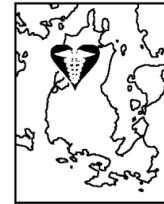


Health Matters

News for your well-being from Lopez Island Clinic & Catherine Washburn Memorial Association



Doing the paperwork—then and now

In 1974, most people paid for their own health care. Hildegard Dengler sent bills to patients every month, and most people sent in checks or brought cash or checks to the clinic. “Sometimes, people also brought us fish, vegetables, or cookies in addition to payment,” remembers Dr. Dengler. There were no computers then; Hildegard kept all the books by hand and made appointments by hand in a little black appointment book.



“I miss that little black appointment book,” says receptionist, Maribelle Doss. “The computer is slower, but it does have advantages; it’s much easier now to find out when someone has an appointment scheduled.” With over 10,000 patient visits a year, that’s no small task.

After that first demanding year, the Denglers hired Lynn Rehaume as a receptionist and assistant to Dr. Dengler. Others followed, including Maribelle Doss, who took that job over from her sister, Barbara Jennings, in 1978. A Certified Health Care Information Technician (CHIT), Maribelle schedules appointments, enters billing information into the computer, and keeps patient records in order. “In 1978, we didn’t have computers, a fax, or bills generated by computer,” Maribelle remembers. “When the Denglers left, we switched to a bigger appointment book, but I still wrote in it by hand.”

The staff continued to do most of their office tasks by hand until Island Hospital took over manage-

ment of the Clinic in 1992. “When Island Hospital came in, they brought lots of computer equipment,” Maribelle explains. In addition to scheduling appointments by computer, she also learned how to enter charges and the diagnosis into the computer so Island Hospital can generate a bill. “We used to mail all that information in on forms,” Maribelle says, “but now it’s sent electronically.”

Maribelle’s first stint at the Clinic lasted until August 1981. In September 1990, she returned to find even more changes. “I don’t think I ever envisioned how it would be here,” she says. As the number of patients has grown and medical/legal issues have increased, management of all the paper work has taken on even more importance. “When I first started, patients had file folders, but there were no dividers and papers weren’t attached to the folder; if a file fell on the floor, the pages went everywhere.” Maribelle and her co-worker, Debra Madan, also a CHIT, make sure all the paper work is signed and filed properly.

New staff—new equipment

Back in 1974, when Dr. Dengler wasn’t seeing patients, he remembers he was “scrounging all over Seattle for equipment.” The Clinic was just a shell when he started, and founding CWMA Board member Charlie Washburn says, “George knew we were on a tight budget. He was very good about going to surplus sales. He got an x-ray machine for a very reasonable price and some exam tables for free.” The CWMA remains proud that all money to build



Betsy Greacen, RN, the Clinic’s newest staff member, displays the latest Clinic equipment purchase, the Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) emergency system. Betsy, a former EMT and Clinic receptionist, returned to school to earn a bachelor of science in nursing degree. She’ll receive additional training on the PALS equipment designed specifically for the care of young children.

and equip the clinic has come through private donations. Over the years, they’ve been able to add, among other things, office furniture, soap dispensers, the LifePak12, a treadmill, gynecology table, bone density scanning machine, pediatric defibrillator, and a more secure front door. The staff regularly submit their “Wish List” to the CWMA Board and this newsletter, and the community always responds.

3 ways to support your Clinic

- 1 Join the CWMA (\$15 for individuals, \$25 per family).
- 2 Make a memorial gift to CWMA in the name of a loved one.
- 3 Designate the CWMA Endowment Fund in your will or trust.

For more information about contributing to CWMA, contact any of the Board members: Diana G. Hancock, President
Becky Smith, Vice President
Ann Norman, Secretary
David Simpson, Treasurer
Trevor Bryant
Diane Letchworth
David Perera
Bob Rose
Joe Thornton

Looking to the future



“Welcome aboard,” says Clinic Manager, Tytti Langford to Jill Blair before starting her retirement and turning her office over to Jill.

By the time you receive this newsletter, Clinic Manager Tytti Langford will be starting her retirement on a 32-foot sailboat in Finland. Eleven years ago, Tytti brought her extensive experience in nursing as well as clinic management to Lopez. Her skill in overseeing the complexities of a rural health clinic has been invaluable. Elise Cutter, Island Hospital Director of Finance oversees the Clinic Managers and understands the importance

of a good manager. “Tytti has been a great asset to the Clinic and to the people of Lopez as an advocate for health care,” Elise says. “She is a great resource we will miss.”

Elise also has been getting to know new Clinic Manager, Jill Blair, and comments, “Jill will be a strong manager, too. Along with her clinical skills, she has picked up extremely quickly on the financial side.” Jill is already well-known to patients from over ten years as a staff nurse. And in 1998, she and Ginger Riggins co-founded Lopez Island Hospice and Home Support.

After the recent CWMA Annual Meeting, Board Chair, Diana Hancock, shared her optimism about the Clinic’s future. “Tytti has provided great leadership; we wish her the best in her retirement.

And we’re delighted to have someone with Jill’s background to take over the reins,” she said. According to Diana, while the CWMA is celebrating its thirty years of success, the Board is always thinking about the future. “In the coming months, we’ll be looking carefully at our Reserve Fund and our Endowment Fund, two of our strategies to insure the Clinic’s viability through whatever changes occur in rural health care.”

CWMA Mission Statement

In 1971, a small group of Lopez Islanders formed the Catherine Washburn Memorial Association with the following mission:

Assure that a properly equipped and maintained medical clinic, staffed by a fully qualified physician, is available to serve the primary medical care needs of the Lopez Island Community.

We are grateful to the founding board members for their vision:

- Howard Cole
- Don Gwynne
- Malcolm Heath
- Pat Roe
- June Scherer
- Charles Washburn

Clinic turns thirty

Looking back, looking ahead

Picture this. It’s 1971 on Lopez Island. There are about 600 year-round residents. If you get sick, you go to Friday Harbor to see Dr. Heath – or wait until he flies to Lopez to see patients at the barber shop. There are no EMTs, paramedics, or Med Flight, no pharmacy, no dentist, no home health and hospice, and no veterinarian either.



Hildegard and George Dengler, the clinic’s first physician and his wife, reminisce about the years they worked together as a team as they look at the appointment books they used during their tenure.

If you weren’t living on Lopez then, it might be hard to imagine getting along without the Lopez Medical Clinic and its full range of staff and services plus the other types of health care support that exist here today. It was that absence of any kind of medical care that spurred Pat Roe to propose building a medical clinic in memory of Catherine Washburn. Shortly after her death in September 1971, Pat, one of Catherine’s co-workers at Washington House Realtors, worked with her family to form the Catherine Washburn Memorial Association (CWMA) and to begin raising funds for a clinic. “Pat knew the time was right,” says Charlie Washburn, one of Catherine’s sons and the first president of the board of the CWMA. “He was very organized, a hard worker, and was committed to make it happen.”

Jerry Eads, a member of the Lopez Village Corporation Board along with Charlie, donated a lot in the village for the clinic. “Fundraising

was ongoing, but we didn’t have a goal because we didn’t know how much a clinic would cost,” says Charlie. In 1972, architect John Ottenheimer developed a design and an estimate for just under \$40,000 to construct a 900-square-foot clinic. “Once we had a goal based on a cost estimate, some people made substantial donations and others made matching donations,” Charlie remembers.

“When we got to around \$30,000, we said ‘OK, it’s time to start construction.’ We trusted we’d get enough money to finish.”

The original plan was to hire a nurse practitioner to work with Dr. Heath. In 1973, a Lopez woman went to Seattle to study to fill that position, but instead fell in love there and never returned. “The whole idea of a nurse practitioner evaporated,” says Charlie.

Little did the CWMA Board know that Seattle physician, George Dengler, was ready to leave his busy family medicine practice and live full-time on the island he and his family had been visiting since 1968. Dr. Dengler approached the Board about moving into the new clinic. “We were surprised, elated, a doctor was interested,” Charlie recalls, “although we didn’t know anything about him. But we liked

Health Matters

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How the Clinic has grown

A 30 x 30-foot building welcomed patients when the Clinic opened its doors in 1974. The community quickly accepted medical care on-island, requiring an expansion of the clinic to 2,400 square feet in 1981. The building was renovated in 1994 in a remodel the Board thought would be adequate for ten years. But just five years later, on the 25th anniversary of the Clinic, they knew the demands on the staff and building warranted more space. Just as in the 1970s, the community responded generously to enlarge the clinic to its current 5,800 square feet.

Clinic turns thirty

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George and felt he would be a good fit.” Obviously, it was the right match, because Dr. Dengler, and his wife Hildegard, ran the clinic single-handedly that first year and stayed with it for nearly twenty years. When the clinic officially opened its doors April 12, 1974, Hildegard recalls, “George was his own nurse – he gave all the shots, drew the blood, and took x-rays.” Dr. Dengler agrees, “The first years were rough, but they were good years. I just had to go with the flow. A lot of mealtimes were interrupted.”



“It’s a very moving thing that an important need in the community has been met,” says Charlie Washburn, one of the Clinic’s founders.

It’s fitting that Charlie Washburn was the first scheduled patient when the Clinic opened. “I really needed a physical; I hadn’t had one in years,” Charlie says. “George told me it was the only physical I’d get on the house.”



Dr. Ted Phillips recalls, “The hard part about returning to family practice was writing my notes by hand.” Now, Dr. Wilson and Nurse Practitioner Cathy Doherty dictate their Clinic notes.

Dr. Dengler recalls he was busy from the very first day. “There was a huge backlog of untreated and undiagnosed chronic disease such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer.” He and Hildegard also remember, “There were lots of tragedies – plane crashes, motorcycle deaths, suicides...and there wasn’t a vet on the island either.” Dr. Dengler admits, “People would call about injured pigs, dogs, cats. It was tempting, but I never treated them.” He was creative, though, about getting prescriptions filled. If he called them in to the pharmacy in Friday Harbor by 3 p.m., they would send the medicines on the mail plane at 4 p.m., and patients picked them up at the airport.

Another fortunate coincidence happened the year the clinic opened; Dr. Ted Phillips and his wife bought property on Lopez. “I went in and introduced myself to George,” Dr. Phillips remembers. “He said he already knew about

me because I had bought Dick Navarre’s property.” Over the next fourteen years, Dr. Phillips served as Associate Dean and Acting Dean at the University of Washington School of Medicine. While there, he developed the Department of Family Medicine to increase the number of doctors in rural areas. He knew about that need from seven years in family practice in Alaska. “Every time I saw George I’d say something like, ‘sometime I’ll want to get back into family practice.’” In 1988, he was ready to make that move, and Dr. Dengler was ready for a long vacation. Dr. Dengler smiles, “I paid the Dean to work for me.”

“It was fun,” Dr. Phillips says, “like what I did in solo practice in Alaska. I did house calls, too – I had missed doing that in the city.” He continued as Dr. Dengler’s back-up for five years.

Dr. Dengler retired December 31, 1993, but he fills in occasionally for the Clinic’s current physician, Bob Wilson, who joined the staff in March 1997. “It’s like déjà vu!” Dr. Dengler explains about working there now. “It still feels much the same – I see some of the same diseases and some of the same patients. Now I see adults I took care of as children, and I’m taking care of their children, too. And Bob still uses my old wooden desk in his office.”

“My mother would be really proud,” Charlie says of the clinic as it is today – a 5,800-square-foot modern facility staffed by a skilled, dedicated team of health professionals. He knows a key to the clinic’s success is “there was a giving spirit all the way through – everyone gave something extra.” That giving spirit remains healthy today and honors well his mother’s legacy of always thinking of others first.



Don Poole, Jerry Eads, John Ottenheimer, and Charlie Washburn break ground for the original Clinic in 1973. It was named after Washburn’s mother, Catherine.



The Denglers, 1974.



First Clinic, built for about \$40,000.



Catherine Washburn, 1969.

“The Clinic has a great team of professionals who deliver a superb level of service,”
—Vince Oliver, CEO
Island Hospital.

Former staff and volunteers

George Dengler, MD
Hildegard Dengler
Jim Sprowell, MD
Nancy Morgan, MD
Robert Morgan, MD
Karen Gilbert, RN, MSN, ARNP
Linda Seger, RN
Dorothy Foote, LPN
Kimberly Sakstrup, RN
Diana Cochran
Barbara Drake, HCA
Rochelle Fowler
Penelope Gilde
Barbara Jennings
Lynn Rehaume
Patt Moore
Penelope Morton
Susan Herrera
Julie Doss
Jane Crawford
Kim Secunda, CNA
Jeannie Belanger
Jo Pope, RN
Pat Baker
Cynthia Holland



Dr. Bob Wilson on his arrival in 1997.



1999 expansion provided for larger ER.



Mireille Paulson breaks ground for the new expansion December 1, 1999.

A great team delivering superb service...all through the years

The Clinic has a great team of professionals who deliver a superb level of service,” says Vince Oliver, CEO of Island Hospital. That’s been true throughout the entire thirty year history of the Clinic, and here are the folks who have made up that team—then and now.



Current staff: Back row, L-R: Kai Sanburn, RN; Maribelle Doss, CHIT; Bob Wilson, MD; Tytti Langford, RN, PA. Front row, L-R: Jill Blair, RN, BSN; Betsy Greacen, RN, BSN; Cecelia Richmond, RN; Debra Madan, CHIT; Cathy Doherty, RN, MSN, ARNP; Robyn Buchanan (not pictured)



Physical Therapy Staff: Terri Drahn, PT; Linda Bartolucci, PT



Home Health Staff: Julia Rust, RN; Karen Hattman, RN; Joan Giard, OT; Alyson Stephens, PT (not pictured)