

Prairie Gazette



Summer 2018 The Official Publication of the Lakewood Historical Society

Museum: 6211 Mt. Tacoma Drive SW, Lakewood WA 98499

OPEN Wed-Sat, 12 Noon-4 pm

(253) 682-3480

LHS Bids Farewell to A “Founding Father”

Cyrus Happy III, noted local historian and plant expert, died May 9, 2018 at age 95.

Cyrus was born in Tacoma on July 5, 1922, the son of **Cyrus Happy Jr.** and **Marjorie Antoinette Sayre Happy**. He was an only child and grew up on five acres on Gravelly Lake.

Childhood friends knew him as “Jim,” a name he gave himself when he was two. When he was a boy, his wonder pony, Ginger, took him all over the Lakes District on trails through the woods. He began to ride hunter/jumpers at Woodbrook Stables, and roamed hundreds of acres of the military reservation on horseback. He was a longtime member of Woodbrook Hunt Club and a fearless rider. For decades he rode horseback on the prairie every week, and he knew the locations of every pioneer homestead and orchard and every location of endangered native plants.

Cy graduated from the first class of Clover Park High School in 1940. He enlisted in the Army in 1942. He was a graduate of University of Washington, a lifelong



Plant expert Cy with floral friend, c. 1975

learner, and avid reader. He built a library of historic photos and books and for years told the stories of local pioneers to hundreds gathered in clubs and schools.

He received the David Douglas award from Washington State for his work in documenting and saving historic sites and structures through the Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation.

In 1998, Cy was co-founder and first President of the **Lakewood Historical Society**. He was also a life member of Steilacoom Historical Museum Association, and longtime member of Tacoma Country and Golf Club and Gyro Club.



“Jim” and Ginger, circa 1935

Cyrus became an expert on Western Washington’s native plants, photographing and documenting their habitats. He hybridized rhododendrons and roses, but he was known internationally for his work with primulas. A specialty was development of an exquisite line of green-edged auricula primroses. He led local and na-

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See Cy, page 3



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President's Message

Summer fun, farmer's markets and baseball—and some **great news** to share with everyone.

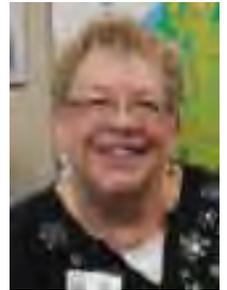
The **Lakewood Historical Society Board of Directors** voted recently to sign a new lease and move into the space formerly occupied by the **Terrace Restaurant** (the first floor only) and the lobby of the **Lakewood Theater**. This will give us more museum space and bring in more items for exhibiting that have been stored awaiting exhibit space. The owners have some work to do before we can begin the move, but we will keep you up to date on this exciting time for the Lakewood Historical Society and Museum. This coincides with our **20th anniversary gala** planned for **October 23!**

Our outreach continues. We recently manned a booth at the **Lakewood Senior Center Open House**, and check us out at the **Lakewood Farmer's Market** on **July 24** and **August 21**, along with **SummerFest** at **Ft. Steilacoom Park** on **July 14!**

But we continue to need your help. Our pool of docents has gotten smaller and we are always looking for **new docents** to help us keep the doors open. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact me at **253-588-6354**.

Thank you for your continued support of the Lakewood Historical Society & Museum.

And go Mariners!!!



Sue Scott

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

SAVE THE DATE!

OCTOBER 2018

23

Don't miss a historic bash!

Lakewood Historical Society's 20th Anniversary Gala.

Details soon at lakewoodhistorical.org and on our facebook page.

CY from page 1

tional primrose societies, and served as editor of the American Primrose Society Quarterly. He was an authoritative judge at primrose shows in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and British Columbia, and was featured in a Time-Life Encyclopedia of Gardening titled "Perennials" for his prized collection of auriculas.

Cy's interest in the area's pioneer orchards developed into knowledge of old apple varieties. He could identify dozens of varieties, and planted many of them at his Gravelly Lake home. He raised vegetable gardens and created an impressive alpine garden with choice plants from around the world.

Cyrus spent 30 years as a banker with National Bank of Washington, which evolved into Pacific National Bank of Washington and Wells Fargo. His favorite assignment was as photographer and editor for the bank and its magazine. He made friends throughout the banking system for his insightful writing and exquisite photographs. He won international competitions for his photographs. After retirement he continued to use his photo skills, producing candid wedding pictures and illustrating freelance articles.

An expert genealogist, he researched generations of family members. He knew their names and their stories. His paternal grandfather, **Cyrus Happy**, became an attorney by "reading law" in the office of **Abraham Lincoln** in Illinois. His maternal grandfather came west



Three Happy generations, 1922. Cy (left), Cy III (middle), Cy Jr. (right).

from the maritime region of eastern Canada to become a builder and contractor in Tacoma in the 1800s and early 1900s. He was contractor for the Snoqualmie Falls Power Company Transfer House, now the signature campus building and library reading room at University of Washington, Tacoma.

Cy's family asks that his life be remembered by planting primroses, telling family stories, patting a dog or cat, waltzing around the living room, or playing old songs on the ukulele.

A Celebration of Cy's life was held at the Woodbrook Hunt Club on June 30, 2018.



Cy (circled) —Clover Park Junior High School 9th graders, 1937



Cy (left) on "Jeep", jumping hurdles at Woodbrook Hunt Club, October 1948.



Cyrus "Cy" Happy III
1922-2018

Speaking of Woodbrook

Historian Cy must have been delighted when the riding and hunt club that played such a significant role in his life was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2017.



Founded over 100 years ago with the financial backing of local banker (and builder of fabulous Thornewood mansion) **Chester Thorne**, Woodbrook is the oldest club of its kind still operating in western Washington. Its significance will be further recognized soon with the placement of one of our historical markers.

Councilwoman, mayor, champion of local history—and historic figure herself—passes

In addition to the loss of co-founder Cy Happy, LHS sadly notes the passing of another dear friend and ally in the cause of preserving Lakewood's history...

Dr. Claudia B. Thomas, devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and public servant, passed away peacefully in her sleep after a long illness, surrounded by her loving family on May 12, 2018.

Claudia was born in Shannon, North Carolina on September 20, 1930 to **Claud** and **Mary Lee Bonds**. Her phenomenal success began early, entering Bennett College at age 15. Earning her Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry, her first job after graduation was with *Ebony* Magazine. She then began her teaching career as a high school chemistry teacher in Asheville, North Carolina.

Later in life, she married **Harry A. Thomas**, a military officer, giving her the opportunity to travel and teach around the USA and overseas.

Claudia and her husband eventually settled in Lakewood in 1963 when he retired from the military. A passionate "life-time learner", she continued her educational pursuits earning a Master of Science Degree in Educational Administration from Seattle University and a Doctorate in Organizational Development and Management from Union University.

Claudia served 42 years in public education as a teacher, Vice Principal, and Principal, retiring in 1994 after serving as the Assistant Superintendent for the Bremerton School District. One of her fondest memories was having past **Lakewood Police Chief Larry Saunders** as one of her students.



Dr. Claudia B. Thomas • 1930-2018

Concluding her career in education, she helped spearhead efforts to incorporate Lakewood as a city. Elected as an original member of the Lakewood City Council, Claudia served for five terms. During her time on the council, she served as Deputy Mayor to Lakewood's first mayor—also one of her dearest friends and mentors—**Gen. William Harrison**.

In 2006 she became mayor of Lakewood, serving two years as the first African-American female mayor in the state of Washington. Her platform and agenda was "Unity in the Community." Rec-

ognizing the need for comprehensive services for Lakewood families and youth, Claudia set aside one percent of the city's budget for human services, created a Youth Council, and cofounded the Human Services Collaboration with another dear friend, **Andie Gernon**. This collaboration of over 92 local agencies, later known as Lakewood's Promise, was recognized by **America's Promise: Alliance for Youth** as one of the best collaboration models in the nation.

Describing Claudia, some have said she...

- ...was gifted with the ability to bring diverse groups together
- ...inspired the dreamless and taught those they called unteachable
- ...was a model of service and of hope for our youth
- ...was a compassionate, caring, energetic leader outpacing people half her age

...saw a need and went about solving it
 ...though short in stature, stood head and
 shoulders above the best
 ...was one of the truest friends I ever had.

Always generous with her personal time, Claudia was proud of her involvement in the numerous civic, non-profit and service organizations to which she belonged.

We of the Lakewood Historical Society knew we could always count on Claudia's support, from the day the museum first opened in 1998 to her appearance at our "Salute to Pierce County", a joint venture with the Tacoma Historical Society marking the centennial of World War I, in 2014. At that function, the Society was proud to present to her the William H. Harrison Leadership Award (see story, right).

The legacy she leaves her family and friends is abundant and unyielding; the memories of her are everlasting.

Claudia will be greatly missed by her family and friends who will forever remember that her door was always open, and her table always set with an abundance of good food.



A memorial service was held at the Harrison Preparatory School Auditorium June 2nd, followed by a Celebration of Life Reception at Clover Park Technical College's McGavick Center. Photos from those events plus others from her remarkable life and careers begin on the next page.

For donations in her honor, please contribute to:

Claudia Thomas Scholarship Fund
 c/o Ivy GATES, Inc.
 PO Box 111796
 Tacoma, WA 98411



A Tale of Two Awards...

To recognize those who have gone above and beyond in service to local history and our community, LHS has established...

The LTG William H. Harrison Leadership Award (given to Claudia Thomas in 2014)

The text of Claudia's award reads, in part:

How can one sum up a lifetime of accomplishments and achievements...?

How can one quantify the contributions made to a city that she helped birth...?

How can one show someone adequately the recognition and gratitude they so richly deserve...?

This award is a poor attempt to do that. No one deserves to be honored more by this award, named for your good friend and fellow community leader, than you.

And so, Claudia, we the members of the Lakewood Historical Society Board, proudly and lovingly present to you...[this] Award.

The Cyrus Happy III Historian Award (presented to its namesake, below, in 2013).

The text of Cy's award recognizes his lifelong interest in history, advocacy of historical preservation, and co-founding of the Lakewood Historical Society (of which he was the first President and Director Emeritus until his passing)

Other Recipients of the Cy Happy Award:

2013: **Walter Neary**

2014: **Steve Dunkelberger**

2015: **Glen Spieth**

2016: **Phil Raschke**

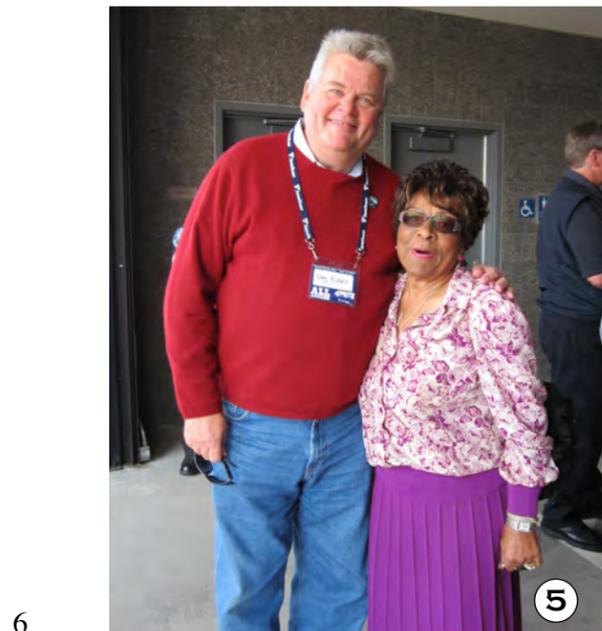
2017: No award given





Claudia

1. Member of the first Lakewood City Council, 1996. 2. One of "Lakewood's Founding Mothers", honored as such with friend and colleague Andie Gernon by the City Council in 2014. 3. With friend and mentor Bill Harrison at ceremony marking her retirement from the Council, 2011. 4. With Bill again, having just received the Harrison Leadership Award at LHS's "Salute to Pierce County", 2014. 5. Attending opening of Lakewood Sounder Station with fellow Sound Transit Board Member (and ex-mayor of Seattle) Greg Nickles, 2012. 6. Announcing start of train service with characteristic enthusiasm at meeting of Lakewood United, 2012. 7. 2006 opening of Lakewood History Museum... 8...where her ribbon-cutting made it official. 9. Opening of the Museum's exhibit, "Lakewood's Road to Cityhood" with Andie, Bill and LHS President Becky Huber, 2012. At Claudia's retirement tribute, Becky tearfully spoke of her as a mentor who showed "what it takes to be a community member and community leader". 10. 20th Anniversary party for the City of Lakewood; 11. posing with sign from the campaign. 12. Panel discussion on cityhood with Bill and Andie, 2012



Lakewood flight would have outdone Lindbergh...if

Had all gone according to plan the morning of July 28, 1929 would the ticker-tape parades welcoming Lucky Lindy after his successful flight from New York to Paris been eclipsed by an avalanche of fluttering paper hailing the first man to fly solo across the **Pacific** Ocean...?



Michael Sullivan

Not unreasonable to think so, given the far greater distance, fiercer winds and *open* cockpit (as opposed to Lindy's closed cabin) the man at the controls would have endured...had all gone according to plan...

Sadly, as historic preservationist **Michael Sullivan** told an attentive crowd at the Society's April 24th program, the only thing that went right that day was that the plane attempting the 5000 mile journey did *not* catch fire after it crashed on take-off—saving the life of an amazingly brave, if all but forgotten aviator. His name was **Harold Bromley**, he lived in Tacoma—but he flew out of Lakewood.

So what went wrong that day? Let's back up a bit then resume the story (as adapted and condensed from Michael's fascinating blog on local history, tacomahistorylive.com)

Bromley was in his late 20's, operating a flying school in Tacoma while picking up extra cash as a test pilot for Lockheed in California. At some point he met Canadian-born lumberman **John Buffelen** with whom he hatched the idea of raising \$25,000 to buy and fly a single engine low wing monoplane non-stop from Tacoma to Tokyo.

By July 19, 1929, Tacomans from all walks of life had ponied up the required amount and, after an 8 hour 17 minute flight from Los Angeles, Bromley landed a bright orange Lockheed Vega on a freshly cleared airfield in Tacoma (better known today as the McChord in Joint Base Lewis McChord). Painted across its ridiculously cool looking fuselage of spruce and canvas, was the spirited name *City of Tacoma*.

A few days later, on July 25th, nine year old **Clasina Buffelen** and kimono clad seven year old **Evelyn Miyazaki** christened the aircraft with flowers, U.S and Japanese flags and a bottle of water from Puget Sound. The little girls and the big airplane symbolized a civic leap of faith, a flight 1000 miles farther than Lindbergh's, sailing west into the prevailing winds and weather.

At about 4 a.m. on July 28, 1929, crews began pumping 900 gallons of gasoline into the tanks of the *City of Tacoma*. 25,000 people had already gathered for the take off and the crowd continued to grow, pushing the launch later into the warming summer morning.

Finally, at 6:08 a.m. a crewman pulled on the propeller, Bromley gunned the 450 horsepower engine and released the brakes. The plane started down the steep wooden ramp that had



Highlighting Sullivan's presentation were many rare, historic photos of the event and its participants.



Harold Bromley (right) with co-sponsor John Buffelen.



If at first you don't succeed...
Aftermath of Bromley's first attempt.



The christening. Not too hard, Clasina—remember, it's only spruce and canvas!

been built to increase take-off speed. As he hit the level ground at the bottom of the ramp a spray of gasoline covered the windshield from the fuel tanks that were expanding in the morning sun. Bromley lifted his head above the windshield and pulled down his soaked goggles—and was immediately blinded by a splash of corrosive petroleum. Then things began to go really wrong.

As the plane picked up speed and the tail lifted, it began to wander from the center of the runway. The blinded pilot tried to correct under full power, but the wheels pulled the heavily loaded plane into a sideways careen before it could lift off.

In a terrifying moment for the 70,000 spectators, the *City of Tacoma* nosedived into the gravel edge of the runway about 1500 feet from the ramp, leaving sightless Bromley 10 feet in the air, with gas pouring out of the ruptured tanks.

Finally something went right. The engine stalled and there was neither spark nor fire. The plane was a total loss but Bromley was OK—and Buffelen and their Tacoma investors were willing to be talked into another Trans-Pacific attempt.

Another *three* attempts, in fact. But their luck only worsened. Plane number two, another Vega, crashed before it could be delivered, just a few miles from the Lockheed plant in California.

A different model, perhaps...? Things took an even grimmer turn when the Lockheed Sirius that (briefly) became the third *City of Tacoma* crashed

during a test flight over the Mojave desert, this time killing its pilot (not Bromley).

All right, how about a much bigger and more powerful plane...from a different manufacturer... with a second man in the cockpit...flying in the opposite direction...taking advantage of the more favorable winds? (As you've probably surmised, these were men not to be easily dissuaded.) And so a **fourth** *City of Tacoma* (by now, we're well into 1930) was bought, dismantled, loaded onto a steamer and shipped to Tokyo. What could possibly go wrong this time? Well, an exhaust system could split...and fill the cabin with choking fumes that nearly killed Bromley and his navigator before Harold managed to land the craft on a Japanese beach.

Incredibly, Harold was *still* trying to cross the Pacific when word came that the feat had finally been accomplished by a veteran barnstormer named **Clyde Pangborn** and Hugh Herndon, a wealthy New Yorker who financed the trip. Note, it had *not* been a solo flight.



Early arrivals—the crowd would grow to 70,000 by take-off time—take a look at the plane many of them helped buy.

The dream at last dead, Harold kept flying. He helped familiarize **Amelia Earhart**, **Jimmy Doolittle** and **Wiley Post** with the Lockheed Vega monoplane. He flew for mining companies in Mexico and then became a federal aviation inspector in Oakland.

In 1997 Harold Bromley passed away in Palm Desert, less than a year from his 100th birthday.

Even in the '20's, flying wasn't strictly a "boys only" game—see next page

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in Memory of Cyrus Happy and Claudia Thomas

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Welcome!

New Members Since March 2018

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Hollywood comes calling to Lakewood's Mueller-Harkins Airfield

February 8, 1928—actress **Ruth Taylor** comes to Tacoma to promote the opening at the Broadway Theater of her new film "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes"—the silent

version, not to be confused with the better-known Marilyn Monroe vehicle of 1953.

Picked for the starring role of "Lorelei" by none other than the author of the original story herself, **Anita Loos**, Taylor had previously been a Mack Sennett Bathing Beauty. In 1930 she would make another contribution to entertainment history by giving birth to **Buck Henry**, years later to achieve fame as screenwriter for "The Graduate", "Catch-22" and many other films.



Continued from previous page

Apparently the adventurous type, Ms. Taylor donned flight helmet and goggles to experience what few had in 1928—a brief trip aloft in one of the fragile aircraft of the day.

In the photo at right, she shakes hands with fellow aviator-for-a-day (and Mayor of Tacoma) **M.G. Tennent**. The pilot is believed to be **Jack Story**, president of the newly organized Olympic Aeronautical Corporation, the main business of which was the flying of tourists around Mt. Rainier. As can barely be seen here, the name of his plane is “City of Tacoma”—which brings up a bit of a mystery...

It’s obviously not the monoplane in which **Harold Bromley** (see pg 8) made his first attempt to cross the Pacific a year later—nor can it be any of the other three planes by the same name he had built for his later attempts. Most likely the



name predated the planned flight, being used here to identify the “Lumber Capital of the World” in the promotional slogan written underneath.

Prairie Gazette visits grave of Seminole leader Osceola

Our peripatetic pal “Historical Phil” Raschke of KLAY radio checks in from yet another exotic locale—accompanied again by Your Favorite (and Very Well-Traveled) Historical Newsletter...

During a May visit to Charleston, SC, a travel copy of the LHS **Prairie Gazette**—along with Lakewood’s “**Historical Phil**”—paid a visit to the grave of the famous Seminole leader **Osceola**



Osceola was born of mixed parentage in 1804 and given the birth name of **Billy Powell**. He rose to fame as a leader of the Native American tribe known as Seminoles. The Seminoles were located in Spanish Florida, but in 1821 the United States acquired Florida from Spain.

Soon the new government attempted to remove the tribe to lands to the west, but under Osceola and others the Seminoles resisted.

A long series of conflicts broke out, highlighted by Osceola’s 1835 murder of **US Indian Agent Wiley Thompson** and six others, plus the massacre of 108 U.S. soldiers near Ocala.

Osceola evaded arrest until October 1837 when he was tricked into peace talks under a white flag of truce and captured near St. Augustine.

He was soon moved to Fort Moultrie outside Charleston, where he became somewhat of a celebrity. The famous portrait of Osceola by **George Catlin** was done at Fort Moultrie.

Osceola died of malaria and acute tonsillitis at the Fort in January 1838. He was buried with full military honors. His grave is just outside the main entrance to the Fort.

Prior to Osceola’s arrival, an earlier resident at the Fort was none other than famous mystery writer **Edgar Allan Poe** who was stationed at Moultrie in 1827.



Photos by Beverly



**Lakewood
Historical
Society**

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LHS Summer 2018 Schedule of Programs & Activities

Sat, July 14th, 11 am-6 pm, SummerFEST, Ft Steilacoom Park, 8714 87th Ave SW. Visit Society's booth, enjoy lots of activities for families and kids, food and crafts. Visit City's website for info: cityoflakewood.us/parks-and-recreation/special-events/summerfest

Tues, July 24th, 10 am-3 pm, City of Lakewood's Farmers Market, Lakewood City Hall, 6000 Main St SW. Be sure to stop by the Society booth.

Tues, August 21st, 10 am-3 pm, City of Lakewood's Farmers Market, Lakewood City Hall, 6000 Main St SW. Be sure to stop by the Society booth.

Tues, August 28th, 4-6 pm, Picnic in the Park, Ft Steilacoom Park, Shelter #2 next to the Playground, 8714 87th Ave SW. Come join the Society for a potluck, come enjoy great food and get an update about all of the improvements made to the Park from **Mary Dodsworth**, City of Lakewood's Parks Director.

Tues, September 23rd, 7-9 pm, "Willis Boatman: First the Trail and then the War", at St Mary's Episcopal Church, 10630 Gravelly Lake Dr SW Lakewood. Mr. Boatman is portrayed by living historian **Ray Egan**. Boatman was an early pioneer who built his cabin in 1858 in what is now the historically registered Boatman-Ainsworth House in Lakewood.