



Tracking Bogeys in Skies Above Bend

The Ground Observation Corp watched for Russian bombers above the skies of Central Oregon during the Cold War Fifties.

See Page 2



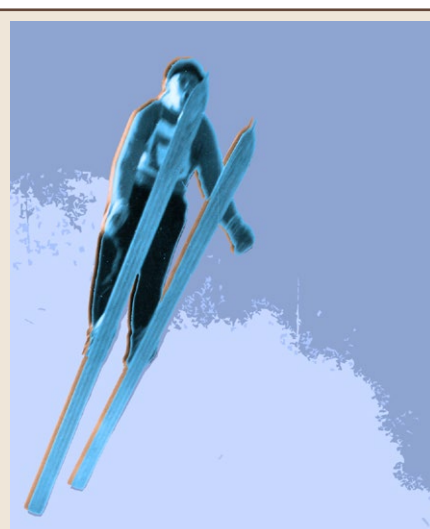
Deschutes County Centennial Day

Join us on December 13 from 11 to 1 for birthday cake to celebrate the 100th birthday of Deschutes County! The event is free to the public.

See Page 6

The Homesteader

Deschutes County Historical Society Newsletter – December 2016



Winter Comes Exhibit Extended Until January

The Deschutes Historical Museum brings good news for all Central Oregon skiers. Aside from the latest rounds of snow, we are happy to announce that our exhibit *Winter Comes: Oregon's Nordic Ski History* will stay in Bend a bit longer. The exhibit has been extended until January, 28 2017. Don't forget to bring your holiday visitors for a tour!



CHILI FEED, BAKE SALE & RAFFLE A GREAT SUCCESS



-- continued on page 6

WE'VE GOT QUESTIONS. DO YOU HAVE ANSWERS?

Vanessa Ivey, the Deschutes Historical Museum's baseball expert, needs help with identifying the lone unknown player in this photo.

"Attached is the 1938 Bend Elks image taken at O'Donnell Field between July 1938 and September 1938. The player I am interested in is sitting in the front row, far right, with his catchers mitt."

Please contact Museum Manager [Vanessa Ivey](#) if you have any information about the mystery player (see inset picture for a close-up).



Nunzie Gould asked if we can help her fill in the blanks in this photo and maybe even set a date when the meeting occurred.

Pictured from left to right:

Unknown; Walt Thompson, city manager; Hans Slagsvold (served among many other things as mayor of Bend in 1955; Wayne Hamilton, city recreation director; **unknown**; Vince Genna; Owen Panner, president of Bend Chamber in 1955; and **unknown**.

Please email the museum at info@deschuteshistory.org with further information about this photo.



Deschutes Historical Museum
129 NW Idaho Avenue, Bend, OR 97703
Open Tuesdays-Saturdays
10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
541.389.1813

Museum Staff:

Kelly Cannon-Miller, Executive Director
Vanessa Ivey, Museum Manager
Shey Hyatt, Registrar
Tor Hanson, Homesteader Editor

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2016 DCHS Board of Directors:

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Marsha Stout, Vice President
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Tony DeBone, Mike Berry, Andrea Hunnell DuPree, Beau Eastes, Greg Fulton, Karen Green, Robin Gyorgyfalvy, Tor Hanson, Loren Irving, Heidi Kennedy, Courtney Lupton-Turner, Bill Olsen, and Susie Penhollow

Complete minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors are on file with the Museum office.

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www.deschuteshistory.org
Info@deschuteshistory.org

Ground Observers Track Enemy Bombers Over Oregon

A small plywood building on top of the O’Kane building served to defend against sneak-attacks by Russian bombers during the 1950s Cold War era. The volunteers of the Ground Observer Corps had their eyes peeled to the skies above Bend to identify enemy airplanes, ready to attack the United States.

The risk that the United States would be involved in a World War III with the Soviet Union was never far from the public’s mind during the Cold War.

The Soviet Union detonated their first atom bomb in 1949 and joined the exclusive superpower club. The United States was woefully unprepared to defend the country’s borders against low-flying Russian bomber pilots hell-bent on attacking high-value military targets or spread

terror in cities along the east and west coasts. The basic radar installations around the United States were not up to the task and the military was looking for an alternative.

The hut in the middle of downtown Bend was an important part of the Ground Observer Corps (GOC), a ground-based “eye-towards-the-sky” volunteer organization that protected the borders against airborne sneak attacks.

R.J. Ralston used to spend the summers in Bend, living with his aunt, Mrs. Walter Emard who was involved in the GOC.

“This was about the same time Joe McCarthy was scaring everybody senseless with the communist conspiracy,” said Ralston. “It seemed as if everyone bought into this plot that Russian airplanes were going to fly over Central Oregon on bombing runs.”

The Ground Observer Corp started during World War II. Millions of civilian volunteers scanned the skies for German and Japanese aircraft. The program came to an end in 1944 but was reinstated in the early 1950s as a civil defense organization saddled with reporting enemy aircraft in the skies.

President Truman encouraged civilians to join the program as volunteers, saying the project was “a common-sense



Bend Air Defense filter center volunteers – bottom row from left: Mrs. Walter Emard, adminisrator; Mrs. Joe Elder; and Clair Olson. Top row from left: Sherman Dearth, day director; Helen Roarig, team captain; Sgt. Paul R. Kent; and Joan Beckley. Photo: Deschutes Historical Museum

precaution in which Americans can serve proudly.”

In 1952, the program was expanded into “Operation Skywatch.” Housed in forest ranger stations, church bell towers, stadium grandstands, or any high point with an unobstructed view of the skies, over 750,000 volunteers were stationed at 16,000 posts all over the U.S. When it came to Bend, the O’Kane building was the obvious choice.

Rich Olsen was one of the young volunteers looking skyward. Introduced to the program through a family friend, he joined “Operation Skywatch” in 1954. Olsen was one of many teenagers involved in Skywatch.

“We would meet at the Armory across from the high school on Wednesday evenings,” said Olsen. “There was probably a reserve officer at the meeting

and maybe even a recruiter. They would show us profiles of airplanes – what they looked like from below.”

After the training, the volunteers were assigned times to man the downtown cupola. The roof area of the O’Kane Building was accessed through Cashman’s Clothing Store on Bond Street.

“We would spend time up there watching for airplanes,” said Olsen. “On the wall [in the cupola], they had posters of what the planes looked like from below, a side shot, and what type of plane it was.”

Each shift lasted about an hour. According to Olsen, it was a day-time affair.

“After the [Cashman’s] store closed for the day, you couldn’t go up there.”

The eye-in-the-sky volunteer effort was only a part of Operation Skywatch. If an enemy airplane was sighted, the volunteer logged the interaction by time and aircraft.



-- continued on page 4

A Well-Deserved Thank You to Our Fabulous Volunteers!

The Deschutes County Historical Society would like to thank everyone who made this year's Annual Chili Feed, Bake Sale & Raffle a great success!

To everyone who shared their favorite goodies; pies, candies, canned goods, cookies, breads...

Cheryl Gardner	Lori Niederhof	Kelly Cannon-Miller	Pat Joslin
Bette Andrew	Sarah Baxter	Jerrie Meton	Burt Douglass
Judy Crowell	Elaine Cosner	Margaret Marshall	Leonard Sholes
Vera Wesenberg	Michelle Patrick	Laurel Sarlie	Craig Lacy
Dick Meddish	Darlene Ross	Barbara Buxton	Delight Hartfough
Susie Penhollow	Vanessa Ivey	Clara Cannon	Tracy Alexander
Ann Maudlin	Bodeene Amyot	Annie Goldner	
Phyllis Hurworth	Shey Hyatt	Phoebe De Gree	

To our fabulous volunteers who were everywhere; pre, post and during the event!

Carla Hunt	Jerrie Melton	Sue Fountain	Georgia Springer
Katie Rixe	Juanita Thompson	Dee Dee Garnett	Harriett Langmas
Karen & Ed Barnum	Wanda McKay	Gene Cota	Ken Sandine
Peggy Spencer	Tami Perkins	Jeri Schutte	Karen Green
Sue Fuller	Dorothy Olsen	Linda Morrison	Tracy Alexander
Ann Maudlin	Michelle Patrick	Nannette & John Sholes	Adrian Zamarripa
Elaine Cosner	Bette Andrew	Judith Penner	Chuck & Eloise Maddax
Susie Penhollow	Anita & Carl Elliott	Emily Miller	Lorlee Ackerman
Andrea DuPree	Holle Young	Chloe Miller	

Thank You to the Bend Genealogy Society for hosting Research 101, Sandy Thompson & Eileen Krueger... and Meet-the-Author Les Joslin.

Rastovich Farms Barley	Crux Brewery	Sarah Baxter	Dudley's Bookstore
Beef	Sue Fountain	Mike & Maureen Berry,	Moonfire & Sun Garden
Strictly Organic Coffee	Dancing Jalapeno Jelly	Pat Joslin	Center
Susie Penhollow	The Tower Theatre	Country Manor Bend LC	Tin Pan Theater
Nicolas Lelac	Loren Irving	Visit Bend	First American Title
The Bend Elks Baseball	Wanderlust Tours	La Magie Bakery	
Club	Bend Electric Bike Tours	The Deschutes Historical	
Karen Green	Ann Maudlin	Museum	

Ground Observer Corp...

— continued from page 3

The O'Kane building was connected to a "filter center" in the basement of the Post Office building on Wall Street. If enemy planes breached the airspace above Central Oregon, the phones would start ringing in the basement.

Ralston's aunt, Mrs. Emard, was a part of the Bend Air Filter Center, a vital part of the local "Operation Skywatch" project.

"She was working in a room in a basement in one of the buildings in downtown Bend," said Ralston. "I was not old enough to understand what was going on, and that was probably why I could come to the basement office with my aunt."

Once a report was filed with the filter center, it was up to the staff to verify the potential threat against flight plans of

commercial airlines or military aircraft. If things didn't add up, the filter center reported the purported enemy aircraft to the Air Defense Command, who in turn could scramble fighter jets to intercept the bogey.

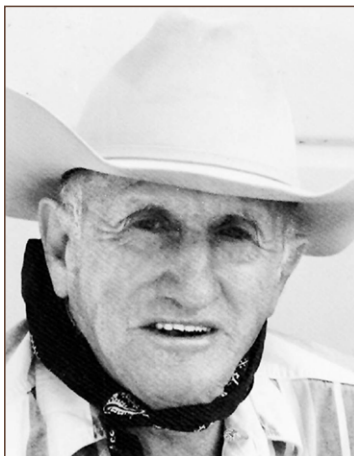
The Skywatch program ended in late 1958. By then, the U.S. military had developed more sophisticated radar installations, capable of identifying enemy aircraft with the help of volunteer sky watchers. The local Bend filter center closed in March 1959.

"We never saw a thing," said Olsen. "It was fun and we got out of the house for a little bit. It seems kind of silly now, but it was different times."

— Tor Hanson



In Memoriam: Mahlon Ivan Couch



Mahlon Ivan Couch, age 94, born January 16, 1922, passed peacefully on October 16, 2016, in Mesa, AZ, with family by his side.

He was born in Tumalo, Oregon, and lived in the Bend area most of his life. Mahlon had been actively involved in the Deschutes Historical Society, the Deschutes Pioneer

Association, serving both as President, and the Fox Trotters Association. He owned his own logging company until his retirement and then spent many years in the mortgage investment business. He was a World War II veteran,

serving 40 months in Alaska, Philippines, and Korea.

He was a wonderful, giving person and will be remembered by many for his kindnesses and honesty. With his passing comes an end to the plethora of cowboy and pioneer stories with remembrances that only he knew. It seemed that where ever he went he knew someone. His family and friends have wonderful memories riding the trails on horseback with him.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Mildred, their beloved son, James, and his second wife, Irene; his parents, Mahlon A. and Mary Couch; brothers, Bob and Lee; sisters, Helen and Rosemary; great-grandchild, Kendrick Knox.

He leaves behind his daughters, Twyla (Bob) Knox of AZ, and Rosalind (Dean) Robbins of OR; sisters, Lucille Johnson and Josephine Moore, both of Bend; 44 grand and great- grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Local News Items

Frank Johns Memorial Restored



The Frank T. Johns memorial in Drake Park has long been the victim of vandalism. Johns was the 1928 presidential candidate from the Socialist Labor Party, who drowned near the memorial in the Deschutes River in a tragic attempt to save the life of a boy who also drowned in the river.

Years ago, somebody scraped away the photo of Johns on the memorial, which was created in his honor in 1970.

In November, with a donation from Frank's grandson, Philip Mickel, a resident of Prineville, the Deschutes

County Historical Society completed a longtime goal and replaced the photograph of Johns on the bronze plaque at the memorial.

The restoration effort and the story of Philip Mickel connecting to his family roots made the front page of The Bend Bulletin on November 27.

The article is viewable online here: www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/4843128-151/restored-memorial-connects-man-to-his-roots

DCHS Board Presidential Plaques



Using money from the Bruce White Memorial Fund, the Deschutes County Historical Society purchased new plaques to honor previous board presidents, including Bruce White (2014).

The plaques display all board presidents from Faith Hall (1975) to Nate Pedersen (2015 – 2017), with room for many more. The new plaques can be found hanging on the wall in the hallway near the front desk.

YOUR YEAR-END GIFT MATTERS

As 2016 comes to a close, the annual line up of non-profits seeking year-end donations from their supporters is well under way.

Thanks to Facebook and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Deschutes Historical Museum's annual fund drive started out with a boost: \$1,000 in donations will be matched by the Gates Foundation as part of their Giving Tuesday campaign. Not bad!

Year end gifts matter for the museum. Our fundraising

efforts during the fall provide much needed operating funds for projects during the next year: new exhibits, collections care, and programs like History Pub.

We would not be able to offer such a wide range of events without your support. Please consider including us in your year-end tax deductible gifts by going to www.deschuteshistory.org/donate. Thank you to all those who have already pledge or mailed in their gifts!

DESCHUTES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL GIVING FUND

YES! I want to help DCHS keep history alive!

Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ E-mail: _____

Please return this form with your payment.
Make checks payable to:

Deschutes County Historical Society
129 NW Idaho Avenue
Bend, OR 97703
541-389-1813

Your gift is tax-deductible to the fullest amount allowed by law. Our tax ID: 51-0186079

Or pay online via our
secure website:
www.deschuteshistory.org

 Donate



THANK YOU

For DCHS use:

Date:

Receipt #:

Initials:

Mark Your Calendars – December

13 **DESCHUTES COUNTY CENTENNIAL DAY** **Deschutes Historical Museum**

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Join us on December 13 from 11 to 1 for birthday cake to celebrate the 100th birthday of Deschutes County!

The event is free to the public, there will be cake, coffee, a sort round of trivia, and an encore reading of our Centennial play, *Faces of the Deschutes*.

18 **VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION BRUNCH** **Deschutes Historical Museum**

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

MUSEUM HOLIDAY HOURS:

Closed Christmas Eve & Christmas Day
Open 10-2 New Year's Eve. Closed Jan. 1

Praise For DHM Volunteers

Appreciation Brunch scheduled for December 18

2016 has been a full and busy year at the Deschutes Historical Museum and the staff wish to celebrate this year's accomplishments with the museum's volunteers inviting them to fun and festivities Sunday December 18th, 11:00 – 1:00 pm at the museum. Brunch will began at 11:00 am with presentations following at noon.

Please RSVP to the museum, 541.389.1813 by December 14, so staff can plan food accordingly. We look forward seeing you there!