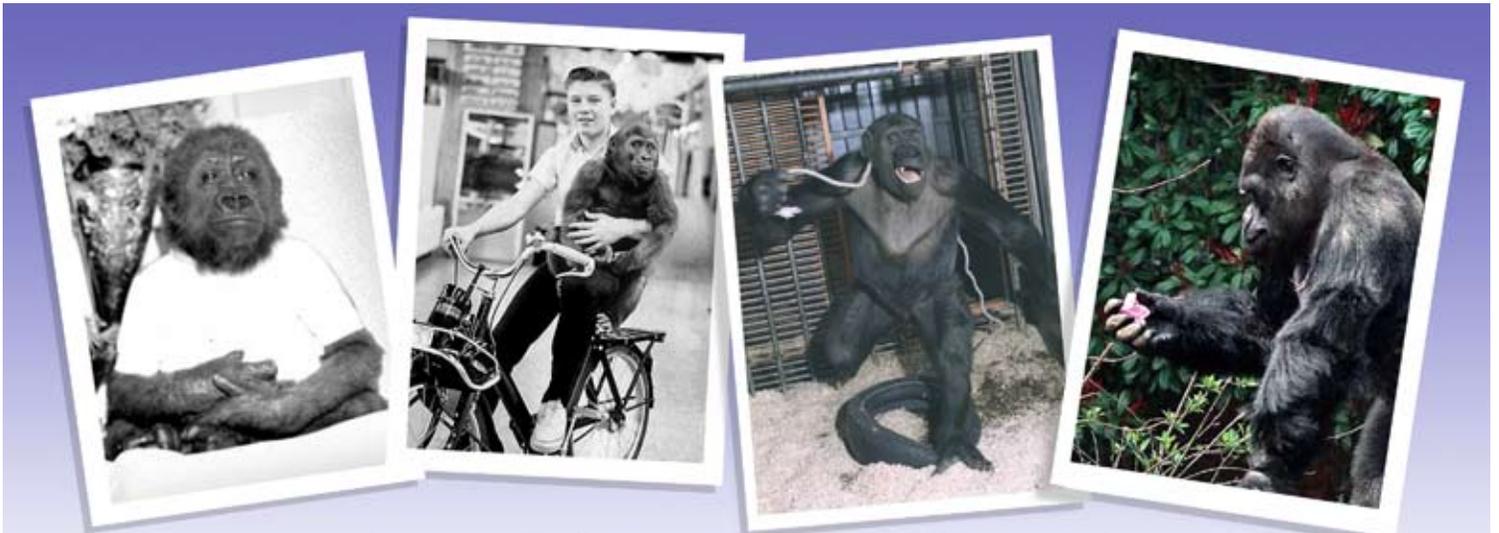




Prairie Gazette

Fall • 2021 •

Official Publication, Lakewood Historical Society



Ivan “comes home” for Lakewood’s 25th Anniversary

Next time you’re playing a round of trivia with your friends, see who can answer this one:

What former resident of Lakewood was kidnapped as a baby, taken halfway ‘round the world to be raised by a loving foster family--then sentenced to solitary confinement *for life* when he became a “problem child”?

Stumped? More hints: After his plight was made known through magazine articles and TV shows, thousands of people the world over demanded his release, resulting in an offer by pop superstar **Michael Jackson** to “adopt” him. Thanks to public pressure, he was finally released from his concrete cell and given a new home in beautiful, spacious surroundings where, for the first time in his life, he had the opportunity to make friends.

If *your* friends still don’t know who you’re talking about, maybe you ought to show them the big-budget Hollywood movie based (loosely) on our mystery Lakewoodian’s life. Because, of course, the answer to the question is... 

Once they’ve seen it, they’ll no doubt want to know what was fact and what

See IVAN, page 3



Lakewood History Museum to Host Special Veterans Day Program



*“Historical Phil”
Raschke*

In honor of Veterans Day, the Lakewood History Museum will host a special military program at 6:30 pm, Tuesday, November 9th. Event will highlight the fascinating historical relationships between “Remembrance Day”, the “Red Poppy” of Flanders Field, a “Shoe Repairman” from Kansas and “Veterans Day”. This highly entertaining

program will be presented by “Historical Phil” Raschke of Lakewood. You won’t want to miss it.

Seating is limited and on a first-come basis. Light refreshments will be served. Several attendees will be able to take home a unique **World War I / Veterans Day prize** following the presentation. Will you be one of the lucky winners?

The Museum will conduct a brief annual meeting just prior to “Historical Phil’s” presentation.



Lakewood Historical Society

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President's Message



Sue Scott (& friend)

What a great grand opening for the Ivan Exhibit in conjunction with the City of Lakewood's 25th Anniversary Party!

Over 150 people came thru the museum that day! It was great to see everyone. And a continued thank you to those who have renewed their membership and those who have donated – it is much appreciated.

The first two programs, **Erich Ebel's** talk on the 1854 Medicine Creek Treaty, and the film "Stan & Ollie" were

smashing successes. We are working on more programs. Have an idea for one? -- please let us know.

A few long time members recently passed away. **Jim Senko** was the man behind the Meditation Park at St. John Bosco Church. Also **Jack Avril**, a 1950 graduate of Clover Park High School, an "ancient warrior". Our condolences to their families.

Besides the Clover Park Kiwanis, **Phil Raschke** and I recently gave a presentation to the Clover Park Rotary.

Interested in keeping the museum collection in order? Need some help in getting it organized. Let me know if you are interested.

And finally – save the date: **Tuesday, November 9**. We will have a short Annual Meeting beginning at 6:30 followed by a presentation by **Phil Raschke** on Veterans Day. Hope to see you there.

PRAIRIE GAZETTE

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The staff of Prairie Gazette actively encourages input from the Society's members as well as the general public regarding story ideas of any other aspects of this newsletter, and the Lakewood Historical Society.

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MEETINGS

The Lakewood Historical Society formed in 1998 to preserve and share Lakewood's rich history through programs, displays and publications. The Society offers frequent programs on topics of historical interest. Most programs are free and open to the public. Visit us on Facebook or our website for information on events and activities:

www.LakewoodHistorical.org

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The beautiful bronze casting of "Ivan's Hand with Flower" is on loan to the Lakewood History Museum courtesy of the Ledger Square Law Collection and Jason Whalen. In honor of his memory, the casting contains a portion of Ivan's cremation ashes. Ivan passed away in 2012 at age 50 while residing at Zoo Atlanta.

IVAN, from page 1

was fiction, and there'll never be a better opportunity to separate the two than at the **Lakewood History Museum**, where the most comprehensive exhibit ever on the life and times of Washington state's most famous non-human primate opened Sept. 25th.

Co-curators **Earl Borgert** and **Chris Erlich** have created an attractive space with colorful display boards providing an illustrated timeline of Ivan's journey from Congo birthplace to B & I Circus Store to final home at the Atlanta Zoo.

Shelves filled with memorabilia include samples of Ivan's artwork, reproductions of which can be purchased, along with other Ivan-themed merchandise, at the



*No exceptions, big guy! LHS Vice President **Ed Voie** reminds Ivan **everybody** needs to mask up to see his exhibit.*

museum store. Proceeds benefit the **Ivan Foundation**. Headed by Earl Borgert, the foundation's purpose according to its website ivanthegorilla.org is "to inspire, provide vision, awareness, and nurture younger generations in the conservation of endangered species."

To round out your visit, be sure to have your picture taken alongside a lifesize cutout of the star attraction himself!

The Ivan Exhibit is open during regular museum hours, noon to 4 pm, Wednesday through Saturday at 6114 Motor Avenue SW in Lakewood's Colonial Plaza. Admission is free (donations welcome, of course!)

More pictures on page 4

When Ivan left the B & I Circus Store shopping center in 1994, Lakewood wasn't yet a city--and wouldn't be for another two years.

Not that people hadn't been *trying* to incorporate the vast, sprawling, ill-defined suburb south of Tacoma (known earlier as the Lakes District) for many years prior. It took three elections and the best efforts of determined advocates like **Claudia Thomas**, **Andie Gernon** and Gen. **Bill Harrison** before the local electorate was finally persuaded the benefits of cityhood outweighed the increase in taxes that would necessarily follow.

The case successfully made, February 26, 1996 marked the incorporation of what instantly became Pierce County's third largest city (after Tacoma and Puyallup).

So what's the verdict--did the voters make the right decision? Consider these words of **Mary Dodsworth**, City Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, and you be the judge:

"Over the past 25 years we have seen significant progress in local planning and redevelopment.

City of Lakewood



1996 Anniversary 2021

Building CommUNITY

We created our own police department and built a city hall for easy access to municipal services.

We removed dilapidated buildings throughout the community and replaced them with new thriving businesses.

We renewed and improved our partnership with JBLM and increased our presence throughout the state as a strong, stable and livable city.

Today you can enjoy so many new and improved parks and playgrounds, updated streets with sidewalks and lighting and many new restaurants and businesses.

And once we are able to gather again as a community, you and your family can attend free activities and special events, like our concerts in the park, farmers market and SummerFEST festival."

Strikes us as good reason to celebrate, and so it must have seemed to the happy Lakewoodians who crowded Colonial Plaza on September 25 to take part in their city's Silver Anniversary celebration. For pictures of the party, see page 5.



Bottom row photos, left to right:

LHS Vice President Ed Voie, President Sue Scott, Board Members Glen Speith and Phil Raschke congratulate Ivan on his new exhibit.

Linda McDermott, Chair of the Lakewood Arts Commission, poses at the museum's IVAN Exhibit with her twin 5 year old granddaughters Joplin (L) and Morrison (R).





CITY OF LAKEWOOD'S 25 1996 Anniversary 2021 CELEBRATION



Recent Donors

Charlie Eckstrom

Kris Kauffman: in memory of Jack Avril

New Members – Welcome!

Linda McDermott

Renae Goldie & James Endicott

Peter D. Cook

David & Donna Redemann

Jim & Shirley Peterson



Historic Lakewood Street Names Making a Comeback

New signs--with old names--have been popping up at intersections around Lakewood, reminding us that some of the roads we're so familiar with today were called something else entirely a few generations back. So far, we've noticed these as we've driven around town:

Current: **Steilacoom Boulevard**

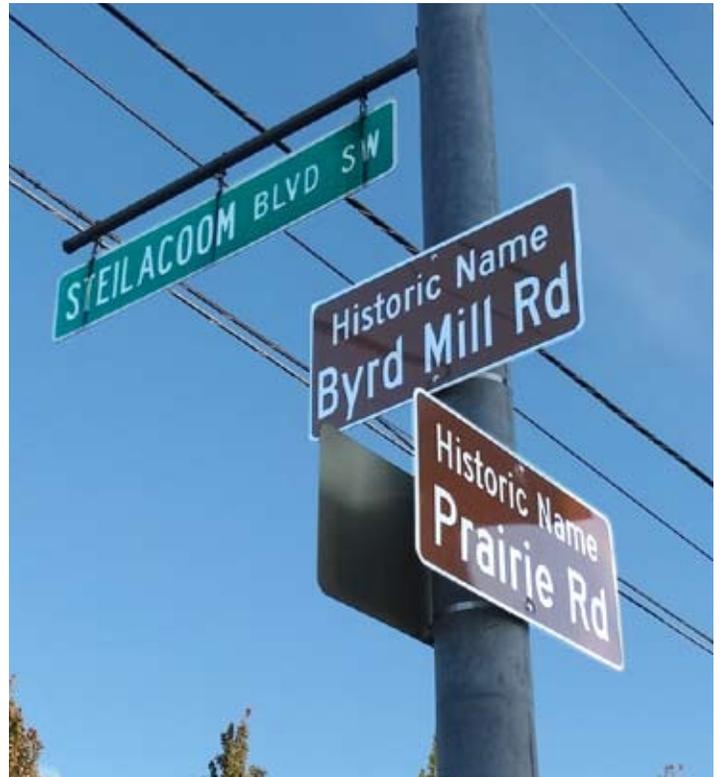
Historic: **Byrd Mill Road** (for the significance of this name, see our Summer 2021 issue, available at lakewoodhistorical.org)

Current: **Hipkins Road**

Historic: **Prairie Road** (as it was known to William Hipkins himself, the settler whose farm was bounded on one side by the road in the 1880's)

Current: **Lakeview Drive & Gravelly Lake Drive**

Historic: **Old Tacoma Speedway** (Lakeview Dr follows the northernmost section of what was once the second-most famous racetrack in America; Gravelly Lk Dr, the southernmost. For an account of the Speedway by good friend of LHS **Steve Dunkelberger**, see www.historylink.org/File/5639)



LHS Makes Presentation to Clover Park Kiwanis Club

At a September meeting held at the RAM Restaurant, the Lakewood History Society was honored to present a program highlighting the museum's recent re-location and modernization.

Guest presenters were President **Sue Scott** and Board Member **Phil Raschke**.

Their presentation covered the complete renovation of the old Terrace Restaurant in the Colonial Plaza into a modern, state of the art, interactive museum featuring early pioneer history, a new mini-theater for showing historical films and the brand new "IVAN" exhibit starring Ivan the famous western lowland guerilla who lived at the B & I Circus Store until 1994.

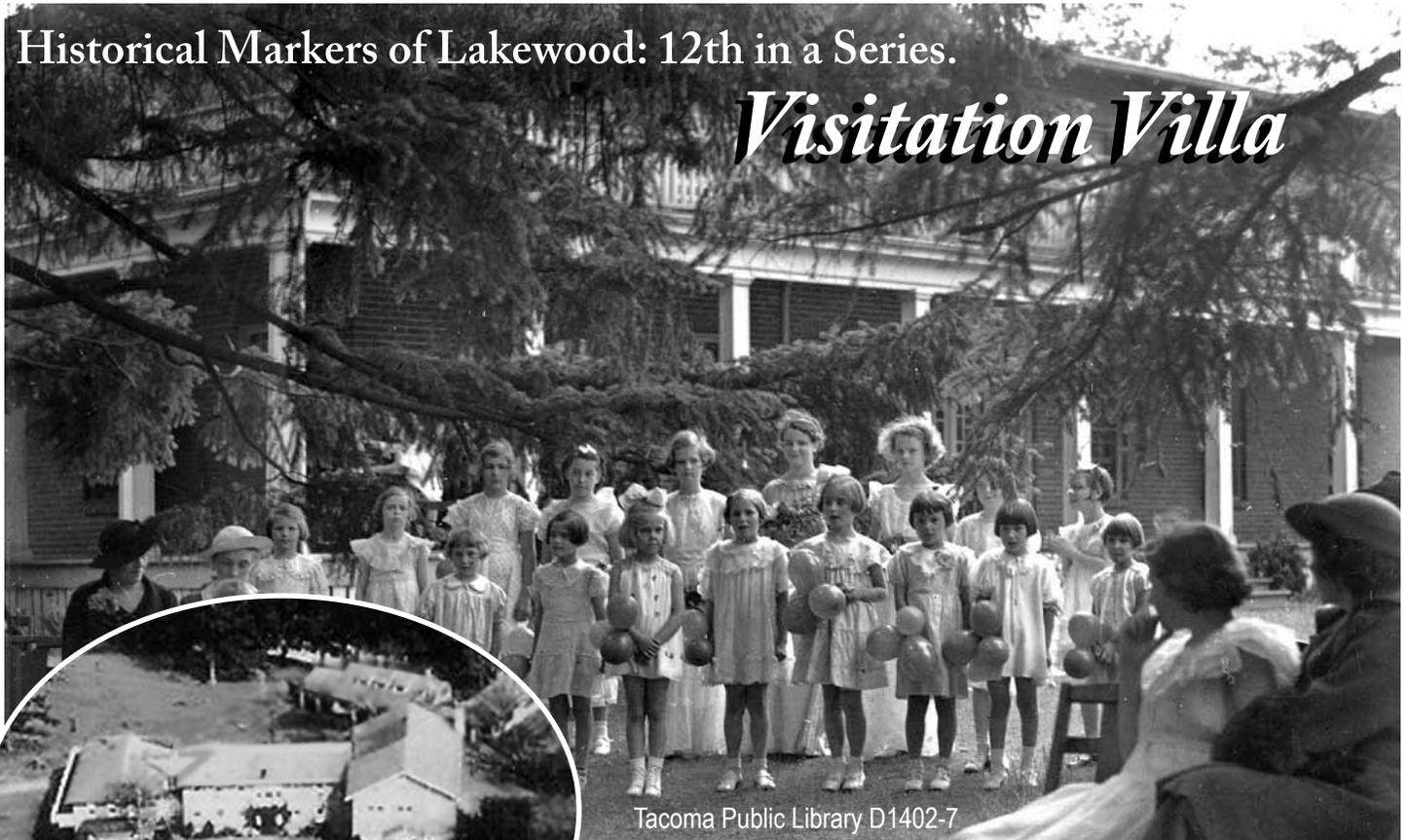
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Congratulating Sue Scott and Phil Raschke for their entertaining and informative presentation is **Thomas Thompson** (center), President of the Clover Park Kiwanis Club. Photo by Fran Phelan.

Historical Markers of Lakewood: 12th in a Series.

Visitation Villa



Tacoma Public Library D1402-7

Visitation Villa Academy's May 27, 1936 May Day fete. The fete started with a picnic lunch followed by games, races, a May Pole dance and flag drill.



1923-1956

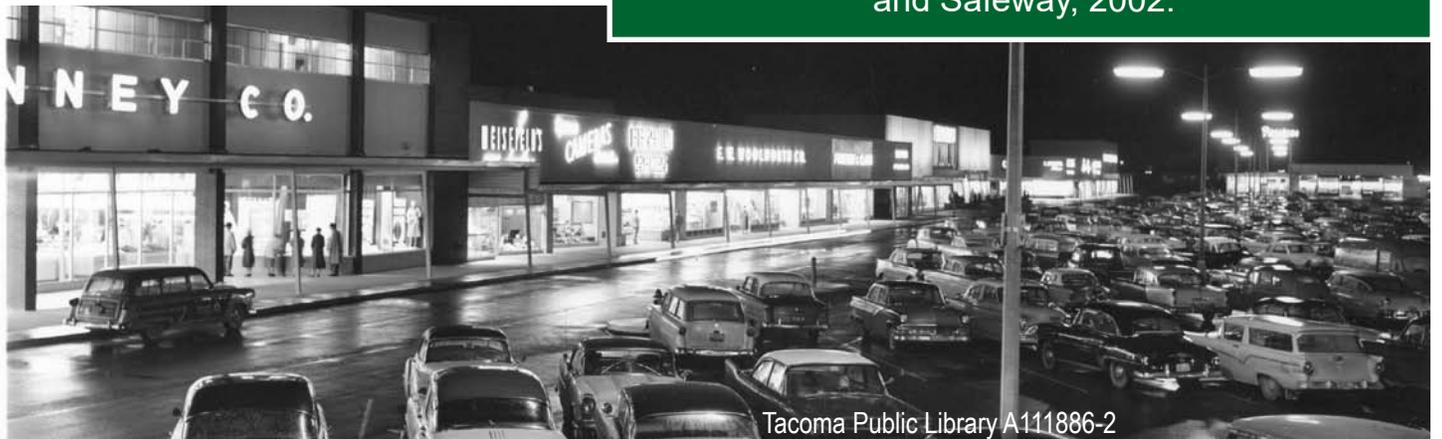
Before Lakewood's largest shopping center was the Towne Center, it was the Lakewood Mall, and before that, the Villa Plaza. And before *that*, it was the site of **Visitation Villa**, a Catholic girls' school run by the Sisters of Visitation.

The plaque (text at right) is attached to the exterior wall of the Safeway store, just to the left of the south entrance.

ON THIS SITE STOOD VISITATION VILLA

A Catholic girls school began shortly after the Sisters moved in on August 15, 1923 and operated until 1954. In May of 1956, construction began on the Villa Plaza Shopping Center which opened in 1957. The Visitation Villa building site is in the central southern core of this building and extended into the loading area and street.

Marker donated by MBK Northwest and Safeway, 2002.



Tacoma Public Library A111886-2

Bright lights illuminate the 4,000 car parking lot at the Villa Plaza Shopping Center in January, 1958. The "Villa" opened in 1957 on the former site of a Catholic school run by the Sisters of the Visitation *Prairie Gazette* · Fall 2021 7



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DOCENTS URGENTLY NEEDED!

Lately, your Society has had to limit the hours and even days we're open due to a severe and ongoing shortage of

****** DOCENTS ******

If you like history, people and bringing the two together,
WE WANT YOU to be a docent whenever you can spare a few hours.

No experience necessary; we'll show you the ropes.

Call **Sue Scott, 253-588-6354**

Check lakewoodhistorical.org
for notices of upcoming programs.

