

Palmer Historical Society

PRESERVING OUR PAST, SHARING OUR STORIES & MAKING HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Official Publication of the Palmer Historical Society-Volume XXV No. 9 - October 2010

President's View from Farm Loop

The crops are mostly harvested and the wind has stripped most of the colorful leaves from the trees. Can winter possibly be far behind? Time marches on leaving history in its wake and new things and old questions continue to be revealed and revisited.

This month our program presentation features Mr. Carol Christianson who will be speaking about the White Alice System and Alaska Telecommunications on Wednesday October 20 at 7:30 PM at the Palmer Library. This should be a great follow-up to last month's presentation on the history of Palmer's West Coast Tsunami Warning System, a system that was made possible by new telecommunications developments in Alaska in the 1960s, including the White Alice site. Also, Eagle River author Jody Ellis-Knapp will be our featured speaker on November 17, giving what is sure to be a fascinating talk on Ghosts of Alaska.

The Palmer Historical Society continues as a result of the efforts of our volunteers and we can always use more help. One way you can help is by renewing your membership or if you aren't already a member, please consider joining. A membership form is included with this newsletter. Another way to help is by volunteering on one of PHS's ongoing projects. If you are interested in helping, please contact one of the board members.

On a more somber note, September was a tragic month for local history. As many of you know, LeRoi Heaven died in an automobile accident near Tok. LeRoi was an extraordinary man who had dedicated much of his life to the preservation and promotion of the local history of the Matanuska and Susitna Valleys. He will be sorely missed and our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Margaret and his family.

Chuck Logsdon, President

PHS Meeting Information

The Palmer Historical Society meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month (Sep-Nov and Jan-May) at the Palmer Public Library. We gather at 7PM and the programs starts at 7:30PM.

Your PHS

Yes, you have a Board of fellow PHS Members serving the membership. Yet if you were to help select our speakers for the upcoming Fall and Spring meetings--who would you want them to seek out? The Board would like your input for our meetings' guest speakers. Please contact Jean or Ralph, our Program Committee, and let them know your ideas.

Our season of service is year around--groundskeepers, docents, meetings and community activities. Take time to renew your Palmer Historical Society membership today with our Treasurer Dave Mathews so you'll be ready for our Fall meetings and adventures.

Carol Christianson to Speak at October Meeting

For some time, we have been asking Carol Christianson to give a presentation on the history of the White Alice telecommunications system and he has graciously agreed to do so at our October 20th meeting. Like many of you, I was always fascinated by the giant communications dish out by Neklasson Lake that was built in the 1950s which most of us probably accepted as connected with Cold War telecommunications and preventing an attack by the Russians. Please join us for what will certainly be a fascinating presentation by Mr. Carol Christianson on Wednesday October 20, 7:30 PM at the Palmer Library. (CL)

PHS Contacts

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Colony House	
Museum.....	Gerry Keeling / 745-3703

Remembering LeRoi Heaven

The valley lost a dear friend when LeRoi Heaven died in a car accident last month. We note LeRoi's lifetime of community service and historical stewardship. He was a founder of the Wasilla-Knik Historical Society which he guided through many accomplishments through the years. Just about every historical building restoration involved LeRoi - and his many friends - including the Dorothy Page Museum and Historic Town Site, Knik Museum, Wasilla Depot, and certainly the barn and homesteader cabins he restored on his farm which he preserved through the Alaska Farmland Trust.

LeRoi also played a significant role in the formation and continuance of PHS with encouragement and showing us what can be done and how to do it. During our early despair at getting anything done, V. Louise Kellog remarked to the effect that it only takes one LeRoi.

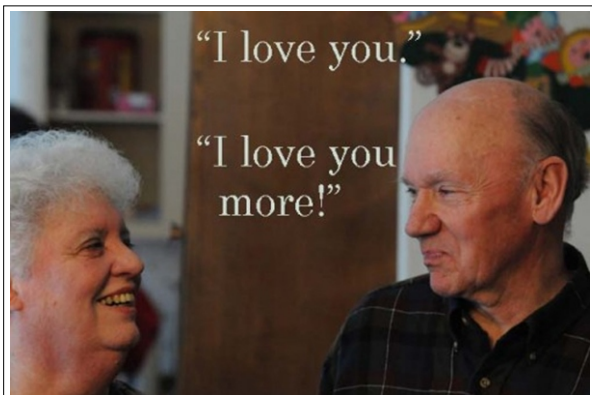
LeRoi had an infectious knack for making the most difficult projects seem worthwhile and fun. Perhaps his most trying restoration was the Herning store. Lacking cash to get started, he asked his old friends for loans, many of them pleasantly

shocked when he repaid all the "donations" with interest after completion.

Restoration implied some precious community reuse. We remember the fun picnics LeRoi and Margaret hosted at the farm among the restored cabins and farm equipment, the hayrides, the weekly farmers' markets at the historic town site, the annual yard sale and dinner, and seeing a smiling LeRoi touring the state in an antique auto.

We share sorrow with Margaret and Troy Heaven. Please visit the web site Margaret started, <http://rememberingleroi.wordpress.com/>, to leave a thought and a thank you.

Also check out the following link that features Le Roi: <http://cityofwasilla.com/ftp/Video/restoration.htm>



George Carte and Wayne Sorenson Discuss the History of The West Coast Tsunami Warning Center

In September, George Carte and Wayne Sorenson teamed up to give an informative and entertaining discussion of the origins and ongoing development of what was initially called the Palmer Seismological Center and is now the West Coast Tsunami Warning Center. Shortly after the 1964 Alaska Earthquake and Tsunami that resulted in deaths in Alaska, Oregon, and California, the Federal Government began looking for a seismic monitoring site in Alaska. As George tells the story, the Feds first looked at Moose Pass, and then came to Palmer which interested them because of the nearness of the

White Alice telecom site at Neklasson Lake. The two scientists from Washington, D.C. who were scouting the Palmer area had stopped at the Moose Club for a beer when they ran into Leo Lucas. When Leo learned why they were in town and that what they were looking for was cheap land on bedrock, he convinced them he had just the site, and so fairly quickly the deal was struck that resulted in what became the West Coast Tsunami Warning Center being built at Palmer.

The Palmer Seismological Center began operating in early 1967 with equipment that Wayne and the other technicians had

designed and built because the specialized seismological devices that were needed could not be bought commercially. The result was that the Palmer Center was able to do things that hadn't been done before. More technological advances came later when there was a need to watch for countries doing nuclear tests in defiance of the test ban treaty. The presentation on the history of the Seismological Center was greatly enlivened by George's personal anecdotes about the people and events during the many years the Tsunami Warning Center has been operating in Palmer.

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Wayne Sorenson and George Carte

Tsunami Center, cont'd from pg. 2:

Prior to George and Wayne's presentation, Ralph Hulbert and Pat Durand teased the audience with photos from an old album discovered by Pat in a box of unopened mail at the Museum of Transportation and Industry in Wasilla. Many of the photos have not been identified but one photo is labeled as being of the City of Knik dated 1898 and is of a cabin and wharf at the mouth of the Knik

River near present day Eklutna. (See *Mystery Photo Album*, page 4.)

Recipe of the Month

Helen Hulbert's Zucchini Gazpacho recipe - a Palmer Historical Society Picnic Hit!

This tasty dish was a real hit at our picnic last summer. Save this recipe for all those zucchinis you find on your doorstep next summer.

Zesty Gazpacho Salad

- 2 medium zucchini chopped (or one local zucchini)
- 2 medium tomatoes chopped
- 1 ripe avocado, chopped
- 1 cup fresh or frozen corn
- 1/2 cup sliced green onions (or diced sweet onion)
- 1/2 cup picante sauce or salsa
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh cilantro
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3/4 teaspoons garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

Combine the first five ingredients in a large bowl. Mix the next ingredients together to form a dressing and stir it into the zucchini mixture. Cover and chill for at least 4 hours. Sometimes I add a can of black beans or kidney beans and it makes a nice meal. (The real secret is to use as many fresh, local ingredients as you can.)



Helen Hulbert

Local PBS Affiliate KAKM (Channel 7) Premieres Movie "Alaska Far Away"

Thanks to the efforts of Joanie Juster, the Juster-Hill Production movie about the Matanuska Colony, "Alaska Far Away" premiered on Anchorage PBS Affiliate Channel 7 in September as part of their fund drive. Joanie also arranged for PHS to provide volunteers to take pledges over the phones and Chuck Logsdon to be interviewed during the breaks. We were assured by the producers that it would be fun, and it was. Viewers loved the film and the phones and cow bells were soon ringing. The film and the PHS got some excellent exposure for



PHS volunteers Amy Swiantek, Ralph Hulbert, Sharon Benson, and Jean Krupa Answer Phones for KAKM Fund Raiser.

Palmer history and we helped raise money for KAKM.

Come Join Us & Become an Active Member

Mail in your payment with the following information today:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone: _____

Membership levels of the Palmer Historical Society:

- Regular - \$10 per year
- Contributing - \$25 per year
- Sustaining - \$100 per year
- Lifetime - \$500

Mail to:
Palmer Historical Society
PO Box 1935
Palmer, AK 99645-1935

MYSTERY PHOTOS, VOTERS & PRESERVATION

Mystery Photo Album

(continued from last month)...

Correspondent: Ralph Hulbert.

At our September meeting, we introduced a photo album from 1898 and asked for help identifying shots. The photo to the right is from that album. It is labeled: The "City of Knik" 1898. Obviously, it is not the current Knik, but it could be the old Knik at Eklutna viewed from a sand bar in the river looking south. The buildings and boat are long gone, but the background should be readily identifiable. Maybe a hunter or hiker along the duck flats would be so kind as to send us a confirmation photo.



At our next meeting, we'll have disks with high resolution scans of the album, along with historical documents that seem to have clues. Please renew your membership and take home a copy.

Voters Approve Bond to Finance Purchase of the Matanuska Maid Block in Palmer

The final tally of absentee and questioned ballots resulted in the passage of the bond proposal to allow the city of Palmer to issue \$3.3 million in bonds to finance the purchase of the Matanuska block. This is a big step forward in the plan to redevelop this historic part of the Matanuska Colony. Significant actions and future decisions lie ahead, but if this acquisition can be accomplished, it has the potential to contribute to both economic and cultural vitality in the city.

*Presenting your Fall Palmer Historical Society Speakers -
3rd Wednesday each Month - Palmer Library - 7:30 PM*
October 20 - *White Alice and Alaska Telecommunications*
Program Speaker Carol Christianson
November 17 - *Author of Ghosts of Alaska*
Program Speaker Jody Ellis-Knapp
December 11 - *Annual Colony Christmas Open House*
Colony House Museum

Return Service Requested

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