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# LINES FROM LOPEZ

A SPECIAL SECTION OF THE Orcas ISLAND BOOSTER

**CLINIC GRAND OPENING - MARCH 31st**

The new Catherine Washburn Memorial Clinic on Lopez Island which will have a grand opening on March 31st is the direct result of a mutual need expressed in action, both physically and financially, by all islanders.

"Folks on this island have a special concern and affinity for one another, which I believe is unsurpassed anywhere," said Charles Washburn, son of the woman for whom the clinic was named. "You read about the 'good old days' like they are something long past. But I'm only 29 and I can recall right here on this island a number of times when a farmhouse or a barn burned clear to the ground and was rebuilt by volunteer labor, often at no cost to the farmer who had suffered the loss.

"If you ask me, those 'good old days' are still with us on Lopez Island."

Although there had been a growing need for some kind of medical facility on Lopez for some time, what with the steadily increasing population, a third of which is over fifty-five years of age, it wasn't until the death of Catherine Washburn in September of 1971 that steps were actually begun to fund a medical clinic.

"A few days after mother died," Washburn said, "Pat Roe came to the house one evening to talk about forming an association for the funding of a clinic. It was Pat's feeling that since mother had always been active in helping others in time of need that it would be appropriate to name the clinic in her honor."

It was back in 1959 or '60 that Catherine Washburn, wife of Louise A. Washburn, former Lopez school superintendent, along with Margaret Kish first set up a branch office for Washington House Realtors in the old house that had been the telephone building, located a short distance from the Islander Lopez.

Pat Roe, managing broker of the Lopez branch of the real estate firm and recently appointed San Juan County Commissioner, explained that Catherine Washburn was still working for the realty firm, although to a lesser degree, when she passed away.

Roe recalls that at the time of Mrs. Washburn's death many islanders wanted to contribute something to her memory. It was then that the plans for a medical clinic began to take root.

Following the meeting with the Washburns, at which time they agreed to the establishment of the Catherine Washburn Memorial Clinic Association, with Charles Washburn as President, Pat Roe set about

drawing up plans for the non-profit corporation designed to handle funds for the project which were already beginning to come in.

By December of 1972 the Association had received approximately \$3000 from concerned islanders and shortly thereafter additional contributions were received, bringing the total to \$11,900. Since then, contributions is the amount of \$19,446 have been added to the funds and at this writing the Association has a total of \$31,346. A sizable amount considering the size of the island, its comparative isolation and limited population.

One of the more encouraging aspects of the project stems from the fact that not one cent has ever been received from federal, state, or county government agencies.

"It isn't that we didn't try for a federal loan or grant," Pat Roe explained. "In fact, we spent a good six months in the fall of '72 gathering essential data in an effort to compute our potential income on an out-patient clinic which would qualify for a grant under the Hill-Burton program. When we had finished assembling facts and figures we had a stack of nearly fifty technical forms to present to Mr. Frank Noecker, of the Department of Social Health and Welfare Services in Olympia."

"Dr. Heath, who had also applied for a loan for the Friday Harbor Clinic, Howard Cole, Trustee of our Board and I went to Olympia. The outcome was that between Dr. Heath and myself, they allotted us a total of ten minutes in which to present our stories, after which we returned to the islands." Both requests were turned down without further explanation.

Although at the time the denial of the grant came as quite a blow to Roe and the other Board members, in retrospect they see



it as a blessing in disguise.

"There would have been certain restrictions under a federal grant or loan," Pat explained. "Any additions or alterations to the building or change in the Board would have delayed the clinic's completion. Then too, at the time there was some question as to whether we could even get a grant because we had no doctor on the staff.

Failure to receive the grant left the Board with two options. They could wait until the following year and apply again, or they could take the bull by the horns and tackle the project on their own. They chose the latter course.

Fortunately, during this period of uncertainty Lopez residents hadn't been sitting passively by  
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Dr. and Mrs. Dengler are pictured in one section of the new Catherine Washburn Memorial Clinic - This was early in their first day of unpacking and getting the clinic set up. Target date for functional operation - April 1st.



## More CLINIC HISTORY

awaiting the outcome of their grant application. On the contrary, contributions in varying amounts continued to come in. Then, just when it was needed most generous four-figure donation was received from an off island land owner.

"The contribution was very encouraging and came at a time when we really needed all the encouragement we could get," Pat said.

Little wonder that a majority of the Board members harbored serious doubts that to obtain their goal of \$25,000 for such a small, isolated area would be next to impossible. After all, they reasoned, neither the state nor federal government would even consider such a loan. Moreover, to this day, Pat Roe points out, nobody from either the state or federal agencies has ever set foot on Lopez Island to even discuss the Clinic or our needs.

"Aside from our own island residents the only person who really expressed concern for our clinic," Roe added, "is Sister Carolyn Minnick, a nurse who works with the Washington Alaska Regional Medical program, a federally funded organization interested in health care."

Because there was no available doctor on Lopez Island at the time the medical building was proposed, it was designed as a nurse-practitioner facility. It was then that Sister Carolyn Minnick came to Lopez to assist in its planning.

"Sister Minnick is a great advocator of the nurse-practitioner program," Roe said. "And it was she who first encouraged and helped us in our formative stage. She is truly dedicated to helping humanity.

"Another benefactor which should not be overlooked," Roe continued, "is the San Juan County Bank. They have been



more than generous in their assistance to us. We weren't asked to fill out forty or fifty complicated forms when we applied for a \$25,000 loan. Nor did they take months or even days to let us know whether or not we would receive the loan. Within a half hour after we had filled out a single page application our loan for the full \$25,000 was granted."

The land upon which the clinic

sets is valued at \$4000 and was donated to the Association by the Lopez Village Corporation. The approximate cost of the building and equipment is \$57,000.

The present Catherine Washburn Memorial Clinic Association Board members include: Charles Washburn, Pres.; Howard Cole, Vice. Pres.; Bill Carpenter, Jr., Trustee; June Scherer, Trustee and Pat Roe, Sec.-Treas.



Charles Washburn, President of the Board of the Catherine Washburn Memorial Association, and son of the lady for whom the Lopez medical facility was named.