

# Admiral's Cove History

## Preface

Compiled by Joy Iverson, Bob Pickerill and Lee Hart, information from interviews with Herman Rorrer, Mark Harman, Nadine Ross, Fran Skinner, Barb Chapman, Mel West, Sid Iverson, George Bratton and John Klasell. This article was downloaded from the ACHOA website.

---

## 1. Development of the community

The community was started in 1963, when Robert Detrich and Kenneth Sanwick formed Admiral's Cove, Inc. and completed real estate transactions for a tract of land of about 80 acres. This also included tidelands. In 1967, Mr. Sanwick departed the Corporation and Craig Harmon replaced him as the new principle.

Herman Rorrer and his brother Hobart were employed to help prepare the land for development. The land had been logged in the 20s and 30s and still had huge stumps some as tall as 6 to 7 feet, and 4 to 5 feet across. Some stumps were removed with a bulldozer. Others required dynamite. They used about 200 cases of dynamite to blast out the stumps. On one occasion, one of the brothers had his pickup on site with 2 cases of dynamite and blasting caps in the back. Stumps were burning and sparks flying. A spark landed in the back of the pickup and exploded the dynamite, destroying the pickup. The owner said he didn't mind losing the pickup, but he sure hated to lose the full bottle of whiskey he had under the seat.

In addition to the 200 cases of dynamite used, one case was left over and stored at the well site. It was found after the Water District was formed and the new water system operator was cleaning out the old concrete block building. The case was leaking nitroglycerin. The Navy was called in to remove and dispose of the case.

The area was being developed as a highly desirable residential area. The first 80 acres became what are now known as Divisions 1, 2 and 6. Another 20 acres were acquired sometime later, which became Division 7. 40 acres came later and became Divisions 4 & 5. The first few homes constructed were at 87, 99, 119, and 127 Keystone.

A well water system was completed in 1963 to support the community. This was owned and managed by Admiral's Cove, Inc. until 1992. That year a special election was held and residents voted in favor of establishing the Admiral's Cove Water District. Three commissioners were elected. ACWD negotiated to purchase the existing system from Mrs. Ella Jane Detrich (wife of the deceased Robert Dietrich) for \$17,500. At the time of purchase, a moratorium on building permits was in effect established by Washington State Department of Health for non-compliance with Washington State Rules and regulations governing public water supplies. Once the Water District was formed, a Public Works Board low interest loan (available to government agencies) was obtained to upgrade the water system. Major improvements included: construction of two concrete 105,000 reservoirs, construction of a pump station with capacity to provide fire flow, installation of a generator to provide an emergency power supply, and re-equipping of one well and drilling of a third well in increase production to 400 gpm. The wells are supplied by an aquifer described as a recessional outwash channel crossing Central Whidbey in a north-south direction just east of the Town of Coupeville. The recharge is from Smith Prairie uplands area near the Navy's Outlying Field at Hwy 20 and Patmore Road. The water is very hard but is free of iron, manganese, and hydrogen sulfide that plague many wells in Island County.

The first road put in was Admiral's Drive. It originally extended from the entrance at the highway down to where Farragut is now. Later a work road was extended down to the pool area. Then work on the lake began.

Arrangements were made to sell lots through McPherson Realty with Bob Holmes in charge of the sales staff. Originally, lots sold for \$4,250, with water front going for \$10,000. Mr. Holmes purchased a lot and constructed his own home here. The first Real Estate office was located at what is now 1250 Admirals Drive. The Real Estate office was later moved to 1260 Farragut and the first office was sold as a home.

In 1963, the developers constructed a bulkhead for the water front lots with buried logs 2 to 3 feet high. At the high end, glacial rocks were placed in front to protect the bulkhead. The bulkheads held up until the winter of 1998/1999 when major storms washed out the bulkheads for several of the residents. For some homes, repairs were made with quarry rocks and others used a new corrugated vinyl called Shove Guard.

Building in the Cove proceeded from the first four homes to a total of 76 in 1976, 94 in 1978, an estimated 200 in 1990, to 440 in 2008.

## **2. Birth of the Lake**

What is now the lake was originally a swamp. A dragline was used to dig a hole big enough to float a dredge. They hooked up an 8 inch steel dredge pipe and forced the sand and gravel from the hole. With 2 eight hour crews working, this project took about a year to complete. All of Keystone Drive was constructed on top of the 3 to 4 foot of sand and gravel from what is now the lake. Also, a canal was cut from the far end of the lake to where Highway 20 is at this time. This was also cut with the drag line.

The initial plan was to dredge a channel to the salt water so residents would be able to bring boats into the lake. This for some reason didn't materialize, probably because of the cost involved.

The ACBC Board arranged to have the lake stocked in 1991, 1992, and 1993 at a cost of \$3,000. To help recoup the cost, the plan was to sell \$5 fishing permits. So, for residents, no fishing license was required but the permit was. There was a small floating raft in the center of the lake. Otters used this for sunbathing. Residents reported that sometimes the otters and the seagulls fought over the fish.

The lake was graced with a few tame geese in the late 80s. The Board authorized the use of funds to feed the geese and had a resident do that on a regular basis. The flock grew, with new goslings every year. Soon, the flock grew to 60 to 70 geese, the cost of feeding them got out of hand, and that many birds became a nuisance. So, a few residents devised a make-shift trap, lured the geese in, and captured them. These were taken away by an off-island family with a need for them. That left 4 or 5 geese on the lake. They have had no offspring, and the number as of this time, is only two.

In 2004, a Lake Committee was formed to study the lake and determine if things needed to be done for the health of the lake. They employed the help of a consulting Fisheries Biologist for this purpose. General information developed indicated the lake area is 9 to 10 acres, maximum depth is 15 to 20 feet, main water source is ground water and rainwater runoff, and the principal pond outlet is via canal to Highway 20, and then flows to Crocket Lake west of Admirals Cove. A 12 inch culvert at the east end of the Lake serves as an overflow for the lake. A tide gate was originally placed on the salt water side to prevent saltwater incursion. This no longer functions correctly and was replaced in 2007 with a tide gate on the lake end of the drainpipe.

The lake was stocked with about 4,000 juvenile rainbow trout between 4 to 6 inches long in 2005. This was accomplished with donations from about 7 of our residents.

By 2007, the name of the Lake was unclear. On various maps, you could find 4 different names for it. Residents were asked to submit suggestions for naming the Lake. The 3 most popular names submitted were: Admiral's Cove Lake, Admiral's Lake, and Cove Lake. The Board will need to present a request to the County before the name becomes final.

## **3. Construction, operation and maintenance of the pool.**

The Olympic sized pool was designed by the firm of Harmon, Pray, and Detrich, Architects and Engineers. The construction of the pool and building was accomplished by Paul Meyer Construction of Seattle. The pool first opened on May 30, 1969. At that time, there were no benches or tables, and volunteers joined in to paint the necessary stripes prior to opening day. Adults watching the kids swim had to sit on the concrete at first. Tables, chairs and lounge chairs have been added over the years.

Some families have come to the pool to make a day of it. They bring coolers, crock pots, etc. and swim, visit, have dinner and a good time.

In the early 70s, the Coupeville Lions Club contracted with the ACBC to rent the pool for the first week or two of the swim season for Kids swimming lessons. This has continued each year since. The Lions organize teachers and support people to conduct the lessons. Students come from all over the Island. Some years see as many as 200 to 250 kids taking part in these. This would translate to over 7,000 children that learned to swim in the ACBC pool. This is a service to the Whidbey Island community we can be proud of.

In the 1980s, the Beach Club sponsored a swim team of residents. They competed with other swim teams on the Island. A small stipend was paid to the Swim Team Coach.

The schedule at the Pool typically involves a time set aside for (1) Adult Lap Swim, (2) Aerobics class, and (3) open swim times for adults and kids. There is a small Sauna attached to both the Men's dressing room and the Women's dressing room for those that wish to utilize them. (At this time, the Men's Sauna is not operational due to an electrical problem with the heater.)

Over the years, a few major improvements have been made to the pool or building. In 2001 the Club changed from oil to propane heat. Also added was a new heating system for the pool. The electrical system was completely updated to bring it up to code in 2007. Major repairs were made in the spring of 2008, when the wall on the pool side of the building was removed and new sills and siding were installed. (Accomplished by volunteers leaving only the cost of materials paid by the Beach Club,)

There have been many hours devoted to minor repairs and repainting over the years. This was also done primarily by resident volunteers. The use of volunteers continues now as this is written. Even minor items can be expensive. In 2004, the chlorinator was replaced at a cost of \$4,000, and a filter at \$2,000.

There are major improvements that have been needed but not accomplished. The basin of the pool has become rough. Many users, especially children have sore feet after spending time swimming. The pool deck is also in need of re-coating, having many cracks. Money has not been available for these major repairs.

Pool usage has increased some along with the number of homes in the Cove. In 1981, the pool was open 75 days with a total of 4,695 swimmers, averaging 62 per day. In 2007, 5600 swimmers used the pool, averaging 70 per day.

#### **4. Setting up the Admiral's Cove Beach Club & its role in community life.**

ACBC was incorporated October, 1969. Membership was to be of 2 classes: Active membership was restricted to those owning property in Admiral's Cove. Associate Members are those not having property here, but applying for membership to use recreational facilities and meeting requirements set forth by the Beach Club. The object of the Club was to provide and operate the maximum recreational facilities possible within budget constraints.

Arrangements were made to transfer the pool and land from Admiral's Cove, Inc to ACBC on December 10, 1969 in exchange for \$10,000. This was done with a proviso that the pool and other facilities on the land be maintained and operated by ACBC, and that they be kept free and clear of all liens and encumbrances. The lake remained the property of Admiral's Cove, Inc. and subsequent owners until 2006, at which time it was deeded to ACBC.

In 1995, arrangements were made to transfer the responsibility of the Architectural Control Committee to the ACBC. Prior to that, this function was one retained by Admiral's Cove, Inc. under the direction of Ella Mae Detrich (wife of Robert). ACBC then established an Architectural Control Committee under the jurisdiction of the Board.

At the annual membership meeting in October, 2007, the membership voted to move from the Recreational status to a Homeowner's Association. (Effective April 28, 2008 The State of Washington approved our status as the Admiral's Cove Home Owner's Association. The next step, now underway, is to update our by-laws and covenants. As this is done, it will involve voter approval of changes made.)

Operation of ACBC has required many volunteers to serve on the Beach Club Board and to Chair and run the committees. The names of those serving as Board Members over the years are posted in the Shelter. This shows that many residents have served for substantial periods of time, some as long as 5 years on the Board. One long time resident served over 15 years as the Chair of the Nominating Committee. We should all be very thankful for the service of all of these individuals.

#### **5. Construction of the Shelter, Storage Shed and Playground**

The first section of the shelter to be constructed is the portion with the wood burning fireplaces. This was accomplished in 1976. This had a roof but no sides. (The walls on the water side were added later to provide a windbreak). The round timbers were donated by a resident who also spent many weekends shaving off the bark so they could be used. Much of the other wood washed up on shore after a barge spilled its load. There was a good deal of volunteer labor in connection with early development. Also,

about 1976, a playground was built including swings, teeter totters, climbing bars, a slide and merry-go-round.

The enclosed portion of the Shelter was constructed in 1982. All of the staining and painting inside and out was by volunteers. Prior to having that, social activities were pretty much confined to the summer months. After 1982, the shelter was used a good deal during the winter for such things as pinochle, poker, dominos and other games.

Potlucks were started before the construction of either portion of the shelter. These proved to be very popular with residents and property owners. As many as 180 people attended the early potlucks including many property owners from off the Island who had not begun construction here. Drawings were held to dispense gifts to the lucky winners. On one occasion, those in charge of the potluck spent \$118 on prizes. Some Beach Club board members voiced concern that this was far too much. Tickets were given to those in attendance and added ones were sold for \$1. Turned out the gifts were so desired that they took in over \$100 in ticket sales.

In 2003, some recreational items around the grounds were in need of repair. The Merry-go-round boards were deteriorating, the posts were gone from the horse shoe pits, the volley ball net was torn, and the posts for the basketball court had no back boards, goals or nets. A small group volunteered to refurbish these. All the boards on the merry-go-round were replaced and minor changes made for safety reasons. The other items were all corrected and put back into use. (Similar repairs were made to the merry-go-round in 1981.)

In 1998, the ACBC Board became concerned with liability issues in connection with the playground. The equipment was becoming worn and the playground was not up to safety standards of the day. So, the playground equipment, with the exception of the Merry-go-round, was removed.

In 2004, residents voted in favor of putting in a new playground and approved a small special assessment to pay for the equipment. Volunteers put the play ground items together and planted them with concrete. The area was covered with 110 cubic yards of engineered wood fiber making the area in compliance with safety standards. ACBC decided to name the playground the "Grace Hopper Playground". Grace Hopper was the first female Admiral in the U. S .Navy.

The storage shed was constructed in 1982 by a resident volunteer. This included pouring a concrete slab, bolting sills in, making the framework and putting on the siding and roof. Materials were financed by the Beach Club.