



# MHS News Quarterly

Spring 2010 Volume 9, Issue 1



Admiral's House  
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## MHS HAPPENINGS

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## 2010 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> , 11:00am – 3:00pm  
Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup> , 6:00 – 8:00pm

Magnolia Public Library  
2801 – 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue West

**BOOK GIVEAWAY – FREE MEMBERSHIP**

## Growing Up in the Gilman Addition

by Jan Parent



Finishing the Great Northern Train Bridge, the Magnolia side looking toward Ballard.  
Circa 1913. Courtesy of Paul Dorpat.

During the 1950s when I was growing up, the playground for the children living in the Gilman Addition, the northern Kiwanis Ravine area of Magnolia, consisted of the Great Northern train bridge which was next to the Hiram Chittenden Locks and the open fields behind the old Children's Orthopedic Home for Crippled Children to the north and the heron rookery to the southeast.

The small beach below the train bridge was a place to spend time from spring to fall. We would grab our towels and head down the trails we had made by blazing them ourselves, knocking down the tall grasses, nettles and blackberries of the open fields that led down toward the train tracks and ended up by the train bridge. I lived on the 4500 block of 36th Avenue West. The trails were on 34th West. The street did not go through to Commodore Way so we made trails that led right down to the train tracks that led to the bridge.

The next challenge was a steep bank and we had to climb down the bank to Commodore Way. Between the overpass and the train bridge there were several trails leading in all directions. We used them all. Along the way we would sometimes pick blackberries and eat them on the way to swimming. The beach was sandy and when the tide went out, it was not that far out to the pilings of the bridge. I never swam out to the pilings, but a lot of the kids did and would climb up and daringly jump off.

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## Growing Up in the Gilman Addition (continued from page 1)

Terie and Patty Blanes and Lorraine Betzler were playmates with whom I spent most of my time. Girls mostly played pretend. We were visiting from “back east” and had made up names we called each other. We would climb on the rocks at the base of the concrete pilings that held up the bridge, swim and look for fish, shells, rocks or other interesting things we might find in the water or on the beach. My Mom and Dad would pick blackberries every summer down by the tracks so they cautioned us many times about the trains. We would put our ear down on the tracks to listen to see if the trains were coming. Then, if a rumbling could be ascertained we would head for the ditch along the tracks, out of harm’s way. Also, we had contests to see who could walk the farthest on the train rails before falling off which was great fun.

At times on our treks, the thick wild nettles that thrived in the ravine would sting us and we would look for horsetails to break off and rub on the itchy, burning bumps caused by accidentally rubbing against the nettles. After spending time in the water under the bridge we would often look for the best flat rocks to skip, seeing how many times they would bounce on the top of the water. We would then walk over to the Locks and watch the boats go through and check for salmon swimming back upstream.

The Locks have changed so much since I was a kid. There were only trails leading to them and there was not the viewing area for the fish ladders. We knew the fish were running because they would jump out of the water on their way upstream. There was a home between the bridge and the Locks, which are now the steps and Magnolia side parking lot. I still love to go to the Locks, but I drive now and use the parking lot.

The ravine was a large gully, all greenbelt, with a small stream running down the middle of it. We saw lots of birds and small animals. We also spent many hours in the heron rookery swinging on the rope swings that were built by other children living on the east side of the gully--share and share alike in those days. We would swing over the stream and see the surrounding area and it was the greatest feeling. Sometimes, we would have two or three kids swing together.

We used other children’s tree houses for play and spent hours exploring the numerous trails throughout the gully. We had no fears and spent many hours just having fun.



Children pose next to their garden patch at the Convalescent Home. University of WA Libraries, Special Collections Division, Children’s Orthopedic Hospital Photograph Collection, Seattle Negative #Coll. E16 15-1, Circa 1930s

We used the open fields behind the Children’s Orthopedic Home to play hide and seek, kick the can and “Cowboys and Indians”. When we played in the fields behind the Home for Crippled Children we saw their vegetable gardens and we looked in the windows and saw children in cribs and children with crutches and they just smiled back at us. Being young children it was hard to understand what was happening in that building. (See article in *Magnolia: Making More Memories “Another Place Called Home”* by Monica Wooton, pp. 115- 131)

Oh, what beautiful memories I have of playing in the great outdoors in the Kiwanis Ravine, part of Magnolia! Most of the area I played in was once wild is now housing – The Gillman Addition.

**NOTE:** Gus Melonas, Public Media Spokesperson for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad says in the 1950’s the Railroad was tolerant of kids, folks, and train-jumpers scurrying on and around the tracks. At that time, 30 trains about a mile long traveled noisily north and south over the Great Northern Bridge. Today, 40 trains a mile and a half long travel much more quickly, quietly and smoothly over the tracks and trespassing is expressly forbidden and a fine of \$500 is levied on anyone on Burlington Northern Property.

## MHS BOARD ELECTIONS

**We are happy to present our Board  
for 2010-2011:**

Monica Wooton, President  
Jan Parent, Secretary  
Dee St. George, Treasurer  
Roxanne Tillman, At-Large  
Dale Forbus Hogle, At-Large  
Luann Mitchell, At-Large

We would love to have more Board Members.  
If you can serve, email us through  
**Contact** at: [www.magnoliahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.magnoliahistoricalsociety.org)

**We have a lot of fun!**



**Monica Wooton**



**Jan Parent**



**Dee St. George**



**Roxanne Tillman**



**Dale Forbus Hogle**



**Luann Mitchell**

Stormy weather at the West Point Lighthouse.  
Photo by Ken Baxter. Courtesy of Virginia Baxter. Circa 1960.



### **MHS General Meeting** **Thursday, May 27, 6:30 – 9:00pm**

A joint meeting with the Queen Anne Historical Society  
will be held at the Seattle Church of Christ  
(formerly Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist),  
**2555 – 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue West on Queen Anne** (8<sup>th</sup> W. & W. Halladay)

The meeting will highlight properties of both communities:  
The West Point Lighthouse and Admiral's House on Magnolia and  
The Ankeny House and the Seattle Church of Christ on Queen Anne.

Mimi Sheridan, local historian and historical preservationist,  
will present old photos and interesting histories of the properties,  
their land making processes and preservation.

## Erickson's Pharmacy

by Monica Wooton

When I was t10, I always got my butter-rum lifesavers from Erickson's Pharmacy on Government Way. This traditional drugstore and soda fountain resided on the first curve in the small clump of shops where the remnants still reside: Fitness by Design, Robert's Cleaners and Carlton Park Realty still make up that little residential center. Erickson's was in the building that has since held Magnolia Mirror and Glass and the recently-departed martial arts center.

I remember the Lifesaver display. It was next to the cash register at the west end of the fountain counter. It had exact metal replicas of lifesaver packages that nestled a real roll and stored more above in long rows. When you took out your selection the whole row rolled forward filling in the gap. I loved the display.

Mr. Erickson was between nice and gruff, depending...on the day, the transaction, and his moods. It was rumored that he lost the function of one of his arms in "the war". He was the pharmacist, soda maker, and salesperson. He employed a staff that also included another pharmacist and his wife was usually on hand working on the inventory in back or dusting and re-arranging the shelves or making sales. He always wore an official and very white crisp medical shirt that added an air of authority.

I didn't really go there because of Mr. Erickson, he kinda scared me, but what I did go for was his inventory. It could take a good half an hour to take in the shelves of the unusual dime store type merchandise he carried.

I remember when I would get one dollar to buy a birthday present for a friend's upcoming party, Erickson's was where I went. Living at the north end of the valley it was more convenient than going to the Village and the selection was great! Knick-knacks, paper products, and unique novelties. My favorite selection was a small plastic case about the size of a deck of cards. It had a clear front connected to a black plastic back (classy!) that showcased the tiniest glass tubes each with a small droplet of real perfume: My Sin, Muguet de Bois, and Tweed were encapsulated in those tubes. It was a virtual sampler of perfumes of the 1950s. And, it came with a "map" that showed which little tube, marked with a colored dot at each end, was what perfume.

The neat trick to me was you carefully broke open the tiny glass sticks of perfume and got a day-long sampling of a sophisticated smell. I considered it the perfect birthday present for my girlfriends. And, it was often my selection coming in at just under a dollar. Looking back now I wonder what the Consumer Protection agency would think of such a lovely little idea encapsulated in such a potentially dangerous medium. But, at the time...no worries, just a nifty birthday present.

Coming from a family of 10 children, it was never really an option to spend the time or money at the fountain...I remember looking longingly at the black board with neat white letters of selections and thinking back now a BLT and a vanilla malt or cherry phosphate would have been nice!

Instead of the fountain fare, it was a more common lunch experience to head in the other direction toward the gate of Fort Lawton. On a sunny day we rode our bikes and carried a brown sack lunch of peanut butter and jelly or American cheese, mayo and a cucumber chip sandwich with a piece of fruit. We sometimes got a rock-hard homemade oatmeal cookie with raisins and we never got potato chips or Twinkies. How I wished!

But, the lunch was not the main attraction to us anyway. As we waved to the guard in the little building guarding the entrance, we headed non-stop for the cemetery. There was a lot of reading of the

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**Erickson's Pharmacy** (continued from page 4)

headstones, and jumping over buried bodies so as not to bring bad luck and a haunting upon oneself. We spent hours eating and exploring, making up stories of the German and Italian prisoners of war, set off in separate graves at the back of the cemetery. Storytelling took on Halloween proportions as we lay against the trees that surrounded the neat rows and rows of pure white headstones. We particularly were interested in wondering about the born in 1800-somethings, and the babies and young children buried there.

As I have grown up, it is ironic that the stories of old fountain drugstores, the Fort Lawton Cemetery, and the dead soldiers are now part of what I study and research as President of the Magnolia Historical Society. The Fort, always a private park to us Magnolia kids, is now officially the largest park for the citizens of Seattle. And, holds the Fort Lawton Historic District.

I still prefer butter-rum life-savers to any other flavor and the neatly laid out and manicured cemetery bring me back to the freewheeling days of the 1950s when the security guards waved back at you as they let you trespass and you could spend an afternoon without adult supervision playing in a cemetery!

***Do you have memories of Erickson's Pharmacy or other long-gone landmarks of Magnolia? Or, do you have favorite snapshots from your brownie cameras of a Magnolia gone by? Share them at our website [www.magnoliahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.magnoliahistoricalsociety.org) by contacting the President or call 206.284.2430.***

**Mimi Sheridan  
MHS Historical Person of the Year 2010**

Mimi Sheridan has been working in history and historical preservation for more than fifteen years. One of her first large efforts was with the Magnolia Historical Society, as an editor of the first Magnolia history book. She later worked with the Queen Anne Historical society on the neighborhood's historic properties survey. She has also headed other City historic property surveys, including Belltown and Capitol Hill. Other local work includes design guidelines for the Fort Lawton Historic District and a landmark nomination for the Admiral's House.



Mimi has a degree in history and political science from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a master's degree in urban planning, with a certificate in historic preservation, from the University of Washington.

Since 2001 she has taught a graduate-level class in historic preservation and planning in the College of Built Environments at the University of Washington (along with another Magnolian, Jennifer Meisner). She also teaches about local history and preservation for a UW Extension program.

Mimi has long been active in Historic Seattle and has written and given numerous tours for the Seattle Architectural Foundation. She served for six years on the City's Northwest Design Review Board and for two terms on the Seattle Planning Commission, including the review committees for the monorail and light rail projects.



## Early Days at Magnolia Elementary School

by Dale Forbus Hogle



**A young Dale Forbus Hogle on her way out the door to the first day of school at Magnolia Elementary School. Circa 1933.**

**Courtesy of Dale Forbus Hogle.**

Magnolia Elementary School opened in 1927, the year I was born. It was red brick with marble steps up the center leading to an impressive front entrance. But the entrances on the north and south ends, though not so elegant, were most often used. I always used the south entrance because it was closed to my bus stop at the base of the McGraw hills at 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue West. In the 1930s, only main Magnolia streets were paved and sidewalks were often long 2x12 boards placed side-by-side, end-to-end. On cold winter mornings, the boards thick with frost made wonderful sliding and slipping fun all the way up the three steep hills to 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue West and the south entrance.

In those days Magnolia school kids who lived too far from school to walk, were picked up by a school bus. Ruggles was our friendly driver and the bus a little square box on four wheels.

Teachers dispensed free school bus tokens. Almost everyone either rode a bus or walked to school. On rare days, when I walked past the home of my schoolmate on the way to the bus stop at the time her father was pulling his black Packard out of the garage, I was offered a ride. It seemed the lap of luxury sitting on soft cushions instead of the hard seats of the school bus.

Magnolia Elementary School had two floors. On the first were the lower grades' classrooms, the offices and a large lunchroom on the north end which, with a stage, doubled as an auditorium. The lunchroom had a full kitchen for preparing hot lunches. I do remember getting small bottles of milk and bringing sack lunches until finally possessing a metal lunchbox with a thermos bottle. Buying lunches was far beyond the financial reach of many. It was during the Great Depression and lunches from home were common. Sandwiches of cheese or tuna or peanut butter with sweet pickles made with my mother's homemade bread were good enough for me.

When school opened in September after the long summer vacation, your room assignment and your teacher were yours for the entire term. That classroom became as familiar as your home. In each classroom were very tall windows with yellow shades which could be raised by some means of cords and pulleys for afternoons when the sun streamed in the west windows. Rows of individual wooden desks with seats that folded up were bolted to the floor. Each desk had an ink-well on the right rear corner. The wells were filled each morning from a large bottle of liquid blue permanent ink. Ball-point pens hadn't been invented yet! It was a bad day when ink spilled on your clothes. The top of the desk lifted up to reveal a compartment for your books, papers, pencils and pens with replaceable metal points that you dipped into the ink well. The desk you were assigned was your own for the whole term. Wood shavings from the pencil sharpener on the wall gave off a pleasant fragrance of wood shavings. Students' coats and jackets produced a musty smell in the cloakroom at the back of every room. There was a kind of comfortable feeling of belonging every day in that classroom.

All the teachers were women. Our principal, Zella Allen, was famous in the school district for being one of the first woman principals. Most teachers were single ladies, reflecting the custom of the times that teaching was one of the few careers open to educated women, unmarried preferred. This idea was to change radically during the 1940s and afterward when women found many jobs open to them during

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## Early Days at Magnolia Elementary School (continued from page 6)

the 1940s and afterward when women found many jobs open to them during World War II. I generally placed my teachers in two categories – ones who were nice and others who made me tremble inside when called upon to answer a question or volunteer. However, I liked school and doing little chores like cleaning the black slate “blackboards” and pounding together the erasers to rid them of chalk. I would have liked to have been a School Crossing Guard, but boys were usually chosen for that job.

Our school nurse also was a woman, again one of the traditional careers open for educated women. She was a regular part of the faculty and in our school every day. In those days school nurses did more than patch skinned knees - they also kept track for the School District of students’ health progress, measuring height, weight and checking for any signs of illness. I also recall getting vaccinations in the school lunchroom, perhaps for smallpox or other childhood diseases.

Magnolia Elementary School had two playfields where we spent our time during the two recesses of the day. The upper pea gravel area was behind and to the south side of the school. The boys occupied the former and the girls the other. Time was not planned and games girls played were jump rope or tag or just strolling around with arms linked. I think playing marbles or jacks was popular with boys. The second playfield was behind the school down ramps to a lower level. There softball was played. One day a girl threw a baseball bat which landed on my left eyebrow knocking me clean out. When I came to teachers and students were hovering over me. They helped me up and walked me back to the nurse’s office where I was pronounced unharmed other than a small cut.

There was little competition for who could dress the best. Girls wore dresses or skirts with blouses or sweaters. Knee socks or long socks held up with garters kept legs warm in the winter. Ankle socks did not come along until high school days, although I believe some “risqué” younger women wore them with high heels – a practice considered “tacky” by proper older women. Boys wore knickers or long pants. There were no such things as denim jeans – those were for farmers or poor rural kids, not city children in a middle-class neighborhood like Magnolia.

Both boys and girls wore assorted practical footwear like sneakers and oxfords. As I mentioned before, these were lean times financially. My shoes were brown tie-up oxfords, new every fall for the year – bought big so I could grow into them. Party shoes were likely black patent Mary-Janes, if you had them. For school pictures posed in front of the grand marble stairs, white middie blouses (sailor style) with black-knotted ties and dark skirts were standard attire for the girls, while boys wore dark pants and white shirts. We were not so clothes conscious as today’s school kids nor was there the variety to choose from.



Magnolia Elementary School Graduates 1940. Courtesy of Hal Will.

Elementary school days were where you mix for the first time with larger groups of other children and teachers, learn the basics of the “3 R’s” (reading, writing and arithmetic), acceptable social behavior and discipline making a basis for life. My days at Magnolia Elementary School in the 1930s formed indelible memories that live in my mind to this day almost 80 years later.

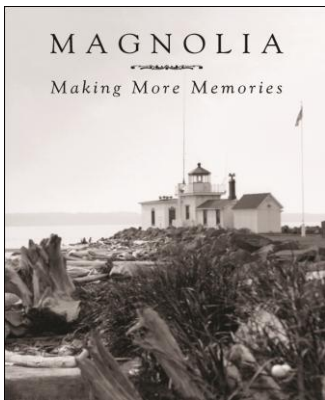


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- Ask for historical information;
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**"People tend to forget  
that the word  
'history'  
contains the word  
'story'."**

**-Ken Burns  
Director/Producer**