formation, enough to fill twenty-five or thirty ships steaming out of Port Orford harbor. With the town incorporated, dock constructed, sawmill operating, new homes built, and ships plying their trade, Gable turned his attention to building a railroad. He received government permission to construct a ninety-mile line from Grants Pass to Port Orford, a railroad which would tie the region into a transcontinental system and make Port Orford's deep harbor a full-fledged seaport." (Margaret Meyers – Retired Teacher/Biographer)

I was too young to remember him but I learned all about his many accomplishments as I was growing up. Among other things he had built a huge sawmill in what is now Buffington Park. The company was TransPacific Lumber and exported lumber and Port Orford Cedar logs to Japan. My father had worked there as a millwright.

Mayor Gable's Oregon Engineering Corporation purchased the bankrupt Inman Mine Company on Sixes River at a 1933 sheriff's sale. "They had twelve cabins, a small sawmill and a blacksmith shop. Altogether they had 30 unpatented mining claims and 80 acres of patented land." (J.E.Morrison – June 10, 1939), Mayor Gable hired local men to reopen it. Among the 'oldtimers' in attendance at the Dedication were some of those men: Aerial MacDonald, Bill Nutt, Calvin 'Dolly' Smith and Ed Conley.

Everything suddenly came to an end, December 2nd, 1941, when Mayor Gable died of a heart attack. Five days later, America was attacked at our big Pacific Naval Station – Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The City of Port Orford has continued on. Even today, our Community remembers and honors Gilbert E. Gable for all he did for Port Orford. Practically single-handedly, he brought prosperity to the town's residents during the darkest years of America's worst economic Depression.

Harbor Dock Dedication City Band, September 2, 1935.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT — **(1)** Lola and Adolph Windmaiser in earlier days. Photographer and date unknown. Lola was also well-known to locals as manager of the Colonial Theatre; **(2)** L to R: Alan Mitchell, Leon White, Ray Reinke in 1976; **(3)** Mayor Leon White (second from left) at the dedication ceremony with Bob Gable at the far right; **(4)** The newly dedicated Gilbert E. Gable Council Chambers in 1976; **(5)** Jedediah Smith Redwood Grove, L to R: Jim Gable, Beth Gable, Brenda Mitchell, Emily Gable, John Gable, Leon White, Alan Mitchell; **(6)** Aerial view of Buffington City Park in modern day; **(7)** The Port Orford City Hall Building. **NEXT PAGE:** more materials from the Gilbert E. Gable Council Chambers dedication ceremony.

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70th Year Published in Coos Bay, Oregon 97420 Saturday, Nov. 6, 1976 15 cents

Mayors of Port Orford

GILBERT E. GABLE	1935-1941
DOUGLAS JOHNSON	1941-1942—1948-1952
R.L. DOWDELL	1942-1948
HOMER KERBER	1952-1956
IRA TUCKER	1956-1960
ANDREW GRIBBLE	1960-1964
LLOYD BATES	1964-1966
FRANK ST. CLAIR	1967
JAMES WILSON	1968
ADOLPH WINDMAISER	1968-1971
JAMES PETERSON	1971
LEON WHITE	1972-1976

Mayor Gilbert E. Gable a biography

Gilbert Elledy Gable was born on June 1, 1886 at Shamokin, Pennsylvania. Upon completion of high school, he began work in a Pennsylvania coal mine, but quickly rose to an office position with the mining company. His natural ability to deal with people was recognized, and he transferred to the Bell Telephone Company to become their publicity counsel. In World War I he was commandeered by the Third Federal Reserve Bank in Philadelphia to head Liberty Loan drives, and then placed in charge of publicity for the U.S. Treasury Department.

After the war, he became president of two production units and assistant to the president of Pathe Motion Pictures. Pursuing an interest in archaeology, he became an explorer for the American Museum of Natural History and the University of Pennsylvania. In that capacity he discovered the largest number of dinosaur tracks in the world, located a lost Indian village, and became a blood brother of the Navajos.

In 1932 he married Paulina Stearns, the daughter of a Ludington, Michigan lumber family. He joined the staff of the National Broadcasting Company, presenting stories from his own experience on his coast to coast radio program "Highroads to Adventure." While with NBC, he listened intently to an Oregon prospector's stories of the abundant natural resources available there. In 1932 he came to Port Orford to see for himself, and returned to New York after investing in Curry County mining claims. He came back to Port Orford in 1933 and increased his holdings, then returned once more to New York. By 1934 he had reviewed all government reports on the region he could obtain. He made the journey to Port Orford again and this time spent five months in intensive study of the area.

Gable learned that within a hundred mile radius of Port Orford was ten percent of the nation's standing timber, and all of the world's Port Orford cedar. There were one hundred square miles of coal deposits, and a concentration of copper ore second only to Anaconda. Forty-eight percent of America's chromium lay in the region, enough cement to build a modern Chinese wall from Canada to Mexico, and bountiful supplies of dairy products. Gable concluded that a deepwater harbor at Port Orford would be the best way to tap these resources, and he returned to New York to seek financing for its construction.

In 1935, he moved his family to Port Orford and brought a quarter of a million dollars to develop his plans. Within a year he had raised a sawmill, blew half a million tons of rock from Graveyard Point to form a five-hundred foot long breakwater dock, constructed an administration building to headquarter his companies, and built thirty homes to form a new section of Port Orford called The Hamlet.

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But disaster struck in January, 1936. The worst storm in forty years hit the Pacific coast. The Port Orford breakwater went out; and with it went some of Gable's good fortune. Gable relinquished his interests in the dock and sawmill to another company, which later rebuilt the dock.

His idea for a Gold Coast Railroad to tap the region's mineral deposits was still very much alive, however. Gable continued to survey and plan for its construction. But in 1938 a rival company submitted plans for a railroad to run from Grants Pass to Crescent City for government approval. A government investigator contended that two railroads were not feasible and asked for revocation of Gable's permit.

Three years later, Gable was actively welding southwest Oregon and northern California together with a view to securing development for the area's vast mineral resources. His movement, launched as a secession threat by Curry County, gained such momentum that definite plans were being mapped for the formation of a new state. At the time of his death, Gable's last act was to call a meeting of the provisional state of Jefferson.

On December 2, 1941, Port Orford was again struck by a near-hurricane, and with its coming Gilbert Gable passed away at the age of fifty-five. The endless hours of driving himself toward fulfillment of his dreams had taken their toll. "I see it all so clearly now," he said shortly before his death, "as though I had focused the telescope of my life on one target that grows and grows until it finally has become almost too large for the glass. I see our breakwater that means Port Orford's harbor will become one of the greatest in the nation, I see Port Orford as one of the great fishing centers of the world. I see our natural minerals being developed and our people coming into their rightful place. For the first time I can see clearly the speedy fulfillment of our dreams and hopes."

Mayor Gable's speech to the first City Council

"Gentlemen, by virtue of the power conferred upon me by the citizens, I declare the community of Port Orford an incorporated city, under the laws of the State and Nation.

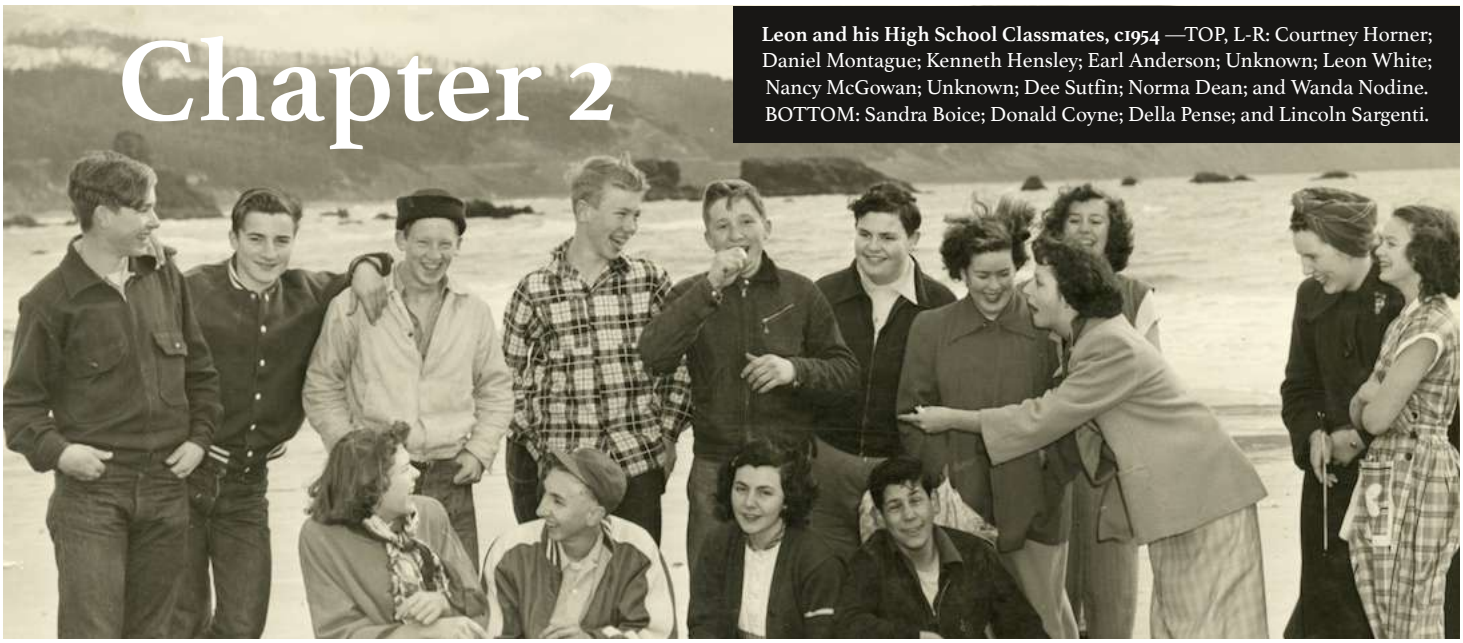
The first meeting of the Board of Aldermen of the City of Port Orford will come to order.

Gentlemen, we have assumed a duty and a trust. We no longer represent ourselves, but the principles of the greatest good to the greatest number. The decisions of the majority, in our own councils, must be accepted and carried out as our individual opinions and acts, regardless of what our personal opinions may be—except that it is our duty to express our sincere opinions in this council, in order that its action may have the full benefit of our thought. Neither animosity nor personal enthusiasm or attachment must now imperil our motives—petty bickerings have no service to give, nor strength to engender.

And this infant city—newest and youngest in America—is just as dependent upon us for fairness, guidance and careful judgment—even for sustenance itself—is just as dependent as an infant human child in your house and mine.

The page is clean and spotless. I am confident that you gentlemen will give the utmost of your capacity to this public trust—to carry on in a manner that will leave

Chapter 2



Leon and his High School Classmates, c1954 —TOP, L-R: Courtney Horner; Daniel Montague; Kenneth Hensley; Earl Anderson; Unknown; Leon White; Nancy McGowan; Unknown; Dee Sutfin; Norma Dean; and Wanda Nodine. BOTTOM: Sandra Boice; Donald Coyne; Della Pense; and Lincoln Sargenti.

The Old Port Orford School

It was a large wooden two story building located about a 15-minute walk north of where I lived. When originally built it was called the Port Orford School and had been used as a Grades 1-12 school. There was no formal dress code but girls wore skirts and dresses year 'round. By the time I arrived, a separate high school had been built and the original building repurposed into a 1-8 Grade School. Students were expected to be inside by 9:00am. To encourage late arrivals to pick up the pace, the school bell was rung a few minutes before the hour. The bell was hung high in a belfry over the stairwell and (depending upon the wind) could be heard for miles. The wooden tower with its water tank was gone.

On the first level were three large rooms. One was used to store the huge amount of firewood needed to feed the wood stoves in each of the classrooms. There were three large rooms upstairs. The one above the firewood room had a piano and was used for music classes and singalong sessions using well-worn, outdated songbooks. During the second World War we sang a lot of military songs.

One of the other ground level rooms was used for the combined 1st and 2nd graders, the third room held the combined 3rd and fourth graders. The school's bathrooms were on the ground floor, handy to the playground.

Each classroom had several large blackboards. We used chalk to write on them. Poster size examples of the alphabet and math symbols were pinned to wall above the blackboards. Our desks had wooden lift tops with inkwells we never used. Before our time, students had practiced their penmanship by using dip pens to write on paper. During my time, we used #2 Ticonderoga lead pencils instead. Behind the students, high on the wall there was a wind-up clock for the teacher's benefit. The High School's large assembly rooms had large portraits of President's George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and a wall clock.

The other two large rooms upstairs were used as classrooms. One was a combined Grades 5 and 6, and the other a combined Grades 7 and 8. Each classroom had one teacher. While a teacher was teaching to one class, the other class would be concentrating on their workbooks. All of the grade school teachers were women, and with one exception, not young. Their ages ranged from 35 to 65 years of age. From a child's perspective they all seemed to be in their 70's! The exception I mentioned above was when we had a female fifth grade teacher who was only in her twenties. It was her second year of teaching. We had her the following year as our sixth grade teacher. When she left at the end of that year to get married, our class took up a collection to give her a 'Going Away' present. It was a $10 dollar roll of silver dollars we had each contributed 50 cents to.

In 1943, Mrs. Grant was my 1st and 2nd grade teacher. She was also the school principal. She had been around awhile. 18 years earlier in 1925, she had been my half-brother's (Carlos White) 1st and 2nd grade teacher. During the years I attended Grade School, teachers were allowed to have long, thin wooden pointer sticks. These were used for teaching and disciplining students by striking the back of a hand. The strokes were always firm and usually gentle but I remember one instance when a teacher accidentally broke her

pointer stick over a student's head.

There was no Cafeteria. We had the option of bringing a sack lunch or lunchbox from home and could eat at our desk or return home for lunch. Depending on weather conditions and his work schedule, my father would occasionally drive my sister and me home for Lunch.

Cliff Hanger Stories after Lunch

A favorite time of the school day for me was after our Lunch break. Before starting the afternoon's class, our teacher would read to us from a book of stories about children and their little adventures. I've long forgotten the name of the book, but I know every story ended with at least one of its characters having to deal with an uncertain outcome – a 'Cliff Hanger'!

All of the school's floors were bare wood that had been oiled with something black. By the end of each year, they would need to be retreated. We students referred to them as 'greased' floors and knew they could easily catch on fire. One very hot afternoon, I recall being in class and watching wood smoke drifting up from below into our room through an open door. It was study time and our teacher was preoccupied, helping a student with his work. Without asking permission, each student retrieved their coat from the other side of the room just in case we had to suddenly evacuate. Everyone stayed calm. We returned to our desks, and waited patiently. At the end of class, we used the fire exit door and slid down the banister to the ground level. Once safely outside we were relieved to discover nothing was on fire. The smoke had been coming from a burn barrel located nearby.

Students dancing around the Maypole at the Old Port Orford Grade School. Date unknown. (Courtesy of The Cape Blanco Heritage Society / Masterson Collection)

Playground Equipment

The playground on the south side had a metal slide with a landing pit filled with soft wood chips from one of the local saw mills. There was also a hard surfaced double & triple jump rope area, and a large sand box filled with beach sand. All three were fun.

The playground on the north side of school had room for hardball, softball and kickball. Off to the side was a bus barn with a small school bus inside. During rainy weather, the bus was parked outside so that students could use the building as a playshed.

During fair weather days, one of the games we would like to play involved throwing a rubber ball up and over the school building. Every now and then the ball would accidentally drop into one of the school's chimneys!

Playing Marbles

One of the popular games we could play on dry dirt was Marbles. There were many versions of Marbles. One involved marbles placed inside a circle. The marbles in the center of the circle were called 'Mibs' or 'Kimmies'. You snapped your thumb and fingers to 'shoot' your 'Shooter' marble at someone else's 'Shooter' marble, trying to knock it out of the circle. When a player succeeded, the shooter won all the other player's marbles and the player was out of the game.

Another version was called 'Pots". It was like miniature golf where you would move your marble around a course by shooting it from hole to hole.

Fortunately our Marbles games were always 'Friendlies'. When a game ended, marbles were returned to their original owners.

Dealing with Unruly Students

Once in awhile some of the older boys might get out of hand and the teachers would have to do whatever they could to stop the behavior. One day (after all else had failed) I remember a teacher smacked a student with a small board to get his attention.

Another memorable incident was when an unruly 8th grade student was being chased by a teacher. The student tried to escape by running into a bathroom and jumping through a window to the outside. The student wasn't hurt and did not get very far before other teachers caught up with him.

Solemn Occasion

TOP STATE OFFICIALS MISSING IN KLAMATH-ADEL PLANE FLIGHT

Herald and News

Snell, Cornett, Farrell Aboard; Hogue Is Pilot

Two Youths Shoot Down Elderly Man

Top State Officials Object Of Wide Search

Director Refuses To Tell Belief

Falling Car Hurts Worker

Korean Debate Flares Again

McGrath Heads Demo Group

News of Governor Snell's missing flight garnered front page attention around the state of Oregon. (Source: Wikipedia).

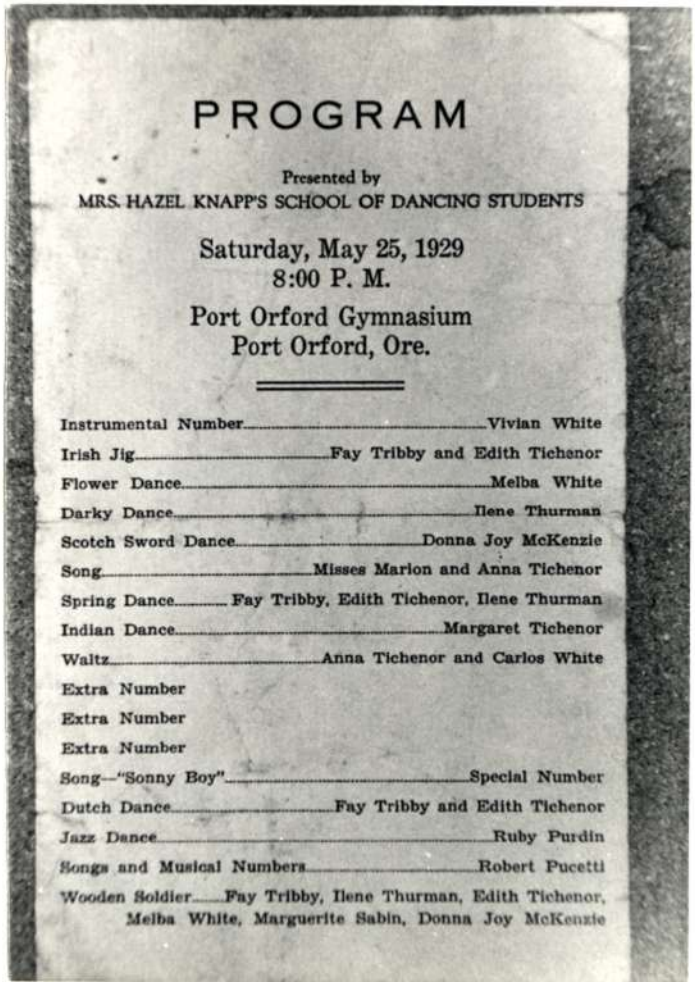
Monday, November 3rd, 1947, turned out to have been what is now referred to as a 'teaching moment' for students. The flag on our school's prominent flagpole had been hung at half mast. Our teachers gathered us together for a special outdoor assembly at the base of the flagpole. We were told that during bad weather in Eastern Oregon, there had been a deadly airplane crash. Everyone on board had died instantly, Oregon's Governor, Secretary of State, President of the Senate, and the pilot of the airplane.

Our teachers went on to explain the significance of what had happened. When Oregon's Governor died, the state's rules of succession meant his job would automatically transfer to the Secretary of State. But, the Secretary of State was dead. The state's rules then said the next person in line to become Governor would have been the President of the Senate. But, he also was dead. In effect, the airplane crash had 'decapitated' the State of Oregon's government. Nothing like that had happened before.

During the 1950s, a new Elementary School for eight grades was built out of concrete blocks. The school district had transitioned from an 8-4 arrangement to a 6-6. Instead of eight grades in one building, and four grades in another building, we had six grades in the Port Orford Elementary School, and the other six grades in the new high school.

I know there have been a lot more changes since then. The Port Orford and Langlois school districts combined to build Pacific High School midway between the two towns, the only school in Port Orford is an elementary school, and Langlois has no active schools.

AT LEFT: Student's bicycles behind the Old Port Orford Grade School . c1926. The back of the photo reads: "P.O. Grad + H.S. 1926. 1927 – H.S. moved." (Courtesy of The Cape Blanco Heritage Society / Masterson Collection); **AT RIGHT:** In 1927, the High School relocated to a new building on Oregon Street. Shown here in 1953.



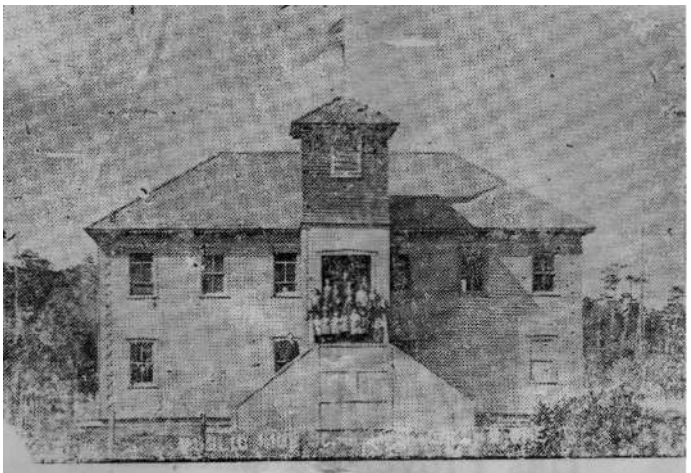
PROGRAM

Presented by
MRS. HAZEL KNAPP'S SCHOOL OF DANCING STUDENTS

Saturday, May 25, 1929
8:00 P. M.

Port Orford Gymnasium
Port Orford, Ore.

Instrumental Number ..... Vivian White
Irish Jig ..... Fay Tribby and Edith Tichenor
Flower Dance ..... Melba White
Darky Dance ..... Ilene Thurman
Scotch Sword Dance ..... Donna Joy McKenzie
Song ..... Misses Marion and Anna Tichenor
Spring Dance ..... Fay Tribby, Edith Tichenor, Ilene Thurman
Indian Dance ..... Margaret Tichenor
Waltz ..... Anna Tichenor and Carlos White
Extra Number
Extra Number
Extra Number
Song—"Sonny Boy" ..... Special Number
Dutch Dance ..... Fay Tribby and Edith Tichenor
Jazz Dance ..... Ruby Purdin
Songs and Musical Numbers ..... Robert Pucetti
Wooden Soldier ..... Fay Tribby, Ilene Thurman, Edith Tichenor, Melba White, Marguerite Sabin, Donna Joy McKenzie



Port Orford School, Miss Ruth Clark principal.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT — **(1)** The wooden tower and water tank next to the Port Orford School, August 15 1922; **(2)** An early program from a school event presented by "Mrs. Hazel Knapp's School of Dancing Students"; **(3)** Port Orford Grade School c1923. This is the east side. Classrooms were upstairs. The downstairs had a huge rough room storing firewood; **(4)** A combined Port Orford Grade School and High School photograph when all the students were still in the same building, c1920s; **(5)** Old Port Orford Grade School – Date Unknown. It was customary for each class to have their group photo taken on the steps of the Old Port Orford Grade School every year (Lance Nix Collection).

Chapter 3

Port Orford's Western States Plywood Cooperative Era – 1951-1975

In 1949, there was a very large empty field bordering cold and clear Elk River. In 2021, the river still runs cold and clear and the land has returned to quiet pastureland. For 24 years though, this beautiful location was where Western States Plywood Cooperative prospered and reshaped the entire community of Port Orford.

Leon's first job after High school began when he was hired to be one of a small Office Crew for the plywood mill along Elk River. It turned out to have been a very good fit. The job provided a paid vacation and Blue Cross Medical Insurance. Both of which were pretty much unheard of in Port Orford at that time. The work was year-round and life in the office was never boring. For instance there were days when tourists would show for a tour of the Mill. They would have come from all over and Leon would add their home states to a map he kept on the counter. It didn't take long for three quarters of the 50 states to be represented.

His office mates were friendly and supportive. He has fond memories of Christmas time, when the office had Aplets and Cotlets to snack on, and the log inventory clerk (Hazel McKenzie) would bring in her home-made chocolates and other tasty Holiday treats to share. For many years, the Forester would bring small trees for staff to take home to use for their personal Christmas Tree.

Soon after being hired, Leon fondly remembers being in the room when one of his parent's friends (Crawford Smith) praised him to Gene for having taken the job and then using those wages to support them – Gene (72 yrs) and Pearl (54 yrs) White.

Western States Plywood was a cooperative and had only been running for a couple of years. There had never been a plywood mill in the area. None of the locals knew quite what to make of the mill, but of course they had opinions. No-one expected it to last very long!

Many shareholders had previously worked at a plywood mill in McMinnville, Oregon. To work at the mill during its early years, you had to own a share. The first shares sold for $3500. (In 2022 dollars that would be approximately $39,000). Eventually workers were allowed to buy a share from a shareholder. When these were not cash transactions, the worker would make payments plus interest to the selling shareholder. The share would entitle a worker to a job, a better wage and other benefits. In a cooperative, all shareholders were equal in pay and voting rights. The plywood mill's annual business meetings were held at the Sixes Grange Hall on a Saturday in January. Business reports were presented and seven people would be elected to be next year's Board of Directors. There were years when entire boards would be voted out and replaced.

During the first few years, all of Management (The General Manager, Mill Superintendent, Timber Manager and Accountant) were shareholders. Larry Lindquist is remembered as being General Manager during Western State's most productive and prosperous years.

The Accountant was in charge of the office. Each day, Management needed to know how productive

the millworkers had been the previous day. Every morning, Leon processed the records of the Mill's previous day's production. Using that data, he calculated what the man hours and production per man hour per day had been at each of the mill's machines during each of those three shifts. "The total of all the machines then was combined into one grand total for the entire mill for that day." Leon's report had to be completed by 11:30 am.

By the time Leon was hired, only two of the crew in the Office were shareholders. One of them would be the current Board's President. The other shareholder working in the office was there because he had been injured while helping to build the Mill. The five other office workers were non-shareholders working at lower pay levels. Each position was paid a different rate according to their jobs.

Management employees always had the highest salaries in the business, with the Office crew having the lowest.

There were 12 Production Personnel (Bushelers) who did the job of veneer layup into 3, 5, or 7 ply plywood. They were paid by the number of panels made and often the highest paid employees. All employees could buy plywood at reduced prices. 2×4 studs made from peeler cores were available for purchase by employees. Shareholders paid discounted prices and more than a few became owner-builders, building their homes with Western States plywood and 2×4s .

Daily Commute Adventures

Employee parking at Western States Plywood, 1956. The trek up Elk River Road could sometimes make for an adventurous commute, especially in the Winter.

The mill was located 3 miles upriver from Hwy 101. There were three shifts at the Mill: Day – 7am to 3pm; Swing – 3pm to 11pm; and Graveyard – 11pm to 7am. Naturally this meant there was a steady stream of car and truck traffic coming and going along Elk River Road. Twice a day, Leon was one of those commuters. During those years, Leon had some close calls, a fender bender and, a ruined driver's side door.

When he started at the Mill, Highway 101 was the only paved road in the area. Hwy 101 was located east of where it is today. It ran past the City Shop building at the base of Hensley Hill Road and around the curves at Silver Springs and Silver Butte. Elk River Road was graveled. There were plenty of potholes. After a good Winter storm, the biggest potholes became mud holes.

Leon recalled when one mud hole made for a memorable commute. It happened during a rainy afternoon. Ray Reinke and he had car pooled with Dorothy Baird. It was Dorothy's car so naturally she was driving. Then she became stuck. After unsuccessfully trying to 'rock' the car to get them out of the mud, she had the good sense to ask Ray to try. Having grown up in North Dakota, Ray knew exactly what to do with the brake, gas and transmission to get them out. Once safely out of the mud, he pulled over so Dorothy could resume driving. Leon was very thankful because he had begun to worry that he and Ray might have had to step outside into deep mud to push the car out of the hole!

Elk River Road had been paved by the time of this close call:

"There was no safe place to pass. Heading to the mill one morning I was suddenly cut off by a car that had just barely passed me. I put my foot on the brake as hard as I could which caused me to fishtail onto the highway's graveled shoulder. We did not make contact but it had been very close!"

The fender bender happened one morning when Leon was northbound on Hwy 101, turning onto Elk River Road. Suddenly, a southbound car also began to turn onto the same road, cutting into Leon's lane as it did. Leon saw the car was slowing up, but it kept coming right at him. Leon remembers: "The potential was bad for both of us. I sped up to get out of its way. I almost made it, but the oncoming car put a big gash into my rear fender on the driver's side. There was no damage to the viability of my car, it just looked bad. The other car's bumper was not even damaged. I decided not to make an insurance claim on the other party as it was about time for me to get a new car anyway!"

Another near miss involved Winter conditions. He was heading east on Elk River Road down the hill

before Paul Wagner's open fields. The road there was pretty steep, with a couple of curves and a big drop off.

"Suddenly I was skidding and sliding on Black Ice. I had never driven much on ice and could not recall which way I should turn the steering wheel. I did remember I should not hit the brakes! Time seemed to stand still as I slid out of my lane, and spun around. Then I was stopped. I had been heading east towards the plywood mill and now found myself pointed west. I was thankful there had been no-one in that lane!"

His ruined driver's side door happened in slow motion while entering the Plywood Mill's parking lot. Leon remembers: "I saw an employee driving towards me at about 10 mph. I assumed he was awake and was about to turn to miss me. Well, he wasn't and he didn't. He had nodded off. He woke up just after he ran into me. It was the driver's side. My door had to be replaced. As the accident was happening, I felt like I was seeing it in slow motion. I felt the bump and saw a cloud of little shards of glass flying in front of me like heavy snow."

Fortunately, Carl Eskelson's Car Repair was able to get a proper drivers' side door from a junk yard for him a reasonable price.

Life (and Death) at The Mill

Employees had shareholder benefits. The ages of shareholders ranged between 30 to 60, with the most being over 45. Production non-shareholders ranged from 20 to 40. Blue Cross medical insurance was available to everyone at a very reasonable price. At Thanksgiving, all employees were given a gift certificate for a free turkey at McKay's Market. Shareholders could buy discounted gasoline from the mill's gas station at the edge of the parking lot.

Free scraps of firewood were available on the north side of the mill near the Wigwam Burner. For $20, Shareholder Don Mechals would deliver a truckload into town. The huge Teepee-shaped metal structure was used by the mill to safely burn the waste wood and bark it could not find a market for. Some mills would install a heat exchanger inside their wigwam to make steam for the plywood manufacturing process. Today's term for that is 'Co-Generation'.

$3,500.00 No. 28

Western States Plywood Cooperative

Port Orford, Oregon

Membership Certificate

This is to certify that -GILBERT L. KENKIRK-- is the owner of One (1) Membership Share and Certificate of WESTERN STATES PLYWOOD COOPERATIVE with principal office in Port Orford, Oregon, transferable only on the books of the Cooperative by the said owner hereof in person or by attorney upon surrender of this Certificate properly endorsed, and pursuant to the provisions contained in the By-Laws of said Cooperative.

This Certificate is one of Three Hundred (300) similar certificates issued by WESTERN STATES PLYWOOD COOPERATIVE (or held, in part, by it) and represents an investment of Three Thousand, Five Hundred and No/100 ($3,500.00) Dollars. This Certificate is Non-Assessable and provides and guarantees only such dividends or interest as may from time to time be specified by the Board of Directors. No more than Two (2) of these Certificates may lawfully be owned by one person.

This Certificate (and the other Certificates similar to it) represent the only type of security offered, sold or issued by the said Cooperative, and the sole ownership of said Cooperative is vested in the lawful owners of such Certificates.

Witness the Seal of Western States Plywood Cooperative, and the signatures of its President and Secretary, this 17th day of September, 195 1

[Seal.]

President

Secretary

The wigwam burner can be seen on the Elk River side. This structure was on the Elk River side. Long after the mill was gone the wigwam burner remained.

Work at the mill, while noisy, was not particularly dangerous. The Mill had a nurse on site to care for minor issues like headaches, cuts, and wood splinters. Dee Hansohn and Lucille Estabrook were the Mill's two nurses. There were occasional on-the-job injuries, but rarely any deaths on site. Of course, the workers' lifestyle involved a lot of smoking and drinking. In the beginning, when an employee became sick and died, employees would take up a collection for the Mill to give to the spouse or family of that employee. After a few attempts at this, the reality was the amounts donated amounted to popularity contests. The Board then established a fund that all could pay into. That way all employees could be assured their 'Heirs' would receive something in the event a tragedy befalling them or their families.

One instance of a tragedy was when three shareholders each lost a son on the same day. The boys were only about 19 and worked together at the mill. While riding together on their motorcycles down a hill on Hwy 101 near Yachats, a truck suddenly pulled out in front of them. All three boys died. In those days, motorcyclists were not required to wear helmets. Another time an employee and his young family were in a head-on collision on Elk River Road. One or more of his children died. In those days, seat belts were not required. Another death involved a shareholder on his lunch break. He was at the Port Orford Dock enjoying his homemade lunch when he accidentally swallowed a chicken bone. The only on-site death was when an employee fell into an active Log Pond and drowned. The worst accident Leon recalled was when an employee working with the Mill's big saw, accidentally cut off most of an arm. Leon was amazed that when medical help

arrived, that worker was able to be walked out to the ambulance.

During its 25 years in operation, there was only one prolonged mill shutdown. That shutdown lasted 3 months and towards the end, an employee sadly hung himself in his garage.

The Columbus Day Storm of 1962

Like the rest of Oregon, Western States had no warning. After it was over, the highest winds ever recorded in Western Oregon and Northwestern California had torn through our Mill.

Port Orford is an oceanside, weather-exposed community. Cape Blanco is close by and annually records extreme winds and rains all year long. When the windspeed is 100 mph at Cape Blanco, Port Orford will be seeing 85-90 mph wind speeds.

The Herzig Clothing and Shoe Store demolished by the Columbus Day Storm.

"When the wind and rain began around 9am during the morning of a regular work day for me, it felt like nothing unusual. By 10am we could feel the storm was becoming a lot windier. Then by 11am it was obvious this was going to be one of our really Big Wind Storms. By 11:30am we were taking one phone call after another from frantic wives at home. "Tell my husband to come home now! We have shingles blowing off our roof, and the storm is getting worse!"

Around noon, a millworker came to the office and told the Manager and Superintendent: "The wigwam burner had blown over!" The burner was lying on its side, on the north side of the mill. Then another report came in that a big door on the east side of the mill building had been completely torn off and was being violently blown about in the open area next to the mill. By 1:00pm, Management decided to shut the Mill down and told everyone to go home to deal with what was happening.

Leon recalled that while driving home that afternoon from the Mill on Elk River Road, you could see lots of downed power lines and poles, flattened fences and small trees. Just before the connection to Hwy 101, entire trees were blocking Elk River Road. They were directed to take a one-way dirt road bypass through a pasture to connect with 101. About 3 miles north of town, trees had fallen across Hwy 101. Traffic was at a standstill. Everyone waited patiently for loggers to arrive with chainsaws to free us. Fortunately, there had been a couple of crews who had been working that day on jobs way up the Elk River. "Before the loggers arrived, I got out of my car to see what was going on. I was surprised to feel a slight 'Salty' moisture in the air."

After the trees were cleared from 101, Leon continued on to Port Orford and home. Along the way he saw a lot of storm damage and began to worry even more about what might have happened to his home, exposed as it was overlooking the harbor.

"Relief! My damage was small. Later I learned that a woman schoolbus driver was killed near Ophir when a tree fell on her bus. I believe there was another local person killed by the storm. I saw houses and buildings in Port Orford that had been severely damaged. Two near me had to be demolished."

One demolished building was the Herzig Shoe store next to Susie White's commercial building (The old Western Hotel.) The other was a house up by the Castaway. When it was all over, historians had determined it had been the worst Oregon Coast Winter wind and rain event ever recorded.

Women working at WSP

Viola Cuatt was a shareholder's wife. She headed the Western States Plywood Women's Auxiliary. Port Orford usually had one doctor, but had no doctors when the shareholders arrived. Viola helped form the Port Orford Ambulance Association, then obtained an old ambulance for the Women's Auxiliary to operate. The Women's Auxiliary then reached out and brought in two doctors for the Community. Another thing to remem-

ber about Viola is that she was the main force in the Curry County Historical Society that headed up the preservation of the Hughes House and its ranch. Once preserved, it eventually became part of the Cape Blanco State Park.

It was not until 1970 that women were allowed to become shareholders and work at the Mill. They were allowed to have some of the 'good' jobs and have voting rights at Annual Meetings. Microwave ovens had not been invented yet, but with the Board's approval one of the shareholders had a machine installed to heat up small cans of pre-cooked food like Chef Boyardee. Hot lunches then became very popular. Around the same time, a dispenser of Coca Cola and other soft drinks was installed as well.

Politically, a lot of the shareholders had lived through the Great Depression of the 1930s. In the process, they had become solidly President Franklin Delano Roosevelt supporters.

The Western Staters

The "Western Staters" brought a lot of changes to the community. When Shareholders began arriving in Port Orford, they found few modern homes available for purchase, so they started building their own. One subdivision in particular, the Geer Tract, became popular with Shareholders. The developer's name was Herb Geer. Many Shareholders also built their homes upriver from the Mill along Elk River.

Pacific High School needed to be built in northern Curry to accommodate the additional children of Western States Plywood Mill's shareholders and employees. A football field was added in the '60s when the men wanted their sons to be able to play.

Shareholders' children were given preference for all seasonal jobs at the Mill. There were quite a few who were able to pay for their College Education this way.

City of Port Orford

During the '50s, before the Western Staters arrived, the City's population was about 700. The City of Port Orford got a sewer system in the 1960s which allowed even more homes to be built to accommodate all the new people. That influx of people associated with the wood products industry in the '70s eventually tripled the City's population, to about 2300.

Western States Plywood 1971

"Back in the mid-1950's, television was one weak channel, whose picture came straight across 150 miles of open ocean from Eureka, California. One did not pick it up with rabbit ears; nor did it stay very long after one had it in the living room, via an expansive antenna on the roof or in the nearby tree" (Mabel Edwards, wife of Bill Edwards, a Shareholder). A non-profit corporation was formed to install and maintain an antenna and electronic equipment on a hill overlooking Port Orford to pick up distant TV signals, amplify and rebroadcast them. The corporation was originally named North Curry Recreation, renamed North Curry Translators in 1978, then dissolved in 1998.

Active civic groups like the Lions and Rotary Clubs, the Back Acres and Sunset Garden Clubs were formed. During the '70s, the Lions Club went on to help establish the Buffington City Park.

A lot of growth happened in the early 1960's when Oregon's forests became more sought after by the wood products industry. The reason Oregon's coastal forests were being opened up at

that time is that huge lumber and plywood corporations like Georgia Pacific and Weyerhauser had logged off much of the timber in the state of Washington. They needed more timber to keep going and began moving in on Oregon.

Without Federal help, none of Oregon's small lumber and plywood mills could pay the high bids for logs that the GPs & Weyerhausers could. Tiny Western States Plywood Cooperative was only able to exist as long as it did because nearby Federal forests were being opened up to timber sales.

The Federal Government required that on smaller tracts only companies with fewer than 200 employees could bid. For as long as local timber was available, Western States with its 120 employees was able to prosper.

By the late '60s though, that was not enough. An opportunity in Alaska to purchase a lot of timber a low price became available. Western States entered into a tentative agreement with the Alaska owners, but due to numerous problems the deal was delayed and never completed. In the process, Western States had spent quite a bit of its working capital before it had to give it up with no logs to show for it.

The price the Mill got for its plywood was always subject to the national market. Western States would make a good profit some years and then have big losses other years. By 1970, a combination of the above issues led banks to stop lending to the Mill. That was the reason for the end in 1975. When the end came, the Mill phased down its production and after a couple of weeks it was all over.

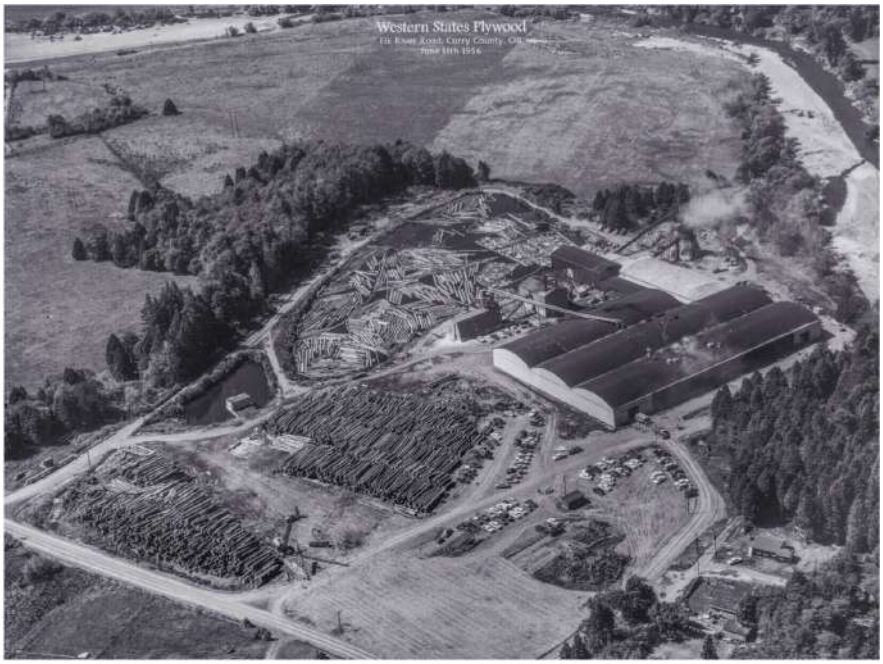
Life after Western States Plywood

"We could no longer compete with the big timber companies. Western States Plywood closed in October of 1974 after about 24 years. The closing was a very sad occurrence for me and the 200 families the mill supported in Port Orford. I greatly enjoyed my years with WSP. The cooperative mill had been the heart of Port Orford." — **JIM ROGERS, A Brief History of the Grassy Knob Wilderness.**

"During the years before it finally closed down, it was believed by many that once the Mill was gone, grass would grow in the streets of Port Orford. DID NOT HAPPEN!" — **LEON WHITE**

A factor people were not taking into account was that many of the shareholders were at the age of retirement and owned their homes. There were a few who opened small businesses like a gift shop, restaurants or a variety store. It was true that the population dropped, but never did "Grass grow in the streets"!

Postscript: After the Mill closed and liquidated its equipment, a small company (Phoenix Western) bought out the shareholders for a token amount of money and started using the Mill to make laminated wood ceiling tiles. Within a matter of months that new little company had failed, then soon after that another one of Port Orford's fires occurred and the Mill burned up one night.



The abandoned WSP Wigwam burner c2007.

AT LEFT: Western States Plywood, June 11 1956 (Lance Nix Collection). The wigwam burner can be seen on the Elk River side.

ABOVE: Long after the mill was gone the wigwam burner remained.

Chapter 4

The Club Building (Point.B Studio)

The Club Building was a popular fancy saloon in its heyday in the 1930s and ‘40s. Initially, it was a service station (see continuing research on “Port Orford Old Town” in our bibliography on the web linked from the back cover of this book), however it is unclear exactly when the building became “The Club.” Alan Mitchell asked Leon White, who grew up in the neighborhood, what he remembers about this building which is centered in Port Orford Old Town but has little documentation in historical records.

Some locals believe the building was intended to be used as a saloon as early as 1925. Leon thinks that this is very unlikely because Prohibition was the law of the land from 1920 until 1933. Like today, the building had a middle partition which created two storefronts with a doorway between them.

The best memory for Leon about the Club Building was during the late 1940’s when both of its storefronts were empty, and he and other children were allowed to play inside and explore this building that was generally off-limits.

He recalls the west side had an impressive, long stand-up Saloon-type bar along its west wall. It looked like it could have been in a Hollywood movie set! In addition, there were two unusual musical artifacts in the room that the children were allowed to play with: a pump organ, and a phonograph record player with single-sided records. The organ’s sound was impressive but the sound coming from the phonograph was terrible!

There was also an artifact the children were not allowed play with. There was a crystal radio stored in the east room. Crystal radios did not require electricity. This one had no cabinet and all of its parts were exposed. While primitive, the radio was hi-tech for its day, like something from a sci-fi movie. Children were not allowed to touch it because its crystal tuner was said to be very sensitive.

Episcopal Church

The upstairs was being rented as a residence by Mrs. Lillian Grayce with her four children. Leon remembers her as being in her ‘50s, a stylish dresser known for her fancy majorette boots.

The stairs to the second floor were steep. At the top of the stairs was a small kitchen area and a bathroom. The second floor had a long hallway with small rooms off both sides. At the end of the hallway was a spacious north-facing living room area with a nice sofa. The sofa had several pillows on it, one of which had a US Navy’s WWII logo colorfully embroidered on it. That pillow had been brought back from the war by one of her sons from a previous marriage, a Navy veteran.

Sometime after Western States Plywood Co-Op shareholders began arriving around 1950, Lutheran shareholders rented the empty saloon side of the Club for their church services while building the Zion Lutheran

church at the north end of town. During the 1952 presidential election, Leon recalls seeing an "I Like Ike" sign in the Club's east storefront.

Leon's childhood home was located directly behind The Club Building which is now Point.B Studio.

This is one of the earliest photos of the 351-Building est. 1930 depicting its original instantiation with a flat sloping roof, front awning, and three windows across the second floor facade. The earliest known photo of this area before this is a Hazeltine Brothers photograph from 1902 which shows no presence of the 351-Building, so current estimations place its initial construction between 1922-1930.

Only commercial buildings that still stand today are denoted in this photo. The Peg Leg Saloon, believed to be the oldest existing building in Port Orford, is obscured by The Fromm Building. It was a private residence belonging to M.M. Bates (zoned commercial) that was eventually transformed into a saloon.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP — (1) The photo at the top as well as the feature photo of this chapter shows the Point.B Studio Building (a.k.a. 351-Building) before the addition of its open gable roof. This was the first instantiation of the building when it was a service station owned by John Marsh; Note the SHELL sign propped up on the side of the building in the top photo. This early photograph clearly depicts the Point.B Studio Building as one of the earliest extant "commercial" buildings in Port Orford Old Town. **(2)** The Point.B Studio Building in 2016. The East side room is on the left and the West side room is on the right; **(3)** The Point.B Studio Building can be partially seen at the far left in the distance. In the foreground is the Episcopal Church built by Pehr Johan Lindberg in 1892. In this photo the Church's original steeple is gone, having been destroyed by Winter storms.

Port Orford and its Fires – 1930s-1960s

Leon remembers that even at very young age, he understood (and respected) the kind of damage a fire could do to a wooden home like his, completely covered with wooden shingles.

For decades, Chimney fires were a common occurrence in Port Orford because people were heating their homes with wood. The wood they burned was often unseasoned and would cause flammable deposits of wood-tar creosote to accumulate inside of chimneys and metal stove pipes. Because it was like grease, when ignited, it burned extremely hot. A chimney fire could perforate a stove pipe or destroy the mortar in a brick chimney. Fortunately there was a powdered product (Red Devil) for cleaning out chimneys and stove pipes without damaging them.

Arson, Chimney, Electrical and Wildfires Remembered

On 6th Street, a couple of buildings caught fire to the east of "The Club" (Now Point.B Studio). The name of the business was "The Casino", and there was a restaurant with a card playing room. The cause of the fire was electrical and the building was never rebuilt.

Just east of the Casino was a two story building – The Collins Building. There was a restaurant on its ground floor with a beauty shop and living quarters on its second floor where George and Hazel Collins lived. One night after the town's fire siren had awakened them, they raised a window shade to see what was happening and saw a wall of flame coming towards them. They and their son, T.J., escaped with no injuries. Fortunately, the fire crew got there quickly and saved the building, using water from the big hydrant in front of Leon's home at 5th & Washington (Later named Harbor Drive).

The irony is that about seven years later (in 1949) the Collins Building was nearly destroyed by fire. The Collins relocated to Trinidad, California, and the fire happened while they were renting to a member of the Hughes family. The building was repaired later in 1949. George Collins' sister – Mary Dobbema Yoder – remained in Port Orford and went on to become a 3-term Mayor. Years later, George himself was elected Mayor of Trinidad. Both lived long lives with George making it to 100.

Pitches' Tavern – a cinder block building – was later built where the Collins Building had been. It is believed that Pitches began ownership of the building in 1955/56, remodeling or rebuiding it entirely. However, a puzzle to Leon is that he recalls seeing a photo with both the Collins Building and Pitches' Tavern on it.

During the Gable Era of the 1930's, the town's first City Hall was located close to the old City Jail on Jefferson Street. The City had an old fire truck which they parked in a garage located further up Jefferson Street. Its hillside location was particularly handy because the firetruck often had to be jump-started in order to run.

The Forty Family house on Oregon Street where Rick Cook has his Art Gallery has had two fires in its

history. Leon remembers seeing the second of them, and running up the hill just west of his home to watch from Carlos and Louise's home at 590 Oregon Street. There was a lot of smoke and damage to its second story. It really scared him because he realize the same thing could happen to his own Family's home.

In 1980, he awoke upstairs in the middle of the night to hear fire sirens and looked out, as he always did from first the west and then the north windows. He saw the glow of a large fire in the northwest. Leon decided to go outside to see where the fire was. He walked over to the highway and then west on the sidewalk. The further north he went, the more likely it looked like his place of employment, The Wooden Nickel, might be on fire (after Western States had gone out of business, it had been years since he had been offered a good job until his friend, Alan Mitchell, recommended him to the Wooden Nickel's owner, Tracy Hassett). His heart sank. Leon kept walking. By the time he got to the theater, he realized the fire was much closer than the Wooden Nickel. Big relief. The Port Orford News Office behind Leo Phillips' Pharmacy was where the fire was. Days later, arson was suspected because someone had pushed burning paper through the mail slot in the front door.

In 1958, the Gable Administration Building burned. It happened during daylight hours. After hearing the tell-tale sirens, Leon noticed a huge cloud of smoke up the hill and to the west of him. During WWII, it had been commandeered by the Military. Since then, most of the building had been converted into a restaurant. What wasn't used as a restaurant was being rented out as motel-style rooms. A lot of the building was saved, but the main center part of the building and its big garage was lost to the fire. It was proven later that arson had been involved. It was reported one of the arsonists had been hired by the restaurant operator. People were convicted and served jail time.

Sometime in the 1950's, a fire destroyed Port Orford's original City Hall. Located close to the City's Jail on Deady Street, it had been built in the late 1930's by the City's first mayor – Gilbert E. Gable. The City Hall was a compact building with just enough room for a large council table and its chairs. The walls were paneled with beautiful Port Orford Cedar wood. Hanging on the walls were professional drawings and paintings depicting American History. Some of the original chairs were saved from the fire and can be found in today's Gilbert Gable Council Chambers. Arson was the cause of the fire. It had been set by an angry City employee.

The irony here is that both the Administration Building and the original City Hall had been built by Mayor Gilbert Gable only to be targeted later by arsonists.

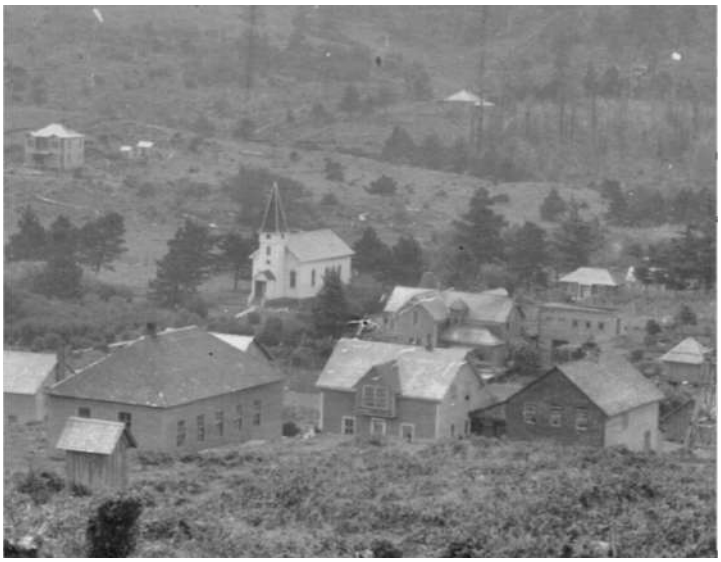
In 1934, a fire started in the Logger's Pool Hall. The pool hall stood where the Crazy Norwegians stands today. The whole west end of the block burned, including a bakery, barber shop, restaurant and Bill Bennett's Mercantile. The fire stopped short of the Charles Long Store (Dana's). The fire was so hot, it was feared it would spread north across the highway and take out Susie White's two story Hotel and restaurant. Fortunately, Carlos White (Leon's Half-Brother) had been issued a portable backpack water pumper when he worked for the Forest Service as a Fire Watcher. He put it to good use and then soldiered on into the night, using that backpack pumper to wet down the south side of the Western Hotel. His efforts were credited with keeping the hotel from catching fire. Susie's building was not seriously damaged, but the fire had been so intense that its heat reached across Hwy 101, cracking windows and baking the apples she set on her south facing windowsills to ripen.

The White Western Hotel, c1920, owned by Willis & Susie Neer White. The fire in 1934 was so intense here that it baked apples Susie set on the windowsills to ripen.

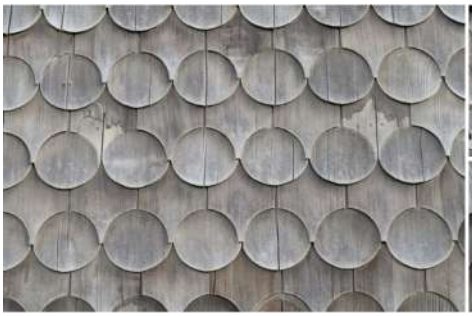
Years ago, on the west side of Hwy 101 north of Sixes, there lived a man who owned a lot of land covered with pine trees and brush. He was a relative newcomer and not one of the area's old-time families. Every few years, he would use fire to clear parts of it off during the Summer. Whatever he was doing always created huge clouds of smoke. The north wind would drive smoke into Port Orford and put everyone in town on edge, concerned about flying embers. Many times his fires would get away from him and the Forest Service and Coos Forest Protective Association would have to be called in to control them.

A block west at 5th & Washington, sparks were landing at Leon's home and yard. He recalls seeing his mother, Pearl using a big water pitcher to drown them.

During the years of major logging in Curry County, the United States Forest Service would dispose of the slash left behind by burning it off during Fall's first rains. When that was happening, or whenever there were wildfires burning, Leon remembers seeing the red glow of those fires off in the distance behind the hills east of Port Orford.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP — **(1)** Port Orford Old Town c1940. You can see the Collins Building and the Casino two buildings on the left from the Point.B Studio Building; **(2)** The Collins Building and the Casino, c1940; **(3)** The Nielsen (Bernal Forty) house is shown in the upper left hand corner of the photo taken September 29, 1912. The fire damage to the building was so extensive that the second floor was destroyed. Bernal Forty bought the house in the 1940's; The Episcopal Church can be seen with its original steeple. **(4)** Alan Mitchell overlooking the fire damaged Port Orford News building. c1980; **(5)** Fire damaged Port Orford News building c1980; **(6)** Leon White's childhood home, circa 1976.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP — (1) The Lindberg House in 1980 (Lance Nix Collection). PJ Lindberg built Leon White's childhood home along with Eugene White, Leon's father; **(2)** The Lindberg House in 2021 following a devastating fire that destroyed the structure on December 26 of that year; **(3)** A glimpse of the kitchen after the devastating fire at the Lindberg House; **(4)** The distinctive shinglework as evidenced on the Lindberg House, a labor of love project for architect PJ Lindberg. You can see this distinctive style on many homes of his design; **(5)** A volunteer helps salvage personal belongings amidst the ruins of the Lindberg House; **(6)** A view up the stairs to the second story depicts the intense heat that ravaged this historic home. (Lindberg House fire photos from the Malamud-Evans Collection)

Chapter 6

Port Orford's WWII Era – 1941-1945

"There were blackouts. At night we had to hang blankets over windows to make it hard for any plane seeking to bomb us, to see us!"

There was rationing. Each month his parents received from the Government a booklet of coupons to be used for basics like flour, potatoes, sugar, and gasoline. People who could, were asked to plant a Victory Garden and grow vegetables. A backyard garden was nothing new for Leon's parents. Gene and Pearl White already had many years of experience growing their own cabbage, carrots, peas, potatoes, and Swiss chard at their home which was built by Gene White and architect P.J. Lindberg in 1903/04.

Port Orford held organized collections for scrap metal, old newspapers and magazines for the war effort. Everyone took their recycling seriously.

Port Orford had at least two or three Victory Bond drives. People were urged to buy as many as they could. The program for the 5 and 7 year bonds was something like this. You paid: $8 for a bond that was worth $10 at maturity; $18 for a $25 bond; $35 for a $50 bond, and $75 for a $100 bond.

Of course, there were no new cars manufactured during the war years. Leon remembered seeing a news picture showing tanks coming off a General Motors Cadillac assembly line. All the car manufacturers were producing only what our military needed.

People learned how the war was going from newspapers, radio, news magazines like Life Magazine, and the 10-15 minute newsreels at Port Orford's popular local movie theater – The Colonial.

You knew the war had come to Port Orford when the Coast Guard stationed a lot more men in the area. Leon was 6 years old and his 60 year old father was Port Orford's Town Marshall. While making his daily rounds and coordinating with Military commanders, Gene White frequently took his young son with him.

Gilbert Gable's Administration Building had become the Military's headquarters for the area. It was important that beaches be constantly patrolled to prevent potential spies from coming ashore. The 24 hour Patrols included large German Shepherd guard dogs. There was a dog kennel for 10-12 of them behind the Administration Building. Every day you could see soldiers with guard dogs on long leashes walking down the hill to the Dock Beach and then on east to Hubbard Creek to look for anything suspicious.

At a later date, the Army arrived with a large caliber anti-aircraft gun. It was installed on top of Fort Point, the hill south of Leon's home. A big hole was dug, the large gun rolled into it, and then aimed down to cover Dock Beach, the Dock itself and the Harbor.

On October 7th, 1942, 40 wounded sailors from the 7,000 ton oil tanker USS Larry Doheny were brought ashore at the Port Orford Dock. The Japanese submarine I-25 had sunk them off Cape Sebastian. Many of the wounded were heavily bandaged. Some were put into the Coast Guard's Barracks at the Heads, the rest moved into the American Legion Building to await transportation to a military hospital. Leon clearly recalls seeing flatbed trucks loaded with injured sailors being driven past his home up the hill to Gilbert Gable's Administration

Building. He remembers others were taken to the Rainbow Gardens Dance Hall, as well as the Legion Hall across the street from Port Orford Elementary school's playground. His 8-year-old sister Annette was in class that day. She and her classmates watched as bandaged survivors were unloaded in front of the Legion Hall.

Soon after the war, people learned the I-25 submarine that sunk the tanker ship USS Larry Doheny in October, 1942, was the same one that had launched a small float plane off Brookings on September 9th, 1942, in an attempt to firebomb the Siskiyou National Forest. That Brookings ("Lookout Air Raids") mission failed because the forest was so wet. After retreiving the float plane, the sub was spotted and unsuccessfully attacked from the air. To elude our military the I-25 headed north, then secretly stayed on the ocean floor near Port Orford. (Later accounts of the incident pinpointed this second mission's launch location to have been just west of Cape Blanco — Please see our addendum "Searching for the I-25" on page 32 of this booklet). That second attack was flown up the Sixes River Valley. Wet conditions in the forest also caused that attack to fail.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT — (1) The Colonial Theater shown to the left of Lyle's Fountain & Gift Shop, c1940; **(2)** Gilbert Gable's Administration Building. Port Orford Oregon; **(3)** Leon White House in center of photo north of Fort Point (at left). The Leon White House was built by Eugene White and P.J. Lindberg in 1903/04.

The featured photo at the beginning of Chapter 6 is of the Pastime Bar and Barbershop and the Seaside Grill on Port Orford HWY 101, c1940.

Chapter 7

The Colonial Theatre

I recall one of the movie serials had a scene with a Forest Ranger speeding in the woods, down a one-way dirt road. My father was the City's Water Superintendent at the time. Gene was known for making regular trips into the hills to check on and maintain the City's pumping station. In those days, that meant taking a dirt road off the old Hwy 101. He drove a battered 1938 Ford pickup. The one-way road to the north fork of Hubbard Creek was dirt. That road wound its way through the forest, up and down all the way. Pat Masterson was in the audience the night I saw the movie. When Pat saw the Forest Ranger speeding through a forest, he humorously yelled out "There goes Gene White!" The audience loved it!

The Colonial Theatre's Box Office fronted the sidewalk. You would buy your ticket and enter the Lobby. When I first started going, there was no popcorn, candy or soda pop available. Eventually during the late 1940's, the theatre lobby had popcorn to purchase and a candy machine. The popcorn bag was small, about the size of 20 oz. drinking glass.

We (Me, Mama, Sister) had our favorite seats. We always sat on the left side of an aisle. I was next to a wall, then Mama and then Annette. Mrs. Lola Windmaiser was the Theatre Manager. Before each showtime, she and Mama (Pearl) would exchange pleasantries.

The seating was on either side of an aisle that went down the middle. The concrete floor was carpeted. The few light fixtures on the walls had tree-shaped screens in front of them. This meant the lighting was very subdued.

Looking up towards the stage you could see on the wall two unique Seascapes. Each was a blend of three layers of painted scenery. They were high to the left and right of the stage respectively. The left one showcased Battle Rock. Surf breaks on the beach. Humbug Mountain prominently appears in the background. The right one showed the Port Harbor with its dock nestled against the base of Graveyard Point. There was no breakwater. A lumber steamer is being loaded. The ship's starboard side is tied to the dock. There is open ocean to its port side. Humbug Mountain appears way off in the distance.

The theatre had a huge projection screen. Immediately in front of the screen was a mechanized dark maroon curtain. There was a small stage in between the curtains and the theatre seating. When the audience heard the sound of the curtain's motor they knew they had to get seated.

Before the feature movie began, you would be shown a newsreel, a couple of cartoons, sometimes a travelogue, and at least two 'Coming Attractions'. During the mid-1950's advertisements for businesses in Coos County began to appear.

One day I learned the hard way that having a front row seat was not a good idea. My whole school had gone to see a movie and were assigned the front row of seats. After having to look almost straight up during an entire movie, I made sure that painful experience never happened to me again!

During the Winters before Bonneville Power was available power outages were frequent. There were times when we would only get to see part of a movie. Because there were no refunds, everyone would sit in the dark with their flashlights and wait patiently. If the outage lasted more than an hour, we were escorted out and sent home.

Including the cartoons, newsreels and previews that ran at the beginning of a movie, most movies ran about 1 and 3/4 hours. We needed to be seated by 7:00pm and expected to be leaving by 9:15pm.

During the early years, the theatre seats were all wood, with seat backs shaped for comfort. Padded seats weren't introduced until the late 1940's. Behind the curtains near the stage, there was a phonograph used to play 33 RPM Strauss Waltzes. I don't recall when it happened, but someone came up with the idea of hanging a see-through curtain in front of the projection screen. It may have been needed to protect the screen, but I thought it greatly reduced the viewing quality.

From 1935 through 1939, there were very few big picture Technicolor movies, and from 1940 to 1945, most of the comedies were still in black and white.

A lot changed for the better after the war. For instance the major movie companies were now creating orchestra arrangements not only for their Musicals, but also for the background for their movies. We now take it for granted, but I remember in my younger days how impressed I was with how a musical score could be crafted to enhance the different emotions and moods of each story. It was amazing what a difference it made and really added to my movie experience.

Some of the comedies, and all of the Musicals, Pirate movies and quite a few Westerns were now in color. Westerns and Pirate movies, with their sweeping outdoor vistas were ideal for Technicolor. The beauty of the ocean shown in the Pirate movies made a big impression on me. Living as I was by the ocean all my life, it was really good to see the Hollywood version of the beautiful Pacific Ocean just across the street and down the hill from the front door of my childhood home.

During the 1948-50 time period, movie companies made some biblical-based movies. The movies were not too accurate if you had read what the Bible actually said, but the plots were entertaining, the action in color, and everything was spectacularly presented.

Eventually by the early mid-1950's there was an effort to give audiences something different. Big movie companies began to again show their movies in small towns like ours. Only MGM, the biggest movie company, had not cut off supplying its movies to small theatres. I remember a couple of 3-D movies that were shown without 3-D glasses (I have no idea why 3-D glasses were not available). When there were scenes with something being thrown towards the camera, all the audience could see was a blur! I was not impressed.

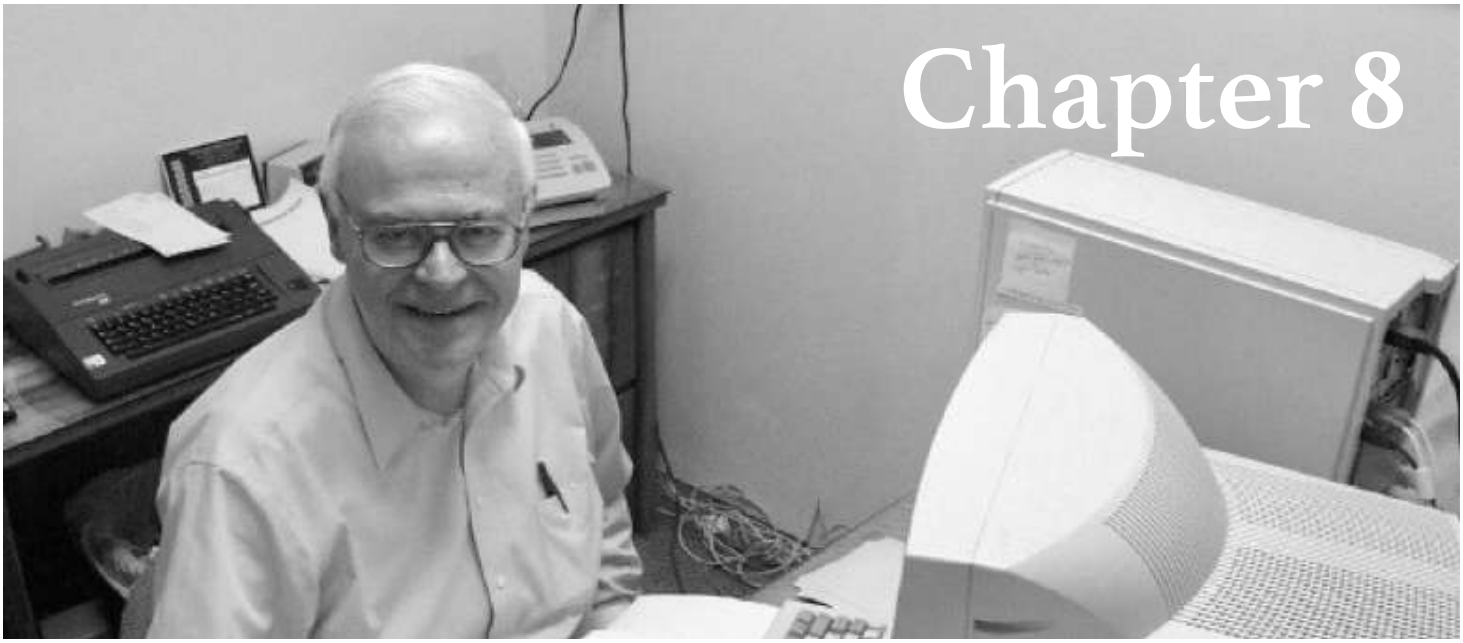
When the Colonial Theatre began showing Wide-Screen movies, the first ones were in "Cinemascope". I found them interesting, but much of the time the people on the screen just looked spread out. Again, I was not impressed.

Twice I saw local talent give stage shows in front of the projection screen. The shows were a mixture of musical numbers and comedy presented by one person at a time. One of them was a mini-version of the Broadway productions we saw in the movies.

In 1949, nearly all the major movie companies had stopped showing their movies in smaller towns. MGM had been the exception. Thankfully, by 1953 all the big movie companies were back. But, then Television had arrived and begun eating into their audiences. My own Family was no exception. After my Family got its first TV set in 1956, we rarely went to movies. By the end of 1960, we were totally out of the habit of going to the movies.

Critics now say the year of I939 is said to have had the most classic movies. They also agree that Hollywood's Golden Years began in the late 1930's and ran until the late 1950's. By having been born in 1937, I was lucky enough to be around to see a great number of them. .... P.S. During my movie going days, unless it was a serial, every movie closed with the crisp words: "The End".)

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT — (1) Leon's father, Eugene "Gene" White; **(2)** The Colonial Theatre circa 1940. Leroy Baker, a Salem projectionist, opened his new theater on April 28, 1936. Cars L-R: '39 Plymouth; '42 Olds; '41 Buick Fastback; **(3)** Lola Windmaiser, manager of the Colonial Theater. Date and photographer unknown; **(4)** Colonial Theatre Programme from January 1960 mentioning Lola Windmaiser: "Closed Thursdays, So Lola Can Relax!"; **(5)** The Colonial Theatre circa 1950. Cars L-R: '48 Dodge; '46 Ford; '40 Chev; '41 Pontiac Streamliner; and '47 Pontiac.



Leon Remembers the Wooden Nickel

For at least the first 4-5 years, the Wooden Nickel was the City's Greyhound Bus stop. Well before the days of UPS, the fastest means of shipping items and documents was by Greyhound. Between selling tickets and dealing with the various parcels coming and going, Leon recalls there having been extensive paperwork involved.

Regarding the Wooden Nickel Myrtlewood perfume, one of the bus drivers mentioned to Leon that after a passenger accidentally spilled some of the perfume on his bus, its distinctive fragrance lingered for days!

At the Wooden Nickel, making bowls begins with tracing patterns onto the Myrtlewood lumber. The patterns are then bandsawed into lathe-ready bowl blocks. Each of the bowl blanks has to be turned twice in order to account for the lumber's natural shrinkage and warping as it dries out. The initial rough turning is necessary because the grain of the wood lies in different directions, resulting in each piece having different stress points. Round shapes put into the drying room will become elongated or distorted. Because myrtlewood is a hardwood, it is much easier to shape into bowls while still 'green' and filled with moisture.

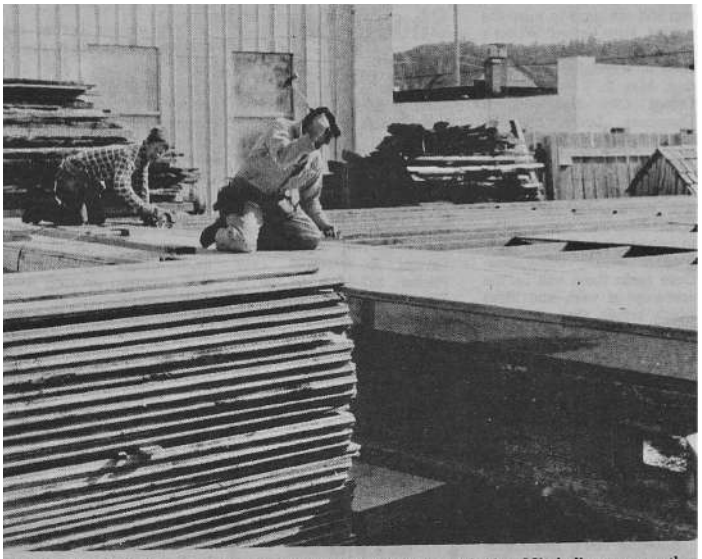
From the initial rough turn, to a second and final turn, approximately 6 weeks will have elapsed. This much time in the dry kiln is necessary for the wood to become stable.

Standing at attention along the north wall of the store were usually a couple of Lyle Knutson's heirloom quality Myrtlewood Grandfather and Grandmother clocks. During the day the store would be filled with the sound of Westminister chimes. Leon recalls that at times "he felt like he was in London". When a clock purchaser needed to have their precious purchase shipped home, Tracy Hassett would build them a custom packing crate and Leon would take care of the shipping arrangements. "Pyrography by Judy" (Myrtlewood – Judy Hallek) was also a good seller in the store.

Along with Hassett (Owner), the original team at Wooden Nickel consisted of Red Thompson (Sales Representative), Lonnie Mecum, Rita Hunt, Laureen Purkey, Irene Baker, Betty Griffin, Rick Cook, Kathy Dahrens, Anna Thomas and Georgine Fields.

Harvey Johnston and his wife, Dylois, were second owners of the Wooden Nickel in equal partnership with their son, Steve Rinehold and his wife Terri Mollier.

As the sign outside reads "See it Made", the Wooden Nickel encouraged its retail customers to ask a salesclerk for a tour of its woodshop.

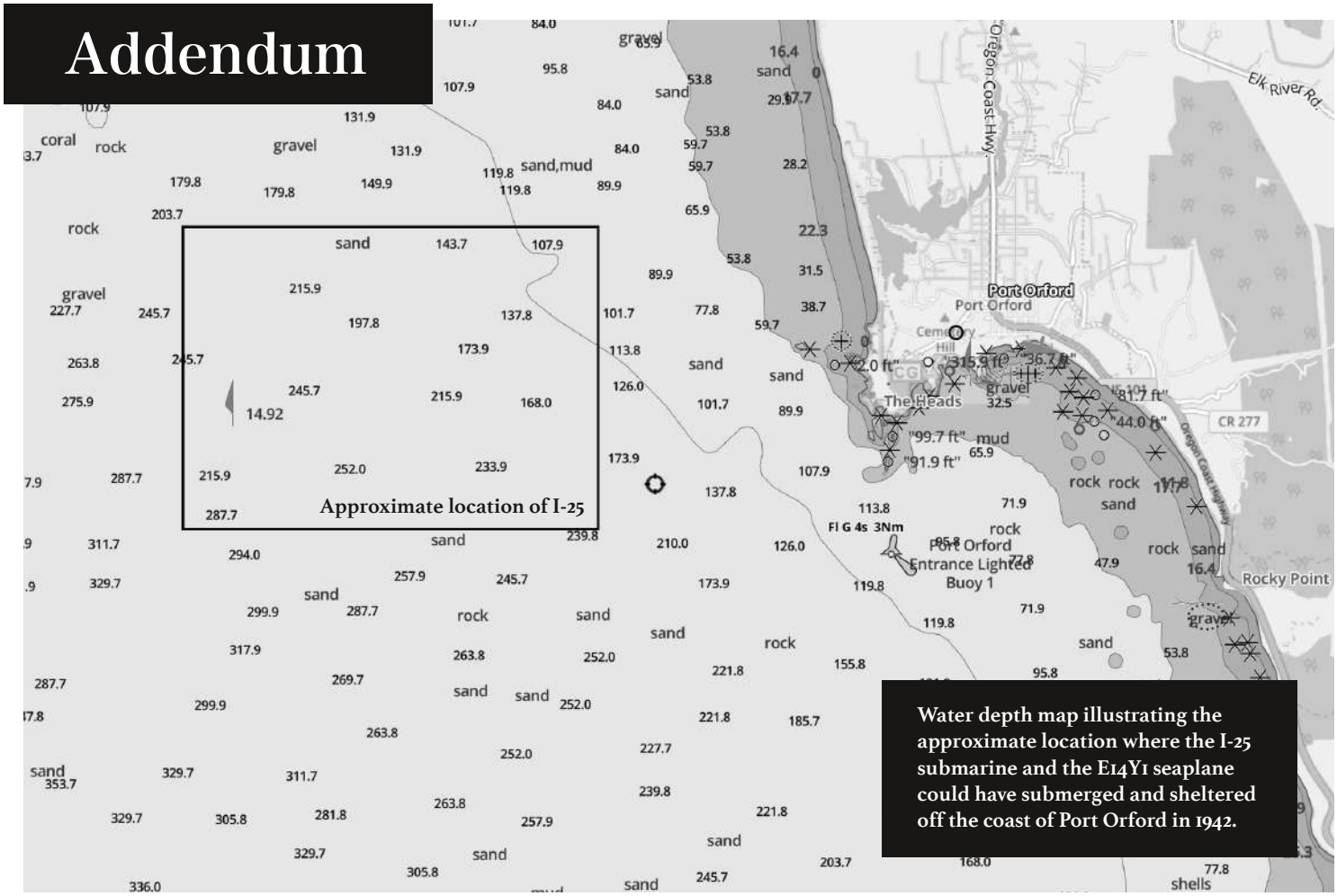


WOODEN NICKEL owner Tracy Hassett, with hammer, and Alan Mitchell are currently in process of building a 1500 square foot addition to the furniture shop area of the business. Hassett said more room is needed for manufacturing, drying and storage. "The expansion will also allow us room to employ a couple of people in the hopefully near future," he said.

4-28-77

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT — (1) On the left side of this 1940's photo of Paul and Aggie Leutwyler's Battle Rock Garage is a partial view of the building Tracy Hassett removed to make way for the Wooden Nickel; **(2)** Wooden Nickel Opened. May 1974; **(3)** Myrtlewood is actually California Bay Laurel, Umbellularia Californica. Along the Oregon coastline, its trunk grows as wide as 32 inches in diameter. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons); **(4)** Tracy Hassett, with hammer, and Alan Mitchell in process of building a 1500 square foot addition in the furniture shop area of the business; **(5)** Lonnie Mecum bandsawing bowl blanks, 2003; **(6)** Raw Myrtlewood lumber planks at the Wooden Nickel; **(7)** Tracy Hassett giving a demo of turning a Myrtlewood goblet at the 1990 Port Orford Arts Festival.

Addendum



Water depth map illustrating the approximate location where the I-25 submarine and the E14Y1 seaplane could have submerged and sheltered off the coast of Port Orford in 1942.

In Search of the I-25 and the E14Y1

As this booklet is primarily a recounting of experiences by Leon White, a traditional bibliography is not provided (see our back cover for a link to one on the web). However, we made our best effort to ensure that facts are accurate in the text. Chapter 6, "Port Orford's WWII Era – 1941-1945", focuses on what was a very tense time for the world, and in particular Port Orford, where our area was under attack in what would later be realized as the only known bombing(s) of the continental United States from the air.

In the short course of a month in 1942, three attacks were on or near our coastal shores: 1) on the 9th of September, there was a firebombing attack east of Brookings; 2) on the 29th of September, there was another firebombing attack east of Cape Blanco; 3) on the 5th of October, came the sinking of Larry Doheny off the coast of Cape Sebastian. All three attacks involved an I-25 submarine equipped with a Yokosuka E14Y1 seaplane of special design which could be disassembled and stored on the sub to facilitate stealth attacks.

According to a 1983 account by the E14Y1 pilot, Nobuo Fujita, during the second attack on September 29 the I-25 submarine came under counterattack from the air. The crew dove, while suffering minor damage that could be repaired at sea. What happened next according to Fujita: "Our orders were to keep perfectly quiet and to remain at a depth of 60 and 70 meters until the surface sounds disappeared. When all was quiet above, we crept along the ocean floor and lay on the bottom (of the harbor of Port Orford) until night time." Note that "(of the harbor of Port Orford)" are not his actual words.

If you look at a water depth map of Port Orford, it is entirely possible the I-25 could have spent the night just west of the Port Orford lighted bouy beyond the bay and port. The ocean depth a few hundred yards beyond the buoy is 150 feet and deeper, a reasonable depth to hide. To know that danger lurked that close to our peaceful coastal home gives one pause.

In later years, Fujita made peace with himself and his regretful role in the war by visiting the United States in 1962 when invited by the City of Brookings Jaycees. In 1992, 50 years after the attack, he planted a redwood tree at the site of the bombing east of Brookings.

This book is created with resources available at the Port Orford Historical Photos Project (portorfordhistoricalphotos.org). A QR code link is provided at left to our work-in-progress files so readers can check for updates, comment, view additional photos and access a complete bibliography. Special thanks to Alan Mitchell for recording the stories for posterity and Rebecca Malamud-Evans for designing the book and maintaining the historic resource. Special thanks to Rick Cook for research.