

A Vintage Lopez Tale

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Gwynne. Determined to improve the situation, they founded the Catherine Washburn Memorial Association in 1972. Its mission: to build Lopez a medical clinic. Named to honor their friend, community supporter and former Washington House realtor Catherine Washburn, the CWMA quickly gained grass roots support. Fundraising began. A giant thermometer, painted on a plywood board to tally donations, was erected on the building site and islanders began opening their wallets. One year later, with \$30,000 in community funds in hand, the CWMA voted to break ground.

Dr. George Dengler, who with his wife Hildegard, owned property on the south end since the late 1960s, approached the CWMA about becoming our first physician. After checking his credentials with the Seattle medical establishment and discovering the good doctor's many pedigrees, the position was offered.

Before the clinic building was even finished, Dr. Dengler was making house calls. Hildegard remembers: "That very first night, we were in our little cabin down on Mud Bay without even a telephone. Somebody left the Galley, cracked up his car and broke his back. That was our introduction to medical practice on the island."

Lopez Clinic opened its doors on April 1, 1974. "The old timers were first to come in," Hildegard continues. "There was a real need for basic medical care and the clinic was busy from the start."

Through the years, the CWMA expanded the clinic three times, the cost always shouldered entirely by islanders. Along the way, memorial donations came in as well as major bequests. An endowment fund was established for expansion and upgrades. The Sikstrom Fund assured that anyone in temporary financial difficulty would receive medical care.

In 1991 Dr. Dengler began planning for his retirement. But finding another physician will-

ing to take over his private practice proved difficult. In time, an innovative solution was found. To assure on-going medical care, the CWMA partnered with Island Hospital. According to newspaper reports at the time, "After lengthy negotiations, the clinic facility was leased lock, stock and barrel to Island Hospital in Anacortes. Dr. Dengler (who would retire 2 years later), and part-time associate Dr. Ted Phillips, negotiated professional contracts with Island Hospital while the office staff became employees." A new chapter in clinic history had begun. Lopez residents, through the CWMA, retained ownership of the clinic building, everything inside the walls, and full financial responsibility for upkeep, maintenance and physical improvements.

Did the change mean Lopez clinic no longer belonged to the com-

munity? Absolutely not. Our clinic always has belonged to the people of Lopez and always will. "Donations from Lopez friends and neighbors built it back in the 1970s, and Lopez generosity will always keep it going. It's our clinic," says current CWMA president Ron Shively. "The CWMA collaboration with Island Hospital is a model for rural clinics in the Northwest. We've got a great working relationship."

And so the tradition continues. For four decades, Lopez islanders have been writing checks to the CWMA – first to build their clinic and then to keep medical care here. No one knows exactly when the CWMA "\$25 annual membership fee" got started, but for most islanders, writing their yearly check is as much a part of autumn as carving the pumpkin.

Charlie reflects, "The CWMA's history is a story of Lopezians coming together to look after each other, rallying around an idea whose time has come and seeing that idea through. I'm honored that it was done in my mother's name. Being a caring, community-centered woman, she would have loved that."



Opening Day. Dr. George Dengler and Hildegard in their new office. Dr. Dengler provided health care to Lopez islanders for 25 years.

Health Matters

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Catherine Washburn Medical Association Turns 40

You're Invited!
Join the Party!

The CWMA was founded forty years ago to build Lopez Island's first medical clinic. Come celebrate with us.

Health & Safety Fair
Saturday, August 25th • 1:00 – 5:00p.m.
Lopez Community Center

Blood-pressure checks, eye exams, ultrasound demonstrations, women's health screening and breast exams, physical therapy presentations, car/bicycle/water safety, EMTs demonstrate CPR, fire-truck and ambulance tours, SHIBA Medicare advice – plus Hamlet House, Lopez Pharmacy, Lopez Senior Services, Lopez Hospice and Home Support, San Juan County Health Department and Island Hospital displays.

Door Prizes and Birthday Cake at 4 'o clock



Health Matters

Summer 2012

Health and Wellness Information for Our Community

Catherine Washburn

By all accounts, a remarkable island woman, Catherine's concern for others endeared her to all. Mother of four, wife of Lopez's first school superintendent, well known for her warmth and skill as a real estate professional, Catherine was a fine, gentle woman, respected and loved on the island she called home from 1941 until her passing in 1971.



Catherine Washburn

CWMA Turns 40

A Vintage Lopez Tale

Lopez islanders' devotion to community and each other is legendary. Sometimes our can-do independence makes us even appear a little feisty. Nowhere is Lopez spirit more apparent than in the story of the Catherine Washburn Medical Association (CWMA), the group of determined Lopez islanders who, in the early 1970s, single-handedly envisioned, founded, funded and built Lopez clinic. Today, the little band's membership has grown to include the majority of islanders, a powerful group whose commitment to excellent healthcare for all on Lopez is stronger than ever.

This year the CWMA celebrates their 40th Anniversary. It's a fun story to tell. Like a good novel it's a quirky tale with a few twists, a dose of drama and even a little Lopez lore. (I've attempted to stick to the facts, but gather any group of Lopezians together, and actual data points can become fuzzy. Ours is, after all, a history of one another, and that invites interpretation.)

Turn back the clock to 1970. Lopez had no doctor. Friday Harbor's physician, Dr. Malcolm Heath, a Brit said to have an elegant accent, came over each week to see patients in Lopez Barber Shop. With no privacy, no facilities, no waiting room and no space, locals lined up outside the door to have their ailments addressed.

If you had an emergency, the hearse might be called. Charlie Washburn, son of the woman for whom the CWMA was named, explains.



Charlie Washburn, son of the woman for whom the CWMA was named, recounts stories of island life before Lopez had a doctor or a clinic. A true islander himself, Charlie's folks brought him home to this house on Center Road when he was just 3 days old.

"The hearse was a white Cadillac. It had a first aid kit, a stretcher, it might have had an oxygen bottle. Certainly no I-V stuff. This was before we had EMTs on the island. It was kept in its bay at the firehouse/little red schoolhouse ready to respond to emergencies. It was pretty rudimentary though, basically just one step up from a pickup."

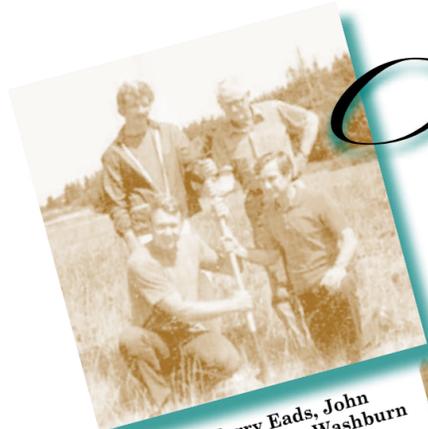
According to an *Islands Weekly* story by Bob Hubbard, there was a third source of medical help. "A major load was carried by Rev. Don Gwynne's wife, Gwen, a registered nurse, dispensed health care literally from the family's hall closet where pharmaceuticals were stored. But she was not qualified to handle many of the emergencies that seemed to pop up every day – from chain saw accidents to the surgical removal of splinters."

Enter islanders Pat Roe, Howard Cole, June Scherer, Charlie Washburn and Rev. Don

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Catherine Washburn Medical Association 1972-2012

Celebrating 40 Years Serving Lopez Clinic



Don Poole, Jerry Eads, John Ottenheimer, Charlie Washburn at 1973 groundbreaking.



Lopez Clinic 1974

1972

1972 Small group of islanders forms Catherine Washburn Memorial Association

- Pat Roe names CWMA to honor longtime friend and fellow islander Catherine Washburn.
- Lopez Village Corp. donates land.
- Second parcel purchased with Scripps family donation.
- Architect John Ottenheimer hired.
- Don Poole, general contractor.
- Fundraising begins.



Catherine Washburn, 1969

1973

1973 Part-time Lopezian Dr. George Dengler approaches CWMA to become first Lopez physician. Proposal accepted.

Lopez Island 1970:
About 600 residents.
No clinic, EMTs, paramedics, no hospice, Med Flight, pharmacy, dentist or vet.

1974

1974 CWMA hosts Clinic Grand Opening April 1, 1974.



Hildegard & George Dengler

“We raised around \$30,000 and said ‘Okay, it’s time to start construction.’”
—Charlie Washburn, 1973

1981

1981 First clinic remodel: 2,400 sq. feet added.

1988

1988 Dr. Ted Phillips pinch hits for Dr. Dengler, and continues as George’s back up for 5 years.

1993

1993 Lopez Clinic partners with Island Hospital. Seeing that “the days of private, rural practice are numbered,” CWMA board enters negotiations with Island Hospital to assist Lopez clinic. A new era begins: Island Hospital begins leasing the clinic building, hiring our professional staff and daily management. CWMA and Lopez Island residents continue to own the clinic building, its land and equipment and to provide oversight.

1993 First clinic computer installed.

Dr. Dengler retires but continues to fill in and see patients until 2006.

Dr. Dengler’s first year clinic income: \$5,200

1994

1994 Second remodel: \$130,000 adds X-ray/procedure room and exam room. Dr. Jim Sprowell hired, then leaves for family reasons.

1994-6 Husband and wife, Drs. Nancy and Rob Morgan, serve as clinic physicians.

First clinic measured just 900 square feet: 30’ x 30’
Cost: \$40,000 for building + \$20,000 for equipment, cabinets & interiors.

1997

1997 Dr. Bob Wilson joins the team.



Dr. Bob Wilson arrives in 1997

“The first years were rough, but good years. I just had to go with the flow. A lot of mealtimes were interrupted.”

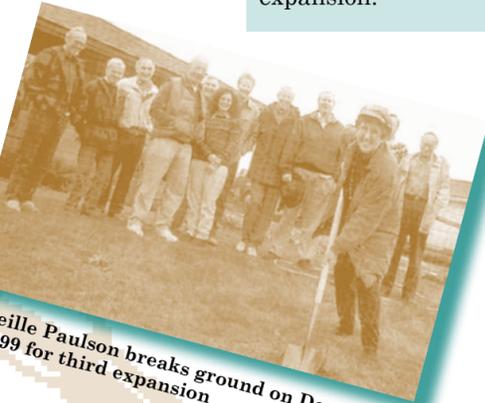
—Dr. George Dengler

2012 CWMA mission:
To maintain a well-equipped, professionally-staffed medical clinic to serve the primary care needs of our Lopez Island community.

Dr. Dengler often made house calls, a tradition which Dr. Wilson (who uses George’s desk to this day) occasionally continues.

2000

2000 Third remodel adds 3,360 sq. feet, more than doubling the building. Mary LaPorte’s \$100,000 bequest helps fund the expansion.



Mireille Paulson breaks ground on December 1, 1999 for third expansion

Anonymous gift of \$100,000 in 2010 funded the clinic’s first digital X-ray machine. The original X-ray machine, a portable military-surplus, field-hospital model, was purchased by Dr. Dengler in 1974 for \$8,288.

2011

2011 Catherine Washburn Memorial Association becomes Catherine Washburn Medical Association.

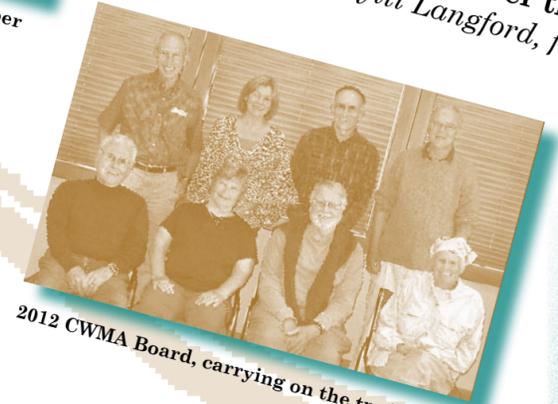
2012

2012 CWMA Anniversary! Lopez celebrates 40 years of clinic history.



Lopez Clinic 2012

“While Lopez doctors haven’t actually treated animals, some four-legged friends received X-rays there. Actually, lots of animals came through. At one point the rule was anything smaller than a horse.”
—Tytti Langford, first clinic manager



2012 CWMA Board, carrying on the tradition

CWMA 2012 board members
Back: Charlie Janeway
Tammy Cowan
Ron Shively
Bob Myhr
Front: Bob Riggins
Bette Shuh
Joe Goodner
Carol Avent
(Diana Hancock not shown)