

# Mt. Lehman Community

## Newsletter

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

MARCH 2009

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In memoriam

Meet & Greet

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Mt. Lehman

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Miss O

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## We will miss you, Miss O ...

It is individual people who essentially provide continuity in a community – the links in the chain of time. Sadly, an icon of Mt. Lehman Elementary School will leave us at the end of June this year.

Every generation steps forward from the shoulders of the previous one, and Fran Ooievaar, or “Miss O” as she is affectionately called, has provided a set of shoulders much wider than her slight frame would suggest. The epitome of a dedicated teacher, Fran has devoted all of her working life to the education of 9 and 10 year olds. Over the past 35 years, approximately 900 of our sons and daughters – and their sons and daughters, too – have spent a year or two of their young lives under her tutelage.

Born and brought up on Vancouver Island, Miss O graduated from U Vic and initially taught at Ross Elementary for five years before coming to Mt. Lehman in 1979. Fran has fond memories of the first “old” playground, installed the year she arrived (the International Year of the Child)

with its big, angled pole tire swing. So much fun!

Much has changed since she started teaching. School Districts have become more risk averse and newer playgrounds reflect the increasing concern for safety, and ease of maintenance.

These days, Fran says, there is much more “stuff” to be covered – so many new programs, so much technology. Teachers must instruct students in planning skills, health education, the evils of tobacco, stranger-danger and such like. Much of it is necessary and good, but it crowds the time devoted to core curriculum. Nevertheless, in 2007 Mt. Lehman still scored 100% on the standard exams for Grade IV students.

What has kept Fran at Mt. Lehman for all these years? “I’m not big on change”, she admits, and of course she loves the kids.



Fran was touched to discover that one boy had the Christmas card that she gave to him still taped to his bedroom mirror 15 years later.

Class sizes haven’t changed much either, 24 is just perfect, and the school is lucky to have an excellent computer lab. To some extent the exterior trappings of life may have become more materialistic, but the kids are the same. Everyone knows each other in the school and the kids share and take care of each other. It’s a good community.

Fran notes that parenting has changed, quite a bit.

Parents and kids talk more to each other, and kids seem freer to say things that an earlier generation would never have dared. The kids actually take their learning home and become a means to educate their parents; for example, on healthy eating habits.

Fran plans to continue with her hobbies of riding her horse and running her races, and eventually she may move back to Vancouver Island to be closer to her nieces and nephews. She’s even looking forward to attending a few Christmas Concerts that she hasn’t actually had to organize.

## Mt. Lehman Community Association Meet & Greet

A very successful get together was held at the Mt. Lehman Hall on Sunday, January 14th.

Although the sunny weather was enough to tempt anyone to do outdoor activities, more than 80 people attended to meet their neighbours, share some coffee, tea and goodies, and take their chances at winning some of the

door prizes and raffle baskets.

Many took the opportunity to renew their annual membership in the Association, and some new members were also welcomed.

The longest resident of the area was Jim McDonald, born and lived here his 82 years, and the youngest was Joseph Cousineau.



## Musician in our midst

Although she spent her childhood in California, Faith Funk met her Canadian husband, David, in college in Fresno, and has since put down her roots firmly in Mt. Lehman.

David was born and raised on Funks' Blueberry farm on Downes Road. She and David now live on Townshipline Road, where they home school their two children.

Like most North Americans, Faith Funk (aka "Mrs. Funky") grew up



under the influence of jazz. From an early age, her musical mind was shaped by gospel, spirituals, Broadway show

tunes, ragtime, and big band music.

She went on to become a soloist with the jazz band at Fresno Pacific College, where she earned a degree in performing and visual



"Mrs. Funky"

arts.

Her most valuable vocal jazz training was under Kate Hammett-Vaughan of Vancouver.

Since she arrived in this area 14 years ago, Faith has been active locally in choirs, musical theatre, song leading, and as a choral composer.

Most recently, she has completed a jazz CD for children,

including original songs, with local musicians Brent Ellis, Lloyd Bates, Jo Worst, and Mike Michalkow.

Faith often collaborates with local jazz musicians and performs as part of a duo, trio, quartet or quintet.

## R.I.P. Elaine Cameron Gibson

On December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Albert Gibson's gentle wife, Elaine, aged 80, succumbed to dementia.

Elaine was born a Cameron, of the large Nova Scotia Cameron clan. Her maternal grandparents were pioneer settlers in Silverdale, just across the Fraser River and slightly west of Mission.

When she was about 16, Elaine and her family drove right across the continent in an old 1930 Essex car to visit the old Cameron settlement in Nova Scotia. They had to drive via the US to take advantage of the better road system.

Albert, who was born and raised on March-McCormick Road in North Bradner, remembers rowing across the river to attend social events in Silverdale. It was at one of where he met the young and beautiful Elaine.

After they were married, they moved to Marpole, because it was closer to Albert's work as a coastal seaman, and

raised two daughters, Carol and Sharon.

Later they lived in Fort Langley, where Elaine was active in the Women's Auxiliary and as a Brownie leader.

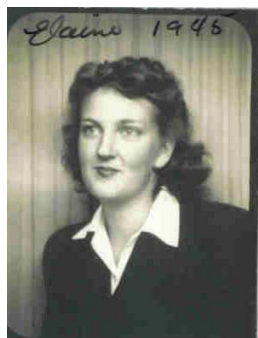
Albert and Elaine enjoyed many holiday trips to Reno and Vegas, as well as visits to the Casino in Mission.

They bought their current Ross Road acreage in 1953, and Albert moved a house from Burnaby up the river on to the property in 1973.

They finally moved into the house in 1975, after the girls had grown up. Daughter Carol and her husband Larry now live on the adjacent 5 acres.

Albert is well known in the local area as an amateur historian. He and his wife considered themselves residents of both Bradner and Mt. Lehman, and for the past 30 years have attended most of the events in each community.

There will be a **Memorial Service** to celebrate Elaine's life, complete with a slide show, at **2:00 p.m. on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 at the Jubilee Hall.**



## Country Corner Pre-School

Country Corner pre-school in the Mt. Lehman Church basement bustles three days a week with 10-18 children aged 3 & 4.

It started life in 1995 as a parent participation school, but is now operated under the umbrella of Social Services, partly financed by the fees paid by parents.

Renee Wedel and Cheryl Loudon provide endlessly patient care and guidance to the kids, emphasizing positive correction – "Use your walking feet", "Use your indoor voices", "Use your words".

Children learn to recognize numbers and letters and write their names, in preparation for kindergarten, as well as to respect others and obey the rules. Ample opportunity is provided for creative and active play.

Unfortunately, the centre has recently been informed that funding has been withdrawn and unless alternate arrangements can be made, Country Corner will cease operation at the end of June this year.





## Respecting the past ... Responding to the future

A small, unique school where new technology and modern ideas are housed in a heritage building full of traditional values, Mt. Lehman Elementary offers the best of all worlds. The school is the oldest continuously operated educational facility in the Fraser Valley and one of the oldest in British Columbia.

History and tradition are greatly valued and taught at Mt. Lehman, as is the importance of science, agriculture, technology and all the academics, plus daily physical education and other important extracurricular courses. The school has a well-equipped, modern computer lab and library.

With a school as old as Mt. Lehman Elementary it's hard not to acknowledge its rich history. Since 1884 literally thousands of local children have walked through its doors. The community of Mt. Lehman is so unique that there are many families that have been here for over a century.

At Mt. Lehman Elementary there are many multi generational families in attendance. We have second, third, fourth and even fifth generation families in



by Suzanne McKay

attendance!

Some families may not live in the village anymore but they want their children to have the same educational experiences they had, and these parents feel so strongly about Mt. Lehman Elementary that they drive their children here from

**"Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself ... You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth."**

**"The Prophet" Kahlil Gibran**

all over Abbotsford and Aldergrove. They want their children to have the small class sizes, be safe from bullies, have a top notch education, know everyone and be part of the community that is so strong in Mt. Lehman.

Many of the parents who attended Mt. Lehman years ago say that the school has not changed in the respect that it still offers the small rural school feeling of a family. It's a wonderful way to learn.

The fourth and fifth Grade teacher, Miss Fran Ooievaar, has been instructing at Mt. Lehman since 1979 and counts among her past students many of the current school parents, including this writer. "Miss O" is now teaching both of my daughters.

In 1908 Henry (Buster) Taylor started at Mt. Lehman Elementary. Buster's two sons, Jim and Doug Taylor followed, then their children Janet and Donna; Gordon, Grant, Rosemary,

Doug Jr., Suzanne McKay and Karen Berry are 4<sup>th</sup> generation and now their children, Mhairi and Emma McKay and Mason Berry are fifth generation. Britney Taylor (Doug Jr.'s daughter) graduated last year and was the Mt. Lehman Ambassador in the July 1<sup>st</sup> celebrations.

The grade four class of 2007/2008 scored 100% on the BC Foundation Skills Assessment tests. Unfortunately, Mt. Lehman's results were not listed in the newspapers because the test group of students at the school was too small. It's too bad that Mt. Lehman could not have been listed so people could see what a fine job the teachers are doing of teaching the core curriculum, and what a great environment for kids in which to learn. The small rural schools so often get overlooked because they do not have the enrollment required to be counted.

It says a lot about a school and community when families from all over the Fraser Valley drive their children to Mt. Lehman just so they can go to the same school their parents, grandparents, great grandparents and great-great grandparents went. Mt. Lehman truly is a special place, offering a high quality public education.



Newsletter sponsored by:



Participate in your community!

To join the Mount Lehman Community Association, apply at the Mount Lehman Credit Union or D & G Taylor Insurance.

The fee is \$20 per year.

Members in good standing for at least 6 months can rent the hall for a discount.

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Mt. Lehman Community Newsletter

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Mt. Lehman United Church News



“Tool Time” Spring Biblical study on Thursdays: potluck supper 6:15 PM and study 7:00 PM, DVD series “Where Faith and Culture Meet.”

Cultus Lake United Church Camp work party: Saturday, March 28.

Palm Sunday worship: April 5 @ 9:30 AM;

Good Friday Service: April 10 @ 10:00 AM; joint service and choir presentations at Bradner Presbyterian Church followed by lunch together.

EASTER SUNDAY Celebration: April 12 @ 9:30 AM;

CONTACTS: Bobbi Smith (604-856-8113 or 604-856-2745) or Rev. Michael Collison (604-542-1806) or <micollis@telus.net>

Mount Lehman Community Association

President: Tim Miller

604-857-9552

Vice-President: Brad Gueldner

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Secretary: Janet Sweeney

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Moms & Tots

Once upon a time, almost 20 years ago, a young mother moved to Mt. Lehman from the big city with her husband and toddlers. After almost a year she realized that she had not met any of her neighbours and was desperate for some adult conversation during the day.

Being a city planner by profession, Lisa Schlagintweit realized what was needed to build community. In 1990, she approached the Mt. Lehman Association for funding, and persuaded a trained early childhood educator called Eileen Gillette to start a group for young mothers. Now her children are in high school, but every Monday morning during the school year, the Mt. Lehman Hall is still home to the Moms &

Tots group, and the friendships that were formed have endured and matured over the years.

It’s what the group is all about – support and friendship between new mums and those who have several children, and occasionally the fathers, too. Coffee and conversation are always on, sharing best child-rearing practices, healthy recipes,



Anita prepares Valentine craft supplies

Eileen Gillette eventually moved on to form her own business, and Candie Thorne took over the leadership of the group for about 7 years. Anita Thiesen starting attending about 12 years ago when her daughter Jenna was small, and when Candie was no longer able to continue, Anita stepped easily into the role, which she has handled with patience and enthusiasm ever since.

There is a rough structure to the morning, beginning with free play while parents arrive, progressing through crafts, circle and story time, singing and snacks, until it is time to pick up brothers and sisters from kindergarten or preschool.

The group is drop-in, so attendance varies from about 9 to 15/16 children at a time, usually more on special occasions such as celebrations and parties. Some mothers keep coming even when they move away from Mt. Lehman. The fee is \$5 per day, or 8 weeks for \$35. Contact Anita at 604-857-8842, or just come!



Dennis-the-Menace kid stories and the like. Toddlers learn to socialize with each other and it’s always fun to play with someone else’s toys. The hall provides plenty of space to kick soft balls and run around in safety, under the watchful eyes of many young women.