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These new businesses offer coffee, 'high tea' • p 5

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A blizzard of snow geese



MORE NOW THAN EVER BEFORE – It is snow geese season in the Skagit Valley. Rebecca Dzombak and Nancy Crowell have a website article that captures in words and images the complexity of human-snow geese interactions in the valley. As abundant as the birds are here means there are more reasons to question the effect a billboard at the I-5 Conway interchange will have on birds. See page 5 to access the Dzombak-Crowell article. – Photo by Nancy Crowell

Local sleuth's digging yields results

Conway billboard proposal comment period extended

By Anne Basye

What laws govern billboards in Skagit County? Exactly what kind of billboard is being proposed by the 76 gas station owners east of the Conway exit?

The answers to those questions are one reason the county revised its "Notice of Development Application" for a proposed billboard east of Conway and extended the comment period to Feb. 24.

Residents of La Conner will not be surprised that one person probing these questions is Linda Talman.

"There was so much misinformation about the proposed sign," she told the Weekly News. "A lot of it was contradictory and I wanted to get to the root of it."

Known for her deep dives into La Conner town code and regulations, Talman says that in her "scattershot" investigation method, she "looks at everything and writes it down in no particular order and then it settles out in a pattern for me and then I can write to the issue."

Talman looked first at pertinent county and state laws. As the county claims, Skagit County zoning section 14.16.120 does indeed permit billboards in Rural Freeway Service that provide small-scale commercial uses at certain Interstate 5 freeway interchanges outside of urban growth areas.

Digging deeper, however, she discovered the State Scenic Byway Act. I-5 from the Snohomish County line to the Bow Hill exit was designated a Scenic Agricultural Corridor in 2010 by the state legislature. Highway 20 and Chuckanut Drive are also scenic byways.

Does state law trump county law? She called the Washington Department of Transportation to find out. Afterwards, Roland Storme of Development Services in the WSDOT/Mount Baker Area sent the county an email clarifying that if the proposed billboard promotes an offsite use and is visible from I-5, it may be in violation of RCW 47.42.030 and WAC 468-66, which allow no signs except those "advertising

activities conducted on the property on which they are located."

What the proposed billboard will look like is also murky. The original notice described a "2-sided/faced Static electronic billboard sign". The revised notice says "the proposed sign will NOT be digital but 'static' vinyl. The electric company will run illumination to the sign—just like the existing on-premises gas station sign that resides at the property."

Moving on to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Talman discovered the federal Neotropical Migratory Birds Act, which protects birds that migrate from the Caribbean and South America to Alaska. WDFW is "obligated to protect migratory birds," she said.

Having any lights on bothers birds passing through during the night, especially in rural areas, she learned. "ALAN (artificial light at night)," she told the county in her response to the notice, "is increasingly shown by researchers to be disorienting to birds – especially in rural areas – and can cause birds to circle and deplete their resources and never make it to their destinations."

"We are losing bird populations. It matters because they are integral to our agriculture, they are important to our economy and because they are beautiful and we want them to be here for generations going forward."

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Holiday Closures

Presidents' Day

February 20

Bank: Closed

Buses: Regular service

Library: Closed

Post Office: Closed

Schools: Closed

Town Hall: Closed

County government offices: Closed

Trash Pick Up: Yes

Honoring our highest hopes

Disney artist will draw interest at library next Wednesday

By Bill Reynolds

Bob Abrams can literally draw upon a lifetime – at 93, a long one, at that – of sharing highlights of a colorful career as an animator with Warner Bros., Hanna-Barbera and Disney, among others.

Fondly known as the "Disney Artist" around La Conner, his home for the past 15 years, Abrams will recount his illustrious times in the entertainment and media industries during a special one-hour program at the La Conner Swinomish Library next Wednesday.

Abrams, a Pittsburgh, PA. native who hit the big time in southern California, is booked to appear 5 p.m. Feb. 22.

"We're very excited about it," library Director Jean Markert told the

Weekly News. "He had brought some books to us and we were listening to his stories and I thought that it would make a great program. I asked if he'd share some of those stories with us and he said 'yes, but you'd better hurry. I'm 93.'"

Abrams is never shy to mention his age. One reason is that as a youth his health was occasionally fragile and some doubted he would realize the longevity enjoyed by others in his family.

Fortunately, they were wrong.

Abrams was wheelchair-bound as a 10-year-old with little to do but cultivate his love of drawing.

"All I had to do was draw," Abrams recalls. "There was no television, no computers. From the time I was five years old, I had admired Walt Disney. So, my mom and I sent a drawing of

mine of Donald Duck to the Disney Studios and I got a letter back encouraging me to continue with my art."

Abrams took the Disney people at their word. After completing studies at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and serving a stint in the U.S. Navy, Abrams headed for Burbank.

"I went to the Disney Studios there and reminded them that they owed me an interview," he chuckled. "They hired me."

At Disney, Abrams was tutored by the nation's finest animators.

He plans to share some of those professional tips learned inside the industry with his audience.

"I want to show on the board some of the things that should've been demonstrated in art schools but were never taught," Abrams said. "I've

(continued on page 7)

Center Street condos are a go

By Ken Stern

The Center Street condominium project proposed by Brandon and Katie Atkinson is closer to construction. Last Wednesday Town of La Conner Hearing Examiner David Lowell denied residents Debbie Aldrich and Linda Talman's appeal to block the project's conditional use permit. Lowell upheld the September administrative determination issued by Town planner Michael Davolio. That approved the Atkinson's proposal for a three story, 21 unit building at Center and Fourth streets. Lowell put the final stake in the almost yearlong determined, expensive and heartfelt efforts of dozens of town residents to stop the project.

Aldrich and Talman sought enforcement of a 1986 contract rezone. The Atkinsons argued that they, and the town's government, did not know of its existence until April, after the property was purchased and the March challenge to the CUP had been heard. Lowell ruled for the Atkinsons with a brief explanation: that the 1986 contract rezone was not filed with the Skagit County Auditor, as its language required. Lowell determined that was a condition precedent, creating a clause that needed to be carried out for the contract to be valid. "Since the Contract Rezone was not recorded it discharges the duty of the owner to comply with the regulations of the Historical Preservation District," Lowell ruled.

The contract rezone bound the town to restrict future owners of the property to those guidelines. No, wrote Lowell, noting the owners did not have "record notice of the Contract Rezone before purchasing the site" and invested in its development

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Amanda Bourgeois resigns from La Conner school board

By Bill Reynolds

Amanda Bourgeois, a strong advocate for equity in education, has resigned from the La Conner School Board, citing schedule conflicts with her new employment.

"She has a new job," board President Susie Deyo said during the panel's study session on Monday, "and felt she just didn't have the time anymore. It's with deep regret that we accept her resignation, but we have to respect her wishes."

"We really tried to twist her arm," stressed Deyo, who credited Bourgeois with providing keen insight on multiple topics during her three years as a board member.

"She has been a great voice on the board," Deyo said. "There's a big empty chair here now."

Board member John Agen agreed, saying, "It has been a pleasure to work with her. She has always been a bright, upbeat presence on the board."

Bourgeois represented the La Conner Schools Swinomish director district. She was appointed in 2020 to succeed Marlys Baker, who moved outside the school district months after having defeated incumbent Janie Beasley in a 2019 election.

The board seat will be on the ballot this fall for a four-year term. The school district is seeking applicants from within that district to serve the remainder of Bourgeois' term on an appointed basis.

Deyo said the vacancy will be posted and anticipates applicant interviews will be in March.



– Photo courtesy of Bob Abrams

From the editor —

Keep public records public

Dear fellow citizens. Help, please, by paying attention to your state government and taking a stand to keep public records public, available to you — and to the journalists and activists.

Tell your legislators and Attorney General Bob Ferguson that the documents created by legislators elected to serve citizens must be seen by citizens and not blocked behind a legislative privilege they claim and desire but does not exist.

What do legislators tell us all the time? That they work behind the scenes, that they meet day and night — sometimes in cloakrooms — researching, drafting and crafting legislation. All that is fine and dandy. It is what we want our public servants to do on our behalf while shaping a better future for our state.

But none of that hard work is protected from the public by the state constitution. Legislators and the attorney general are wrong in claiming immunity by Article II, Section 17, that “no member of the legislature shall be liable in any civil action or criminal prosecution whatsoever, for words spoken in debate”.

Legislative debate takes place on the floor of the House or Senate. That is what debate is. We all know what debate is. The family debates football or politics over the dinner table or in the car. You debate with friends watching the game at home or in a bar. Debate is oral discussion.

This state clause models the U.S. Constitution, again protecting federal legislators from prosecution for their statements made while discussing legislation. Article I, Section 6 is clear. It protects our representatives: “for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall not be questioned in any other Place.”

Legislative minutia in the office, be it letters, reports or phone calls or, in today’s world, emails and texts, is not debate.

Written and electronic communications outside the chambers, between legislators — and certainly with lobbyists — is not “debate.”

Why do legislators seek to hide their communications — the work they do in service to us — from us, whom they represent? What do they have to hide? “Trivial or inane” documents, at least some of them, wrote Danny Westneat in the Feb. 8 Seattle Times.

Legislators already treat themselves very well. They stretch too far in claiming a privilege to protect documents they create in service to the public from the public.

Your job? Write or call your legislators and Attorney General Ferguson. I am, and will tell them their case in the state Supreme Court is against the spirit and letter of the law created when voters passed the 1972 Public Records Act.

We, the people, won the debate that year with our argument in the court of public opinion. Voters agreed that documents created by public officials in service to the public must be made available for the public to see and review.

Now the legislature and attorney general are spending taxpayer dollars in court arguing against the population’s will.

The law requires legislators to provide when requested documents they create while doing the people’s business. We meant they in 1972. Fifty years later we need to insist that the law applies and means what it said when passed.

That is why they are called sunshine acts. People want legislators to do the people’s business in the light of day.

It is your responsibility to petition your government:

Sen Ron Muzzall: 360-786-7618; ron.muzzall@leg.wa.gov.
Rep. Dave Paul: 360-786-7914; dave.paul@leg.wa.gov.
Rep. Clyde Shavers: 360-786-7884; clyde.shavers@leg.wa.gov.

— Ken Stern

Musings — on the editor’s mind

What is more American than farmers on their farms? They were the first colonizers, clearing the land, putting down roots, both literal and figurative, forging the future out of the sweat of their brow, the force of their will and the strength of their imaginations, planning and plotting an ordered world as much out of their hopes for tomorrow as from steering a plow.

Who was right behind farmers, chronicling, championing, challenging and questioning their every move? Some romantics might list journalists, maybe ahead, maybe just after the clergy.

Think about it. If the axe cleared the forests and then farmers started planting, publishers were probably taking notes with quill and vellum and then setting movable type in their printing presses. It may be that printing offices were the third set of buildings in town, after the church and the tavern.

Now, when the future of Skagit farming is celebrated and invested in with a \$100,000 donation, discussion turns to

training new farmers. They are almost as rare as available land is for them. The average age of working farmers is perhaps 58, with many working past 68 to 78 and into their 80s. The old Minnesota joke is, “What is the last thing a Norwegian bachelor farmer says before he dies?” Long pause. Answer, drawled slowly: “Just fine, doc.”

There is a national conversation and a focused movement to create a generation of young farmers to work as well as repopulate all those farmsteads and acres so farms stay farms. Similar attention is not being paid to a parallel phenomenon in rural communities, that a critical reason small newspapers are disappearing is that publishers of those gritty, independent journals are aging out and selling out if they can.

Communities all across the country are drying up into news deserts. The drought choking small town newspapers is partly a lack of vibrant new ownership. As much as farmers don’t want to see big ag swoop in and buy up the family’s

LETTER

Band thanks audience

Dear Town of La Conner residents,

On behalf of the Skagit Community Band, I would like to thank the fabulous La Conner audience that came to our concert on Friday Feb. 3 at Maple Hall. It was truly a night to remember. When the power went out and I asked the band what they wanted to do, they said “Let’s go on.”

That is when the magic began. The band scrambled to fix the situation by getting out stand lights and cell phones. The audience offered flashlights and offered to stand behind members to illuminate their music. It was the affirming cheer that the audience gave, when I told them that the band wanted to continue, that gave us the courage to go on.

The band played with heart and musicality that only a dire situation could bring out. Your gracious applause after each number kept us going to the end. That night will remain in our memories and a part of SCB folklore for many years. We can’t promise another night like that but we can promise an entertaining and musically expressed concert next time.

So, again on behalf of the Skagit Community Band, thank you for your generous support and donations.
Vince Fejeran
Director SCB

P.O. Box costs too high

My post office (“small” 3x4 inch) box rates have been creeping up, especially in the last few years, from \$60/year to \$75/year and now \$210/year.

When I Googled “average post office box rates,” it said a small box averaged between \$5.50/month or \$66/year, to \$38.33/month and \$460 a year. So La Conner fits in between. However, we residents who live inside the town limits don’t qualify for home delivery and therefore are forced to rent a P.O. Box. Those who live outside town limits get free delivery even on Saturdays which isn’t an option for townies.

It seems likely that those in town are paying for the trucks and personnel that give free delivery outside town. This does not seem fair to me. How can this situation be remedied?

Sincerely,
Joan Cross,
La Conner

heritage, small publishers don’t want to sell out to big newspaper chains. Large scale publishers have the same tendencies as giant agriculture conglomerates: come in for the easy profits. These far away strangers will hollow out, suck out, spit out and walk out of town without a care in the world for the ragged project they leave behind, if they leave even a shell of the paper to straggle on.

Are journalists as romantic as farmers? The latter press seeds into the ground and hope the end of the season brings a bountiful harvest and high prices.

Journalists, who used to scratch words on a page but now clack keys connected to the ether, nurture a product that is more ephemeral and possibly, oddly more permanent.

Newspaper futures depend on dreamers and doers who believe in the vitality of their specific communities and know that the future of democracy depends on words on pages that reflect the very real lives of the people around them.

A View From The State House



Clyde Shavers
State Representative



District 10

Keeping veterans and seniors in their homes

The 10th legislative district has one of the largest populations of veterans in Washington state. Island County, for example, has more veterans per capita than any other county. Between Island, Snohomish and Skagit counties, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs reports over 72,000 veterans in our region.

Our veterans return home and continue to serve our communities as our friends, neighbors and colleagues. They buy a home, start a family and reintegrate as heroes living among us.

Unfortunately, some return disabled with many unable to meet their basic needs on a fixed income. Social Security and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs might be all they have.

If they’re fortunate, disabled veterans can find stable housing and support a family. But along the way, there is inflation, the high cost of housing and increased property taxes.

Because of that, many face housing instability and are at risk of homelessness. One in 25 disabled veterans in our state is homeless or unstably housed.

Another group experiencing instability is senior citizens. Homelessness among older adults in the U.S. is increasing with half of single homeless adults aged 50 and older.

Both groups have sacrificed to build the society we inherited. Yet, over the last year, disabled veteran and senior have been losing qualification to their property

tax exemption due to programs like Social Security, which provides a cost-of-living adjustment to account for inflation.

This modest increase in benefits wasn’t enough to offset increases in property taxes and, ultimately, this further destabilized housing security.

On January 24th, I introduced House Bill 1560 which provides greater property tax relief to disabled veterans and senior citizens. This bill raises the eligibility income thresholds by 10% and adjusts the thresholds every three years. This expands the program to new beneficiaries while allowing people formerly removed to rejoin.

Along with many proponents, I testified in support of this important legislation in the House Finance Committee last week, on Feb. 7. I will continue to work diligently to get this bill passed this session.

Our seniors and disabled veterans helped build and protect our neighborhoods and communities. They are interwoven into the fabric of who we are. This legislation is just one way we can honor their sacrifice.

If you are a disabled veteran or senior who has lost qualification for this property tax exemption and wish to get involved with supporting this legislation, please reach out to my office. You can contact me at housedemocrats.wa.gov/shavers.

I look forward to hearing from you as we work to help veterans and seniors.

LEDs lights save energy and dollars



By Greg Whiting

Most residential energy consumers spend about 10-20% of their home electric budget on lighting. Significant changes in lighting technologies have made it possible to cut your lighting energy use by more than two-thirds while simultaneously improving your overall comfort and light quality.

The tungsten filament incandescent lamp, which most people think of as a “standard light bulb,” was introduced on a large scale in the early 1900s. People have become so used to these lights that most North Americans think of lighting in terms of the power consumption of a tungsten filament lamp, e.g., “I want the brightness and color of a 60 Watt bulb.” In fact, people are so used to looking for a “60 Watt” tungsten bulb that the consumer packaging of a light-emitting diode (LED) bulb will usually say something along the lines of “this 9 Watt LED is equivalent to a 60 Watt incandescent.”

In the mid-1990s, compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) were introduced on a large scale, the first major innovation in residential lighting since the frosted-interior tungsten light was invented in 1925. CFLs use about a quarter of the energy of a tungsten filament light. They were

purchased by people who wanted energy savings, but they weren’t ideal. They have more blue in their light than most people like; they contain mercury, which is a health hazard if it gets out of the bulb; and they use glass bulbs that are easily broken.

Most tungsten filament lamps and all CFLs are obsolete. They have been replaced by LED lights. LEDs are a solid-state electronic technology and use about a fifth as much energy as a conventional tungsten filament light. Their costs fell quickly with mass production. They have gone from “expensive laboratory experiments” to “affordable and easy to find” within fifteen years. Their costs are still falling.

LED lamps also produce less waste heat than either tungsten filament or CFL lights. If you use LEDs, your lighting doesn’t heat your house during warm weather. Lost “free” heat from lights during cold weather is more than made up for by energy savings on the lighting itself.

LED lights are durable, both because their components are durable and because they are usually contained in plastic, rather than glass. An average LED light lasts about six times as long as a CFL and 20 times as long as a tungsten light. Therefore, you don’t need to replace LED bulbs as often, which saves money and can be very helpful when lights are in hard-to-reach locations, like ceiling canisters. In commercial and industrial applications, e.g., in factories with high ceilings, using LEDs sometimes reduces light bulb maintenance costs so much that

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Ken Stern, Publisher & Editor

editor@laconnernews.com

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www.laconnerweeklynews.com

Postmaster:

Send change of address to:
La Conner Weekly News
PO Box 1465, La Conner, WA 98257

Bill Reynolds, News Editor
news@laconnernews.com

Marissa Conklin, Production Manager
marissa@laconnernews.com

Rhonda Hundertmark, Design and Layout Editor
rhonda@laconnernews.com

Sally Riggers, Business Manager
office@laconnernews.com

Eileen Engelstad, Proofreader
Rick Shorten, Special Projects

Contributors:

Anne Basye, Judy Booth, Robin Carneen, Nancy Crowell, Don Coyote, Mel Damski, Max Drews, Janna Gage, Bob Hamblin, Madoc Hiller, Ollie Iversen, Bobbi Krebs-McMullen, Patricia Paul, Claire Swedberg, Sarah Walls, Aven Wright-Mcintosh.

OBITUARY



Bernice Jane Stevens
10/1/1927 – 7/10/2022

Bernice Jane Stevens, longtime resident of Mount Vernon, Washington, died July 10, 2022 at the age of 94. She was born on a forty-acre farm in Mount Vernon to James and Elizabeth. She had three older sisters: Isabelle, Joyce, and Gladys.

Bernice went to Ridgeway Grade School and she usually got there on her roller-skates.

She graduated from Mount Vernon High School in 1945. Her position as a song leader and a cheerleader in high school set her up for a lifetime of friends. The connections with her classmates continued as they met regularly in the years to come. She also met with her monthly "Lunch Bunch Crew" at Max Dale's Steakhouse.

Bernice married Wendell Dean Stevens in December of 1948, sharing 18 years of marriage's ups and downs.

While she spent many notable years as a bank teller, she held a variety of jobs in her lifetime. First and foremost Birdy worked for many years at the Skagit County Court House. She enjoyed working with Katie and the many costume parties as well as decorating for the holidays. Bernice worked at a Woolworth Department Store, Brassy's Gift Store (La Conner), Red Apple Market (as a bookkeeper), and on the local Election Board for Voting. Bernice attended First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mount Vernon for many years.

Bernice enjoyed gardening, shopping, and travelling. She consistently worked 2-3 jobs well into her 80's; anything to keep her farm on Starbird Road. She loved her birds and would feed them only the best food.

She was preceded in death by her husband Wendell, as well as her special friend Virgil. Virgil and Bernice enjoyed numerous parties, traveling, and boating trips with their many friends, as members of the Swinomish Yacht Club.

Bernice is survived by her daughters, Karen and Wendy, and her sister, Darlene, along with many cousins, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

There will be a Memorial Service with a reception to follow for Bernice at 1 p.m., Friday, Feb. 17, 2023 at Kern Funeral Home of Mount Vernon.

You may offer your condolences and share memories of Bernice to her family online at www.kernfuneralhome.com. Arrangements are under the care of Kern Funeral Home.

Resident quarters at Snee-Oosh Road fire station almost done

By Bill Reynolds

Patience is about to be rewarded at Fire District 13.

The long-planned modular residential unit for firefighters and emergency medical technicians was scheduled to be delivered to the Snee-Oosh Road station this week and is expected to be ready for use in March, commissioner John Doyle said during the panel's Feb. 9 hybrid meeting.

The unit's ramping and decking, required for permit approval – plus utility hookups – should be completed within three weeks, he reported.

Doyle and commission chair Bruce Shellhamer voted to approve payments of around \$145,000 on the unit and for related site work. Commissioner J.J. Wilbur, a Swinomish Tribal Senator and La Conner School board member, was at a meeting in Olympia and unable to attend.

Fire Chief Wood Weiss suggested the residential unit's arrival merits a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"Are we going to do the big thing with scissors?" he asked.

Shellhamer and Doyle suggested a firefighting tool, such as an axe, as more appropriate.

Another new addition will be a Ford Focus or Fusion provided by Swinomish Police for the district's new CARES (Community Assistance Resource and Education Services) program. CARES facilitates the health care needs of district and tribal community at-risk populations for geriatric, pediatric, behavioral and mental health conditions.

Two full-time district firefighting positions can be filled upon

arrival of a CARES program grant award, Weiss added.

Weiss has begun training for the annual Columbia Tower Stair Climb in Seattle next month. Firefighters pack 60 pounds of gear up 1,311 steps – 69 flights of stairs – as a fundraiser for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

"It's a lovely way to suffer," Weiss said of the cause's merits.

He is seeking sponsorship for his entry, noting, "You need a certain amount of money pledged to make the climb." Medical officer Drew Farrell reported that the district provided 16 patient transports to hospitals in January and another seven in the first week of February.

Training officer Chris Olbu said the district's February training will focus on HAZMAT (hazardous materials).

"It's pretty important training around here," said Olbu. "There's a lot of potential (for emergencies) with our highways and railroad. I want to provide the tools needed for us to be prepared. I remember the time sheriff's deputies pursued someone who ended up pulling directly into a railroad butane car."

Capt. Ted Taylor, who oversees the district's emergency management, logged in from aptly named Hurricane, Utah. Taylor said the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria is a reminder that tragedy can occur suddenly and without warning.

"But," he stressed, "the more you go without one, the more likely we'll have one."

Taylor said there will be two major emergency drills in October, one for community members and one for responders.

Apply for new commission

The La Conner Emergency Management Commission seeks applicants. Apply by 4 p.m. Feb. 28. Information and applications are on the town's website.

Send applications to administrator@townoflaconner.org; mail to Town of La Conner, PO Box 400, La Conner, WA 98257; or take to Town Hall, 204 Douglas Street.

Source: Town of La Conner

Stuff The Bus food drive

Help stuff the bus in the fight against hunger Feb. 25, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Bring non-perishable food donations and non-food life essentials, including laundry soap, hygiene products, cleaning supplies, toilet paper, etc.

Located at 130 East Fairhaven Avenue, Burlington.

Source: Skagit Transit

Planning commission roundtable hears residents

By Bill Reynolds

In the film "Cool Hand Luke," actor Strother Martin, famed for his role as the sadistic warden, delivered one of Hollywood's most iconic lines.

"What we've got here," Strother's character tells Paul Newman's Luke, "is a failure to communicate."

Town of La Conner officials are taking steps to avoid having those words directed at them.

Three weeks after communication strategies were addressed during a forum at the La Conner Retirement Inn, La Conner planning commissioners and Council Member MaryLee Chamberlain followed up with a 75-minute roundtable session devoted to the same topic at Maple Hall Feb. 7.

Town planner Michael Davolio reminded those attending – residents, Port of Skagit Executive Director Sara Young and Planning and Development Director Heather Rogerson and Home Trust of Skagit Executive Director Jodi Dean, that communication is among the key elements of La Conner's comprehensive plan.

The Town wants to talk with a wide range of stakeholders concerning their priorities for the community, he and Assistant Planner Ajah Eills emphasized.

"We want to make sure everybody has a voice here," said Davolio, "and that everyone's concerns are taken into consideration."

The Town's responses in recent years include revising its comprehensive plan to accommodate more housing by reducing to 4,000 square feet the minimum lot size for residential construction. This year, the

town is planning an inventory of downtown parking spaces.

An industrial zone at La Conner Marina was created in 2022. Last May the Port presented possible long-range changes to the Marina's industrial and commercial zones.

"We have a real interest in the process," Young said. "We want to make sure our plans are cohesive with the Town's."

Planning Commission Chair Marna Hanneman brought the meeting back to the subject at hand.

"Communication, communication, communication," she repeated, stressing that the exchange of ideas is essential as La Conner braces for the future.

"Public outreach is emphasized," Davolio insisted.

Resident Linda Talman, a former longtime planning commissioner, championed non-motorized transportation.

"It's a greener way to be, a healthier way to be," said Talman, who also championed preservation of open green spaces around town.

She lamented rising home costs here and the related impact on declining student enrollment at La Conner Schools. She suggested the Town communicate regularly with multiple audiences, among them students, senior citizens and the Chamber of Commerce and that it consider notifying people residing within 500 feet (as opposed to the present 300 feet) of proposed projects and developments.

"That way," she said, "we can get more people involved. We can have our messages go out farther."

Resident Jim Matthews

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Samish Island community meeting

Skagit County will host a community meeting for Samish Island residents Monday, Feb 27, 6-8 p.m. at the Samish Island Community Center, 11292 Blue Heron Road, Bow.

Topics include community flood preparedness and flood and emergency response. The county commissioners and staff from Planning & Development Services, Public Health, Public Works, the Department of Emergency Management and the Sheriff's Office will respond to community questions.

Source: Skagit County

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J.J. Wilbur and Barb James re-elected to Swinomish Tribal Senate seats



THIS MAN IS SIGNED UP FOR ANOTHER SENATE TERM – J.J. Wilbur was reelected to the Swinomish Tribal Senate Sunday. Here he has signed up to be a FD 13 commissioner. – Weekly News file photo

By Bill Reynolds

J. J. Wilbur will remain a busy man. Wilbur, who serves on the La Conner school board and as a Skagit County Fire District 13 commissioner and chairs the Swinomish Tribal Community Port Commission, was re-elected to the 11-member Swinomish Senate in Sunday balloting. Wilbur survived a strong challenge from Cathi Bassford, a tribal housing and utility board member and elder programs supporter who has served as Swinomish kitchen manager for nearly 20 years, serving special event meals for community dinners, funerals, canoe journeys and holiday luncheons. The vote tally was 180-135 in Wilbur's favor. "My hands go up to the people for entrusting me to serve the

Swinomish community for another term," Wilbur said Monday. Once again, I am truly humbled." Bassford was gracious in defeat, offering congratulations to Wilbur as well as to incumbent senator Barb James, who ran unopposed this election cycle. "I would like to say, 'thank you,' to my family and friends for their support during this election," Bassford said. "The results weren't in my favor but that does not change who I am. I will continue to serve my people as I always have and always will." Wilbur ran on the record he established over the past five years plus a set of evolving goals including increased housing and services for tribal elders and further economic development on the reservation. "I am thankful to be part of

a senate that put community first in the uncertain times of COVID-19," he said in a statement prepared for Qyuuqs, the monthly Swinomish magazine. "In the beginning we met daily to establish food distribution, testing, vaccine clinics, rental assistance, COVID pay, unemployment assistance for fishermen, fuel discounts, COVID relief checks and guidelines to keep our community safe." Wilbur also alluded to creation in 2019 of the Swinomish Port Authority and receipt of an \$11 million grant to expand the tribal fishing fleet. He said he has prioritized employment opportunities for tribal members. "Tribal member employment has increased," he noted. "At the mid-year General Council, you asked for a pipeline from scholarship to employment. I heard you. Workforce development is a goal." James, whose tribal work has focused on youth and family services, has also been involved in budget and personnel matters during her senate tenure. "Working with youth throughout the years in cultural, traditional and social events has been a pleasure," James said. "They are our future and it's been my pleasure to work, teach and listen to their hopes and dreams for the future." Members of the Swinomish Tribal Senate serve for five-year terms. Seats held by Brian Wilbur and Eric Day will be up for election in 2024.

High school class constructing tiny house for tiny home village



THESE STUDENTS ARE BUILDING A HOME – The 10 students in Daniel Castillo's La Conner High School construction class are building a tiny house to go in a tiny home village. – Photo by Madoc Hillier

By Bill Reynolds

La Conner High School construction class students are building their skills by following a blueprint that addresses the area's housing crunch. The 10-member class, taught by instructor Daniel Castillo, is constructing a small house the students plan to turn over to a tiny home village in either Burlington or Bellingham at the end of the school year. "This is a great chance to serve our community while affording the students an opportunity to build their carpentry skills," Castillo told the Weekly News. The La Conner school board and district administration heartily endorsed the project last October. "Everybody is excited and so happy that we get to do this," said Castillo, who is hopeful of recruiting community resources to the cause. "It's valuable for students to see people other than me who are in the trades," he explained. "If there are any experienced carpenters out there having some time Monday through Friday around 10 a.m. and would like to lend a hand, come on by." The students will be engaged in measuring and marking, accurate cutting, fastening, framing, and finish work

throughout the process. "We have until June 1 and our daily class period is 48 minutes long," Castillo said of the project's deadline. Materials for construction of the tiny house have been provided by ANEW, the Puget Sound-based pre-apprenticeship program that trains people for entry into the construction industry. The project is important, said Castillo, because it has the potential to provide shelter for people in need of it. The tiny house movement has emerged as an architectural and societal response to homelessness and housing insecurity. It represents an eco-friendly return to simpler living, advocating downsized living spaces and encouraging a more minimalized lifestyle. Town of La Conner officials last year frequently discussed possibilities for siting tiny homes here. As for Castillo and his construction class, they may not be laying the foundation but are certainly taking a hands-on approach when it comes to nailing down a real-world response to a pressing issue. Building trades professionals wanting to help with the project are invited to contact Castillo at 925-698-3589.

Girls win, boys lose in basketball at Coupeville

By Bill Reynolds

It was an up and down night for La Conner High School basketball teams at Coupeville to end the regular season Feb. 7. The girls team improved to 17-4 overall and 7-1 in league

action with a convincing 48-22 triumph despite resting Skagit County leading scorer Ellie Marble, who is nursing a lower back strain. La Conner buried Coupeville with 10 three-pointers, six by Josie Harper, who paced all scor-

ers with 22 points. Senior Kennedy Miller contributed a career-high 14 points, with four perimeter treys. Makayla Herrera (7) and Maeve McCormick (5) rounded out the La Conner scoring. The Lady Braves secured the No. 1 seed in their half of the bi-district tourney. They played Northwest Christian of Lacey in first round post-season action, again in Coupeville, Tuesday, the site of all district action. The winner of that contest plays for the bi-district title and a state tournament berth tonight.

Boys Coupeville game
After a strong start, the boys fell 60-47. The teams were tied four times and had several lead changes in the second period before Coupeville forged a halftime 32-27 lead. A three-pointer by Braden Thomas and putback by C.J. Edwards brought the visitors to within 44-38 at the end of the third frame. But after that it

was all Coupeville. The Wolves pulled away in the final stanza, going on a 10-4 run over its first five minutes, a spurt interrupted only by a Thomas bucket and a Christian Fix layup. Coupeville led by 16 points, 60-44, before Edwards narrowed the final margin with a steal and layup. The Braves visited Auburn Adventist Feb. 14. La Conner lost 62-50 Dec. 8, but that was before Braden Thomas joined the

team, adding a scoring threat. The winner plays tomorrow for state tourney bid. The loser also plays Thursday for a second opportunity Feb. 18 for a spot in the state tournament bracket. The 16-team opening round of state action is scheduled Feb. 24 and 25. The round of 12 at the Spokane Arena tips off March 1.

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Jazz Walk in Anacortes

By Steven Dolmatz

The Manieri Jazz Endowment of the Anacortes Public Library presents six stages of live jazz March 3, 6-10 p.m. in tandem with the First Friday Art Walk. Seattle jazz vocalist Kelley Johnson is at the Rockfish Grill, 7-9 p.m. She performs with John Hanson, piano, Michael Glynn, bass and Victoria horn player Kelby MacNyr. Seattle vibraphonist Susan Pascal is at Pelican Bay Books, 7-9 p.m. Her band: Brian Monroney, guitar, bassist Jeff Johnson and drummer John Bishop. At the Brown Lantern, 7-10 p.m. is Deep River Blues Band, a three piece band featuring acoustic blues, ragtime and hokum from the 1920s to the 1950s. Hot club style jazz is presented by Dogtail

Swing at Johnny Picasso's, 6-8 p.m. Newton's Law Trio plays jazz fusion at Frida's Restaurant, 6:30-9 p.m. The Depot presents Anacortes High School jazz combos, 6-8 p.m. Admission is free at all six venues with volunteers at each site selling Jazz Walk buttons for \$10 to help defray the event costs. The venues are all clustered in the downtown core of Anacortes and are an easy walking distance from the galleries and from each other. The Manieri Jazz committee hopes that this can become an annual event. Come out and dig how Anacortes can sound like Manhattan's 52nd Street in the 1950s and check out the great art while strolling through town.

'Prelude to a Kiss opens Friday

"Prelude to a Kiss" opens Feb. 17 at the Lincoln Theatre in Mount Vernon, produced by the Theater Arts Guild. This romantic comedy begins with a chance encounter when Rita, a beautiful, bohemian, eccentric bartender, meets Peter, an attractive, bright, slightly geeky publisher. Despite her secret fear of the world and hesitancy to invest in joy, the two fall in love and marry. Then, at their wedding reception, another chance meeting between Rita and a frail Old Man completely alters the course of all three lives. "Prelude" is about how we show up in our lives and how we deal with fear and loss, the

Guild's press release states and calls it "sweet and funny, romantic and poignant – the course of this play is a profound statement on the fragility of life and how every minute matters." Craig Lucas wrote his play in 1990. It has been on Broadway. It is directed by Angela Marinella and includes jazz vocalist Joan Penney and her band. The trio will be on stage throughout the show and also perform a 30-minute pre-show. Shows are weekends through March 5. Tickets: 360-336-8955; lincolntheatre.org/live-stage-prelude-kiss. Source: Theater Arts Guild

Locals post 'Runaway Snow Geese'

The history of snow geese in the Skagit Valley is a tangled and complex story of unintended consequences from human intervention. In her story, "Washington's Runaway Snow Geese," for Biographic magazine, Rebecca Dzubak offers a detailed and

balanced view of the past and potential future for these winter visitors in our valley. The story is illustrated with images and video by photographer Nancy Crowell. View it at www.biographic.com/washingtons-runaway-snow-geese.

Clothing drive ends Friday

Drop off coats, socks, hats, gloves and shoes and women's supplies at the La Conner WaFd Bank through Feb. 17 for the Winter Daytime Shelter in Mount Vernon. There is a dire need for women's supplies.

The Winter Daytime Shelter is open and located at First United Methodist Church, 1607 East Division, Mount Vernon. The bank is at 620 Morris Street. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

A glimpse of a painter's life —

Bill Slater: An artist with a visionary eye

By Maggie Wilder

William Slater, known variously as Bill, Billy or Weeyum, lived among us here in the lower Skagit River area some forty years. He hailed from the other coast, an estuary that had been famously spoiled. Bill taught art for a while in New York City at Hunter College and said he hated it. He had befriended some abstract expressionists of that time and place and was scheduled to debut at one of the city's most illustrious galleries. And just as his star was rising, he bailed. After a good long meander through the United States, he found his way to a place his friend Tom Robbins described as "far from the centers of personal ambition."

If Bill's roots were in East Coast abstract expressionism, he transplanted that sensibility into the rich mud of the Skagit Valley. Here he became a much admired and influential painter in a community full of painters. His keenness for drawing allowed him to move in and out of many genres and subjects. He animated his landscape, figure and still life work with an energy that seemed to dance its way through his body.

Bill was a friend to some, and mentor to many. He didn't seek out students. We were attracted intuitively to his peculiarities and kindness. Some of us were invited for corncakes, his specialty, and stayed for lessons on life. He taught some, like myself, how to build a sturdy stretcher, one that was "happy" to support canvas and paint. He taught some to sail. There was no sailor more relaxed and attentive to weather and sea. He himself was a student of tides and current, and would often comment about the vagaries of personal relationships or fortune with "The tide comes in and the



RIDING THE TIDES OF HIS LIFE – Artist Bill Slater made the Skagit Valley home after escaping from New York City. He approached the complexity of sailing with the same thoughtful care he applied to his painting.

– Photo courtesy of Maggie Wilder

tide goes out."

Painting was not a discipline with William. He was in it for the joy. That said, he was a firm believer in housekeeping. He made a clear distinction between carelessness, which would bring unwanted chaos, and being carefree, which would attract the "Happy Accident." He obeyed impulse and, as he often said, his subjects were both everything he'd ever loved, and also the act of painting itself. He became reflexive, and conscious, painting and watching himself paint simultaneously.

A true visionary, he saw what the rest of us missed. Sometimes it was a beautiful accident of dripped paint, or a small plant that he'd guide a companion around, or sometimes it was a certain energy around a human being or animal. (I observed him once nimbly avoiding a confrontation with someone after he saw "sparks coming off their head"!)

What he had to teach was beyond art or seamanship. As the years pass since his death, I see William as a man whose life

was a message in itself. Gandhi's word for it was Satyagraha. Like many of his generation, he studied some Eastern principles: Wu Wei, Wabi Sabi, the way of the Tao, the I Ching. But unlike most, these once popular ideas became his very way of being in the world.

William lived enoughness. After years of poverty few of us could imagine, raising a son as a widower, I saw his star rise again, this time in the Pacific Northwest. His paintings found their way into major collections all over the country and internationally, too. He prospered, manifesting his dream of a magnificent sailboat named Satori, building a home on the edge of his beloved Salish Sea, all the while tending a life of sweet simplicity.

William made passage in July of 2007.

Portions of this essay are excerpted from "Far from the Centers of Personal Ambition: the Life and Paintings of William Slater."

Maggie Wilder is a La Conner artist, activist and writer.

Deception Pass ranks high on Instagram

New research has named Washington state park Deception Pass as the fourth most-Instagrammed state park in the U.S., with over 119,674 Instagram posts with the hashtag #deceptionpass.

Source: Tavel Lens

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More coffee, biscuits and potatoes in and around town

By Anne Basye

Morning coffee, afternoon tea and better St. Patrick's Day potatoes are now on tap in greater La Conner.

Cruser Coffee, 313 Morris Street, is a new source for your morning joe. Nicole Cruse owns and operates a stand with the same name on Memorial Highway near the Mexico Café.

Cruse likes the pace of her second location. "In the stand you only get two-minute interactions with people," she said. "They want quick, quick, quick get me out the door." Here, she is enjoying getting to know her customers.

"Not that I don't love my stand but I definitely like the café style way better," she said.

Acai bowls, a popular feature offered by previous occupant NW Fuel, are still on the menu. "Ours are a little different, because you can build your own bowl," notes Cruse.

She is looking forward to the tulip season, when she hopes tourists will stop in for coffee and offer some input on what her menu should feature.

The Wayfinder Market at the corner of First and Center streets is also looking for menu feedback.

Although trained in French



TEA TIME – Newly opened on South First Street, the Wayfinder offers a British afternoon tea. Make your reservations. Chef-owner Scott Dean, above, trained in French cooking, provides pastries served on a 3-tier tray in the high tea style.

– Photo by Marissa Conklin

cooking, chef-owner Scott Dean is offering a mix of comfort food with the occasional British afternoon tea.

Dean's inspiration for the

Wayfinder is the well-known New York specialty grocery Dean & DeLuca. To the breakfast biscuits and sandwiches, paninis, salads and soups already on the

menu, Dean wants to add top-quality jams, pastas and other culinary ingredients from makers around the country.

Eventually he wants to offer "lovely stuff, premade, to take home for dinner," he said.

Not yet, though. Already, the Wayfinder is a 7-day-a-week job. To keep the restaurant sustainable, he's adding new items slowly.

Co-owner of Pac Northwesty, Dean is leaning on partner Rich Murphy's expertise in social media to help find customers.

"Good food fast" is my slogan," he said. "I'm really glad to be here and hope to be embraced by the community and be a member of it."

New potato storage shed

John Thulen of Pioneer Potatoes isn't opening a new restaurant, but he's investing in a new way of storing potatoes that is better for his spuds.

Instead of storing potatoes in 13-foot piles inside or sometimes outside their potato sheds, Thulen is moving to a European-style bin storage system. The new 9,800-square foot potato storage building at La Conner Whitney and Downey roads accommodates this model.

Building air is forced down through bins rather than up from the floor through piles.

There is plenty of room for new equipment from the Netherlands that fills each bin with up to 3,000 pounds of potatoes.

The bin system offers many advantages. Tall piles of loose potatoes can pressure-bruise the potatoes on the bottom. By relieving this pressure, bins let potatoes be stored longer and in better shape. That is good news around St. Patrick's Day, which brings a nice sales bump.

It's also easier to retrieve a particular potato type in the bin system.

Most important, the system prevents rot. "We can store potatoes by the fields they are grown in," Thulen said. "When we mix potatoes from several fields, one 'bad apple' can rot the whole pile."

The previous building had more square feet but was shorter. The new one has fewer square feet but is taller.

"When you can't back your tractors in anymore, it becomes a big space with not a lot of things you can put into it," said Thulen.

"On this site, my father had that pickle plant and my grandfather one of the pea stacks and stationary viner and before that my great-grandfather had cattle.

"I like to think we're adapting, but we're still here."

Historic La Conner Civic Garden Club continues to cultivate good works

By Bill Reynolds

Before there was a Skagit Valley Tulip Festival, there was a La Conner Tulip Show.

And before the tulip show here, there was a La Conner Rose Show.

Plus a fall dahlia show.

All because, as the late Philena Dunlap noted 40 years ago this August, La Conner has long had the good fortune of having "a group of women who were dedicated in their desire to work together for the benefit of all in the town they loved."

That tradition took root with the founding in 1909 of the Civic Improvement Club of La Conner, Dunlap explained in a profile in a "Making La Conner Go" series run in the Channel Town Press newspaper in the early 1980s.

It is a tradition – a proud one, indeed – that endures to this very day through the good works of the entity formed when in 1954 the Civic Improvement Club merged with the La Conner Garden Club.

The now named La Conner Civic Garden Club still meets regularly in its landmark Second Street building, originally a Grange Hall and territorial court-

house and today a popular venue for meetings, weddings and all types of public gatherings.

"The organization continues to work on civic projects, providing food for the Pioneer Picnic, maintaining the Butterfly Garden at the Civic Garden Club Building, providing educational seminars and selling wreaths to town businesses," club president Kim Good Rubenstein told the Weekly News.

The club – whose roster includes endeared 104-year-old poet Joyce Johnson, an active member since the 1954 merger – remains a vital link between the town's past and present.

"I think I was struck by the generational history of our members," Rubenstein said upon reflection, "and the opportunity for new members of our community to join the club and become involved in our activities."

Its mission has always been both a product of and purposeful response to the times.

That goes back to the founding of the Civic Improvement Club, whose constitution and by-laws were signed by nearly 70 women.

"An immediate effort," Dunlap, a revered La Conner teacher who joined the CIC in 1924, said nearly 60 years later, "was made to form sub-groups to assume the responsibility of cleaning up different sections of town.

"Plans were made," Dunlap learned from tireless research of the club's minutes, "to hire boys to pack rubbish at a wage of three sacks for a nickel or 15 cents an hour. The decision was also made to have a delegation visit the Town Council to urge that livestock be kept off the town streets."

With the town clean-up well under way, the club decided to sponsor a spring rose show, said Dunlap.

"It became the first of many in the years that followed," she

reported, "and the La Conner Rose Show became well known to many rose lovers in the area."

More such events blossomed thereafter.

"A dahlia show in the fall," said Dunlap, "began a tradition of fall flower shows which grew to include garden produce and children's sections."

The flower shows were dropped during World War I and according to CIC records the club nearly dissolved but managed to lend support to the Red Cross and invest in Liberty Bonds.

After the war ended, the club resumed its local projects, including procurement of benches and picnic tables at Pioneer Park. CIC members also endorsed sponsorship of a Parent-Teacher Association and installation of highway signs in the La Conner area. By 1925, the club had secured the iconic building on the bluff overlooking town as its meeting place.

"Work on the building became a long-time continuing responsibility," Dunlap wrote in a formal history of the La Conner Civic Garden Club, "with rummage sales and dinner parties given to finance the new foundation and the work on the floor. Construction of the kitchen and restrooms were big projects assumed after the purchase of the building."

The 1930s saw the CIC serve meals at two major annual events – the La Conner Alumni Banquet and Skagit County Pioneer Association Picnic.

In 1951, the late Roberta Nelson proposed merging the CIC with the La Conner Garden Club, which had been founded the previous year and met at the Planter Hotel. Nelson credited Planter owner Olga Fahlen, a member of the Garden Club, with having successfully lobbied for the consolidation.

"She suggested," Nelson said in a two-page written account,

"that the two clubs merge to form one club that will work toward the civic good of the community."

Prior to the formal merger, the two clubs had reached agreement to jointly sponsor spring tulip shows in La Conner.

Those shows drew thousands to the old La Conner High School gymnasium, which had been constructed with volunteer labor in 1948 and garnered statewide publicity and recognition. Renowned artist Laurie Wells painted large murals, developed waterfalls and pools and brought in trees and wildflowers – transforming the gym into what Dunlap termed a "natural wonderland."

"The show," wrote Dunlap, "would not have been possible without the wonderful cooperation of the local tulip growers who picked their thousands of choice flowers and brought them in to the gymnasium. The show also required the hard labor of club members who prepared the display beds. This was an effort which required loads of sawdust and large quantities of sword ferns.

"Moss gatherers," she added, "went far and near to collect moss to cover the sawdust and give the beautiful woody look that added so much to the beauty of the shows."

The tulip shows in La Conner continued into the early 1970s, ending their run not long after Wells' retirement.

The Civic Garden Club shifted gears and through ensuing generations has remained an active

and productive organization, perhaps most visible in its role serving the barbecue salmon luncheon at the Pioneer Picnic each August.

The club looks forward to making yet more history while cherishing its time-honored role in having helped define La Conner's heritage.

Rubenstein is hoping to further chronicle that legacy.

"I've loved reading about all the past club activity," said Rubenstein, who has served as president of the Skagit County Pioneer Association. "I'm thinking of compiling the information into a book about the history of the club."

For many locals, that project would qualify as must reading.

Energy

■ ■ ■ (from page 2)

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Disney

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

done so much. I'm going to try to cover as much as I can."

Abrams was part of numerous iconic productions during the Golden Age of Hollywood animation, from 1955-1970.

"I worked on Bugs Bunny, Mr. Magoo, The Jetsons," said Abrams. "Good God, I was able to do pretty much everything. I taught and lectured at several places."

Indeed, while in California, Abrams expanded his resume by completing courses in advertising art design, cinematography and film editing, earning a teaching credential from UCLA.

He even illustrated an album cover for the brilliant but ultimately disgraced record producer Phil Spector, who would die in prison, a convicted murderer.

During his La Conner years, Abrams – who shares an apartment here with his aptly named black-and-white cat Sylvester – has ventured into painting, equally comfortable with oils, watercolors or acrylics.

A favorite subject for his easels has been the several species of birds whose flyways take them over La Conner.

Rarely – if ever – has there been a dull moment for Abrams, reminiscing on a career path that took him to the major studios and college lecture halls and membership in the Academy

of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

And now to the new La Conner Swinomish Library, where for an hour next week he will be a treasured walking, talking addition to the reference section.

While much of his talk will address personal history, those in attendance are sure to recognize that Abrams has always been ahead of the times. Long before the mantra, 'work smarter, not harder' became a workplace staple, Abrams was living it.

"All I ever wanted to do was draw," he explained, "I can honestly say that I got paid extremely well for not working a day in my life."

County holding Public Health hearing

The Skagit County Board of Health holds a public hearing for revisions of the Public Health Schedule of Charges 1 p.m. Feb. 23 in the commissioners hearing room. The public can give comment in person or by email, mail or hand delivery.

Proposed revisions to the Schedule of Charges more closely reflect the actual costs for services such as permitting and inspecting food service establishments, living environment facilities, on-site septic systems, drinking water systems and other

fees. The implementation date is tentatively April 1, 2023 and could affect all permit holders, licenses and applicants these regulated programs.

Email comments to EH@co.skagit.wa.us. Mail or bring comments to Skagit County Public Health, 700 South Second Street, #301, Mount Vernon, WA 98273. Identify comments as "Revised Schedule of Charges, Board of Health." Deadline is Feb. 22.

Information: 360 416-1500.

Residents

■ ■ ■ (from page 3)

lauded the town council communications committee for having last month's forum at the Retirement Inn. He said it and Harbor Villa represent about 10% of the town's population.

Eills handed out survey forms to attendees which in part asked them to identify their preferred means of obtaining information. She took suggestions from

Talman and others that a bulleted "What's New" entry be included on the Town website and that on-site notices of permit applications be posted on larger, more easily seen signs.

Resident Maggie Wilder requested that key issues and topics be publicized well in advance of meetings and hearings, perhaps with a single paragraph narrative in the Weekly News as well as an official legal notice.

Making greater use of the kiosks in town to share public

service announcements was also mentioned.

Davolio noted discussions are under way between the Town, school district and other entities for the installation of a new community reader board to replace the one that was taken down at Sixth and Morris streets.

He thanked folks for missing a night of national politics on TV.

The Planning Commission will meet Feb. 21 and meet with the town council Feb. 28.

Conway

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

Stopping by the Conway 76 station for a piece of candy, the Talmans found the only public notice facing Highway 534 had apparently blown away. A second, by the coffee stand, was obscured by cars waiting in line for beverages.

Talman passed the information on to the county, which fixed the signs and added a third one.

Overall, her legwork

uncovered important information for the many residents objecting to the proposed sign.

"That coming home view, as everyone calls it, is precious to most of us who live in Skagit County, so we're glad that people are looking into what is allowed in Scenic Byways," said Molly Doran, executive director of the Skagit Land Trust, which has gotten many calls from citizens concerned about the billboard.

About her work, Talman is humble.

"I like sleuthing," she said.

Center

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

and submitted permits authorizing development. Lowell noted that courts have ruled unrecorded dedications and liens are unenforceable and not binding. He also recognized that a contract rezone creates "different types of documents/encumbrances" but ruled the property purchasers need to "rely on record title are substantially similar."

Lowell however, did not reference in his decision, nor did planner Davolio in his administrative decision, the analysis that the contract rezone is valid because the 1986 town council took legislative action in passing an ordinance and later made a legislative amendment to the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Lowell and Davolio did not reference the case made for Aldrich and Talman by their lawyer, David Bricklin.

Their October appeal points out that "although the private agreement regarding the Contract Rezone was not recorded and may not be enforceable against subsequent purchasers of the property who lacked notice of the agreement, the legislative amendment of the Comp Plan and Comp Plan Map continues in full force and effect as do any other legislative amendments to the Town's Comp Plan and Uniform Development Code."

Bricklin pointed out the CUP applied for is, "subject to all of the zoning laws, including the contract rezone, in effect when the Town makes its decision on the application."

His analysis is that property

owners do not need to have notice of zoning laws to be subject to them.

Lowell last week made no mention of the exhibits and documents in the 52 page appeal. Lowell's decision, in its entirety, reads: "Based on the findings of fact and conclusion of law contained herein it is the decision of the Hearing Examiner to deny the appeal and affirm the Town's Administrative Determination."

Talman's untypically brief response was "I was very disappointed in the hearing examiner response. He didn't respond to any of the points in our appeal. I have no idea why that response took so long, given that there wasn't much to it."

Aldrich wrote: "I would like to add a thank you to the many people who wrote letters, went to meetings and hearings and helped with financing our

efforts. We will be talking to them and asking for advice."

The town's municipal code provides for an appeal to Skagit County Superior Court within 21 days by any party of record. A favorable ruling by that Court could reverse the hearing examiner's decision or return the case to Lowell to rule on issues remanded by the Court. The residents' group is considering that option. Residents are weighing the filing and legal costs and time investment of this action.

More than one lawyer has pointed out that a hearing examiner works for a municipality and works to protect the municipality. Others have suggested that Town of La Conner elected officials and staff are more concerned about a lawsuit from Atkinson, the developer, for an adverse ruling.

Atkinson did not reply to a

request for comment. Mayor Ramon Hayes responded: "The questions being answered are legal ones. As such, the town's position is neutral and our only desire is to ensure the law is followed. It is clear that significant deficiencies occurred in the 1980s. That is why, for the sake of the entire community, the town engaged a law firm that specializes in municipal law to render an unbiased opinion based on a comprehensive review of the file."

Bricklin wrote in his appeal "The documentation available on the town website is enormous (a thousand pages or more)."

There is a page on the Town website dedicated to the 306 Center Street Project. Search "Center Street" to find it.

Search the Weekly News website for articles dating to late 2021.

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February 21

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LEGAL NOTICES

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF KING ESTATE OF JOHN E. LASTELIC, Deceased. NO. 21-4-02567-0SEA NOTICE OF HEARING PETITION FOR DISTRIBUTION CLERK'S ACTION REQUIRED

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO ALL INTERESTED IN THE ABOVE ESTATE THAT:

(1) Benedict J. Cooley, as Personal Representative (PR) of the above estate has filed with the clerk of the above court:

The Final Account and Petition for Distribution of the estate, requesting the court to settle the final account, distribute the property of the estate to the heirs or persons entitled thereto, and discharge the PR;

(2) The Final Account and Petition for Distribution will be heard in the Ex Parte Department, Room W325 of the King County Superior Court at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, the 22nd day of March, 2023, at which time and place any person interested in the estate may appear and file objections to and contest the petition and/or final account.

Date of Publication: Feb. 15, 2023

Benedict J. Cooley, Personal Representative

Sarah E. Smith, Attorney at Law P. O. Box 70567 Seattle, Washington 98127-0567

Published in the La Conner Weekly News Feb. 15, 2023.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON IN AND FOR WHATCOM COUNTY

In re the Estate of: PAUL Z. SILVA, Deceased. Cause No. 23-4-00142-37 NOTICE TO CREDITORS RCW 11.40.030

The Administrator named below has been appointed and has qualified as Administrator of this estate. Any person having a claim against the decedent must, before the time the claim would be barred by any otherwise applicable statute of limitations, present the claim in the manner as provided in RCW 11.40.070 by serving on or mailing to the administrator or the administrator's attorney at the address stated below a copy of the claim and filing the original of the claim with the court in which the probated proceedings were commenced. The claim must be presented within the later of: (1) thirty days after the administrator served or mailed the notice to the creditor as provided under RCW 11.40.020(1)(c); or (2) four months after the date of first publication of the notice. If the claim is not presented within this time frame, the claim is forever barred, except as otherwise provided in RCW 11.40.051 AND 11.40.060. This bar is effective as to claims against both the decedent's probate and nonprobate assets.

Date of First Publication: February 15th, 2023

Name of Administrator: JESSICA CAUGHLIN

Attorneys for Administrator: David M. Neubeck, WSBA #31321

Sara LC Hulford, WSBA #52098

Todd L. Sliva, WSBA #54298

Address for Mailing or Service: Elder Law Offices of Meyers, Neubeck & Hulford, P.S. 2828 Northwest Avenue Bellingham WA 98225-2335

Telephone: (360) 647-8846

Facsimile: (360) 647-8854

Published in the La Conner Weekly News Feb. 15, 22, March 1, 2023.

SUPERIOR COURT OF WASHINGTON FOR SKAGIT COUNTY No. 23-4-00075-29 PROBATE NOTICE TO CREDITORS (RCW 11.40.030)

In the Matter of the Estate of Ralph G. Horton, Deceased.

The personal representative named below has been appointed as personal representative of this estate. Any person having claim against the decedent must, before the time the claim would be barred by any otherwise applicable statute of limitations, present the claim in the manner as provided in RCW 11.40.070 by serving on or mailing to the personal representative or the personal representative's attorney at the address stated below, a copy of the claim and filing the original of the claim with the court in which the probate proceedings

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Complete Events Calendar on laconnerweeklynews.com

ART & THEATRE

Anacortes Community Theatre. 918 M Ave, Anacortes. 360-293-6829. acttheatre.com.

As You Like It. Through Feb. 25, Thurs-Sat 7:30 p.m. and Sun 2 p.m. Purchase tickets online.

Gallery W. 101 N 1st St, La Conner. 360-265-2374. galleryw.art

Exhibit: "Connected" featuring Sherry Ying Ruden. Through Feb. 26.

Museum of Northwest Art. monamuseum.org, 360-466-4446.

Teen Art Club. Every Friday, 3-5 p.m. Free for grades 6-12. Pizza, snacks and art supplies are provided.

LIBRARIES

La Conner Swinomish Library. 520 Morris St, La Conner. 360-466-3352. lclib.wa.us. Open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday.

Storytime. Every Friday at 11 a.m.

Anacortes Public Library. 360-299-8067, CityOfAnacortes.org. 1220 10th St, Anacortes.

Tech Help. Every weekday at library front desk. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Drop-in for hands-on help.

Yoga at the Library. Every first and third Saturday, 9 a.m. Great for beginners. Bring your own yoga mat.

Mount Vernon Public Library. 360-336-6209, mountvernonwa.gov. 315 Snoqualmie St, Mount Vernon.

Virtual Reality. Every Saturday 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Must be 18 or older.

Baby Storytime. Every Friday 10:30-11 a.m.

MUSEUM EXHIBITS

Museum of Northwest Art. Open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. monamuseum.org, 360-466-4446.

Exhibit: Permanent Immigrant, Italo Scanga in the Dale and Leslie Chihuly Collection. Feb 18-May 14.

Exhibit: Geppetto's Children, Italo Scanga at Pilchuck Glass School. Feb 18-May 14.

Pacific Northwest Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum. Wed-Sun, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. qfamuseum.org, 360-466-4288. 703 S Second St, La Conner.

Exhibit: Birds of a Fiber. International and national bird themed quilts and fiber art pieces. Through Feb. 26.

Exhibit: Our Voices in Fiber. African American quilters today. Through Feb. 26.

Exhibit: Bedtime Stitches. Through April 30.

Skagit County Historical Museum. 360-466-3365 or skagitcounty.net/museum.

Hours: Thurs-Sun 11 a.m-4 p.m. *Exhibit: Quilt Until You Wilt.* Through June 2023. Design your own paper quilts.

MUSIC

Shelter Bay Chorus. Meet every Thursday.

4:30-6:30 p.m., Shelter Bay Clubhouse. No auditions required, just a joy for singing. Rehearsals are resuming for Spring Concert. Questions, call Joan 360-941-7507.

Lincoln Theatre. 712 S 1st St, Mount Vernon. 360-336-8955. lincoltheatre.org.

Mark Hummel's Blues Harmonica Blowout. Feb. 20, 7:30 p.m.

MEETINGS

Town of La Conner 204 Douglas St, La Conner. 360-466-3125. Zoom info @ TownofLaConner.org/calendar.

Planning Commission. Feb. 21, 6 p.m. at Maple Hall.

La Conner School District 305 N 6th St, La Conner. 360-466-4113. lcsd.wednet.edu.

School Board. Feb. 27, 5 p.m. at District Office Board Room.

Skagit Conservation District 2021 E. College Way #203, Mt. Vernon. 360-428-4313. Zoom info @ skagitcd.org.

Board meetings. Every fourth Wednesday 7:30-9 a.m.

Rotary Club of La Conner. laconnerrotary.org. Meetings Monday, 6-7 p.m. at the Farmhouse restaurant - optional dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Skagit Cemetery District One.

Regular meetings. Every second Thursday, 5 p.m. at Lori Buher's home, 17604 Valentine Rd., Mount Vernon.

Little Mountain Gamblers. *Gamblers Anonymous.* Every Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. at Senior Center in Mount Vernon. 1401 Cleveland Ave.

SERVICE & VOLUNTEER

La Conner Sunrise Food Bank. Food distribution every Monday from 2:30-5 p.m. 602 S. 3rd St., La Conner. 360-488-3878. laconnerfoodbank.com.

Swinomish Helping Hands Food Bank. Food distribution every Thursday from 2-5 p.m. Non-essentials every first Thursday. 17444 Snee Oosh Rd, La Conner. 360-856-2211. helpinghandsfoodbank.org.

Skagit Valley Humane Society. 18841 Kelleher Rd, Burlington. 360-757-0445. skagithumane.org. Find volunteer/donation opportunities online.



By Patricia Aqimuk Paul, Esq., Food Editor.

Rye Berries

These are cooked in the Instant Pot. A wholesome side dish. A pound of rye berries was included in a recent CSA box from Boldly Grown Farms. You can cook these on the stove top; it just takes longer. Once cooked, they remind me of super sized, chewy brown rice.

Ingredients

- Rye berries, 1 cup
- Olive oil, 1 tbsp
- Water, 4 cups
- Salt, to taste

Preparation

Use the sauté mode of the Instant Pot. Add the olive oil and rye berries. Stir occasionally. The rye berries will begin to pop. Cancel sauté mode. Carefully add 4 cups of water. Be mindful of the hot steam that will rise by adding the water. Secure the lid and close the steam release. Set on high pressure for 25 minutes. Allow to naturally release for 20 minutes. Then carefully turn the steam release, being careful that the steam is released away from you. Remove the lid, opening it away from you. Drain the rye berries through a colander and serve, lightly salted.

AqimuksKitchen@outlook.com

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TWO MOONS GALLERY. Our 27th Anniversary Sale begins today! Everything is at least 20% off. Many of your favorites are now 30%-50% off. Spring is around the corner and we have great deals in store for you! Let's all shop local and celebrate. 620 S. First St, La Conner.

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LEGAL NOTICES

were commenced. The claim must be presented within the later of: (1) Thirty days after the personal representative served or mailed the notice to the creditor as provided under RCW 11.40.020(1)(c); or (2) four months after the date of first publication of the notice. If the claim is not presented within this time frame, the claim is forever barred, except as otherwise provided in RCW 11.40.051 and 11.40.060. This bar is effective as to claims against both the decedent's probate and non-probate assets.

Date of first publication: Feb. 15, 2023

Russell L. Horton Personal Representative SKAGIT LAW GROUP, PLLC

MEGAN OTIS MASON-HOLDER, WSBA #29495

Attorneys for Personal Representative P.O. Box 336/227 Freeway Drive, Suite B Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Published in the La Conner Weekly News Feb. 15, 22, March 1, 2023.

AGENDA

Meeting Notice. Town Of La Conner Planning Commission Tuesday, February 21st, 2023 6:00 p.m. Location: Lower Maple Center 104 Commercial St, La Conner. And by Zoom Information below and on the Town website

1. Convene
2. Public Comment (Topics not otherwise on the Agenda) – Time Limit 3 Minutes
3. Minutes
4. Old Business
 - Approve minutes from the Jan. 17, 2023 meeting
 - Approve minutes from the Feb. 7, 2023 meeting
5. New Business
 - Status Report: 306 Center Street
 - Impact Fee Updates
6. Closing Comments
 - Staff presentation on the first Community Round Table
 - Staff report on Historic Design Review application for the Skagit County Historical Society
7. Meeting ID: 884 2592 7380
8. Passcode: QE4zaP

Super Crossword **ODD BIRDS**

- ACROSS**
- 1 Soprano's last note, perhaps
 - 6 Jordanians, e.g.
 - 11 Oscar winner Rockwell
 - 14 Mazda model
 - 19 NBA Hall of Famer — Thomas
 - 20 Tanzanian national park
 - 22 "Burnt" or "raw" color
 - 23 Bird from Richmond?
 - 25 Trident, e.g.
 - 26 Winter D.C. hrs.
 - 27 Fermented honey drink
 - 28 Fashion's Oscar de la —
 - 29 Patron associated with a "fire"
 - 30 A handful of
 - 31 Bird partially composed of element #56?
 - 33 In less peril
 - 36 Seek the affection of
 - 38 Archery asset
 - 39 Solo of sci-fi
 - 40 Bird that always keeps to itself?
 - 43 Mob member
 - 48 Adept
 - 49 "Entertaining Mr. Sloane" playwright Joe
 - 50 "Atlantic City" director Louis
 - 52 Prefix with 33-Down
 - 53 Fellow soldier
 - 55 Bird that travels to and from work?
 - 58 Notable time
 - 59 Potentially offensive, in brief
 - 62 El — (certain current)
 - 63 Stand for art
 - 64 Bird wearing a hard hat?
 - 69 Far — eye can see
 - 71 Ending for switch
 - 72 Groove for a letter-shaped bolt
 - 73 Cell material
 - 76 Bird nesting in winter precipitation?
 - 80 Causes to be ashamed
 - 82 Finnish coin
 - 83 Not worth — of beans
 - 84 Not one's best effort, in sports lingo
 - 87 Some small batteries
 - 88 In — (while not present at the event)
 - 90 Bird performing under the big top?
 - 92 Abbr. of fair hiring
 - 93 Store clerk on "The Simpsons"
 - 95 Business agt.
 - 96 Peels the skin off of
 - 97 Bird that plays bebop?
 - 103 Real admirer
 - 104 German subs
 - 105 Absorb a loss
 - 106 "Sure, sign me up!"
 - 108 The Gem State: Abbr.
 - 111 Mournful song
 - 112 Bird living in the Sistine Chapel?
 - 115 Being tried, as a case
 - 116 Movies' main stories
 - 117 Rub down
 - 118 Chairs, e.g.
 - 119 Waco-to-Austin dir.
 - 120 Cary of "Saw"
 - 121 Alternative to Valium
- DOWN**
- 1 Bees' place
 - 2 Horned Egyptian goddess
 - 3 Surrounded with a belt
 - 4 Witch
 - 5 Mythological fire-breather
 - 6 Korea's place
 - 7 Peruse
 - 8 Brow's shape
 - 9 Catcher Yogi
 - 10 Be disdainful of
 - 11 Nose partition
 - 12 Elite squad
 - 13 1986-2001 Earth orbiter
 - 14 Feral horse
 - 15 Drive along
 - 16 "That rings —" in Mexico
 - 18 Symbol on a one-way sign
 - 21 Wish-fulfilling spirits
 - 24 Innovative
 - 29 River in a Foster tune
 - 30 Flu symptom
 - 31 — ohic (fashion style)
 - 32 Will, biblically
 - 33 Part of NASA
 - 34 Shady shelter
 - 35 Movie cast members
 - 36 Failed to be
 - 37 Mo. in fall
 - 41 Commotions
 - 42 Extremely old: Abbr.
 - 43 Particles believed to bind quarks together
 - 44 Kitchen wrap
 - 45 Result of backcombing
 - 46 Toledo's lake
 - 47 Pack of coins
 - 50 2,002, in Roman numerals
 - 51 Comeback to "Are too!"
 - 54 Two wives of Henry VIII
 - 56 En pointe, in ballet
 - 57 Ranch in Ferber's "Giant"
 - 60 1990-2019 Toyota minivan brand
 - 61 Moisturizer brand
 - 65 Melodramatic cry of sorrow
 - 66 Relative of a univ.
 - 67 Refuse to talk
 - 68 Kimonos, e.g.
 - 69 Out of port
 - 70 Rebuff rudely
 - 74 Writer Zora — Hurston
 - 75 Aides: Abbr.
 - 77 Spiteful types
 - 78 Buckeye State sch.
 - 79 Slugging stat
 - 81 The Evil One
 - 85 Mutt's threat
 - 86 Pitching star
 - 89 Fishers with seines, say
 - 90 Dead skin at the base of a fingernail
 - 91 Lycra, e.g.
 - 93 "Trainwreck" director Judd
 - 94 Word before jury or larceny
 - 97 Betrayer of Jesus
 - 98 "Take — out of crime!"
 - 99 — the Greek
 - 100 Big name in restaurant guides
 - 101 Repasts
 - 102 Web vending
 - 103 Pine's cousin
 - 106 Frozen drink treat
 - 107 Widespread
 - 108 Privy to
 - 109 Arp's art
 - 110 Author Haley
 - 112 #2 execs
 - 113 Dir. 135 degrees from 119-Across
 - 114 Author Levin

Love Puzzles!

See our new online puzzle page laconnerweeklynews.com/puzzles

POLICE BLOTTER

SKAGIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Monday, February 6
12:22 p.m.: Car crash – A truck crashed into the front of a car when it pulled out into the front of it. The vehicle owners exchanged insurance information with the assistance of law enforcement. There were no injuries reported. Maple Ave., La Conner.

3:53 p.m.: Dog left in car – Report of a dog left in a vehicle parked on the street. Shortly after the report the owner of the vehicle got into the car and left. Morris St., La Conner.

Tuesday, February 7
5:21 a.m.: Noise complaint – A loud truck was reported driving in the area. Morris St., La Conner.

Wednesday, February 8
1:13 p.m.: ATV riders on trail – Two ATV riders were riding on the Padilla Bay Trail and in the fields. The riders were contacted by Sheriff's deputies and reminded of the rules for the trail and the hazards they could create with trail walkers.

The riders' parents were contacted who advised they would handle the situation. Bay View Edison Rd., Bay View.

4:10 p.m.: Suspicious yelling – Report of subjects yelling and causing a noise disturbance around the public restrooms. The area was checked by law enforcement and the subjects were not located. Morris St., La Conner.

Friday, February 10
1:59 p.m.: Horse on the loose – Skagit 911 received a call of a horse loose on the railroad tracks. Sheriff's deputies checked around for the horse and it was not located. La Conner Whitney Rd., Greater La Conner.

Saturday, February 11
1:59 p.m.: Animals in the road – Goats and sheep were reported in the road. The animals moved along on their own. Young/La Conner Whitney Rds., La Conner.



ALL HANDS WERE NEEDED TO PULL THIS BOAT OUT – The saga of the sunken boat, abandoned at a La Conner channel float, ended with Town public works staff Kevin Palaniuk, Todd Park and Mannie Pena, from left, bringing it ashore at the town boat lunch Feb. 10. Chip Sherman and Director Brian Lease also assisted. – Photo by Ken Stern

Peace in Ukraine prayer service

A Prayer Service for Peace in the Ukraine will be at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 404 Douglas Street, La Conner, at 5 p.m. Sunday, March 5. Father Tom McMichael will host the evening, and Pastor

Marcella Baker from La Conner United Methodist Church will participate as well. Please join us!

Source: Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Former teacher Jim Frey remembered as motivator

By Bill Reynolds

Blessed with a broad skill set and diverse interests, the late Jim Frey, who served La Conner Schools for more than a decade as a teacher, coach, counselor and principal, is most remembered for having brought out the best in others.

He did so, according to those who knew him well, not only by unflinchingly putting service above self-interest but doing so with a blend of compassion, encouragement and humor that his strong faith assured never faltered regardless of circumstances.

Frey, who died Jan. 30 at age 83, was by nature a motivator.

His caring approach produced success in La Conner's classrooms and on its athletic fields and later through the consulting work and business ventures he engaged in after leaving public education.

La Conner area residents of a certain age have told the Weekly News they recall Frey mostly for the enduring impact he had during their student years, delivering lessons and guidance to last a lifetime.

"Jim saw potential in his students," recalled Rev. Don Robinson, whom Frey – then the Braves' head football coach – recruited as one of the team's managers.

"An injury to my hip the year before precluded me from ever playing the game," Robinson said, "but Jim gave me a place on the team. Like so many other students, Jim took an interest in me, welcomed and encouraged me."

For Robinson, the timing could not have been better. That 1968 team went undefeated and finished the season ranked No. 4 among the state's Class B programs. Many consider it the best football team in school history.

"At the end of that undefeated season, at the awards banquet," Robinson said, "I was given the same mug with my name on it that the other players received. I belonged. Jim gave me a place."

Robinson credits Frey, who was active in various Baptist ministries and later launched a construction firm, with laying the foundation for his becoming a pastor.

"I remember Jim as a mentor and friend," said Robinson. "His investment and involvement in my life helped prepare me for my own vocation."

Reggie Nelson, who was to follow Frey into education, likewise found him instrumental. "He was a great role model," Nelson said of Frey. "He treated us with respect and we respected him in return. I often thought about Jim during my own teaching and coaching career. Little lessons I learned on how to treat my students and athletes certainly were reflections of many teachers and coaches I had myself, but true of coach Frey in particular."

"I made my choice to go into education," said Nelson, "because of the impact he had on me at La Conner High School. His Christian witness to everyone he met was one of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

Tom Zimmerman, who quarterbacked the unbeaten 1968 La Conner football team, remembered Frey as an innovator.

"Coach Frey liked to have fun," said Zimmerman, who recently retired after a long run with Dunlap Towing. "He was always putting in trick plays."

One of those, which worked beautifully against Granite Falls – a foe that had previously given La Conner fits – was the lonely end play. Zimmerman said Frey set the play up while making multiple substitutions, having one player stand just in-bounds while appearing to be on the sidelines. He would be wide open for a Zimmerman pass once the ball was snapped.

"That play was made illegal the next year," Zimmerman quipped.

Zimmerman's teammate, David Hedlin, now a leading figure in Skagit County agriculture, said he was among those who benefited from Frey's knack for player development.

"He had a pretty profound effect on my life in high school," said Hedlin, who would go on to serve as a school board member. "I went from being a clumsy farm kid to a decent tackle my senior year. That had a lot to do with Jim. He knew how to bring out the best in people."

Hedlin said Frey engineered a remarkable turnaround for the Braves, taking a team that struggled mightily in 1967 and guiding it to an unblemished mark (other than one tie) a year later.

Frey employed a similar innovative game plan in the classroom, where he shunned the traditional "read the chapter, answer the questions at the end" teaching model. He taught a law class in the early 1970s without using a textbook. Instead, he read aloud and assigned students to analyze Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham jail" and arranged regular field trips to view courtroom trials in Skagit, Snohomish and King counties.

"The kids who had Jim Frey in school," said his former school colleague Maureen Harlan, "really appreciated him."

Frey connected with students beyond school walls, too. He and Kay, his wife of more than 60 years, opened their Pleasant Ridge home – later to become the Downey House B&B they operated as innkeepers for nearly a decade – to senior classes for breakfasts the morning after the high school commencement exercises. Those breakfasts were the last time class members would be together before going their separate ways.

As a contractor and innkeeper, Frey remained committed to positive outcomes for students and young adults. He and Harlan joined others in speaking to groups far and wide on the merits of education and leadership related topics.

"During his presentations, when he would start talking about his grandkids, he would get teary," Harlan said. "He had a hard time making it through those."

Tall, strong and athletic, Frey never shied from showing emotion.

"He had a very positive outlook on life and wasn't afraid to laugh and smile," Nelson said. "I remember his smile would fill up his entire face."

Memories of that smile have in turn continued to bring smiles to those Frey taught and coached.

"He was so very positive in every interaction," stressed Nelson. "It's not always possible to feel totally at ease and safe around every adult we counter as a young person, but Jim had that effect on me and many others."

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