



# Health Matters

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

## Brief History of the Clinic

**1971** - Small group of Lopez Islanders formed the Catherine Washburn Memorial Association (CWMA) to develop a clinic to serve the primary medical care needs of the community

**April 1974** - New 900 square-foot Clinic opened and was staffed by Dr. George Dengler and his wife, Hildegard

**1981** - Clinic expanded to 2400 feet

**1993** - Dr. Dengler retired, though he continued to fill in through 2006

**1994** - Building renovated in a remodel the Board thought would be adequate for ten years

**1997** - Dr. Robert Wilson became the Clinic physician

**1999** - Triage area updated and expanded; Clinic enlarged to current 5,800 square feet.

## Clinic's First Physician

# Remembering Dr. Dengler

It was thirty-four years ago this spring that the Lopez Island Medical Clinic opened its doors and provided a home for the medical practice of Dr. George Dengler. He and his wife, Hildegard, staffed the Clinic in those early days, making medical care available on Lopez for the first time. Dr. Dengler's death last fall is a loss to the entire community, but the benefits from his compassion, skill, and dedication remain.

There was much excitement on Lopez when the Denglers arrived. A group of dedicated Lopezians had formed the Catherine Washburn Memorial Association (CWMA) in 1971 and worked for three years to build a clinic. When their plan to staff it with a nurse practitioner fell through, the Denglers came to the rescue. Charlie Washburn, Catherine's son and the first president of the board of the CWMA, remembers that George contacted CWMA Board member Pat Roe to say he was ready for a change from his demanding family medicine practice in Seattle. "We were elated that a doctor was interested, but we didn't know anything about him," Charlie remembers. He asked Sandy Bill, a prominent Seattle physician who had moved to Lopez, to check George out. His report back to CWMA - "this man has impeccable qualities."

Those words and others are commonly used to describe Dr. Dengler. Although he retired fifteen years ago, several of the current Clinic staff and many he provided care for remember him well.



George and Hildegard in front of Clinic - 1974

Maribelle Doss, Clinic receptionist and health records technician, is one of those many people who has warm memories of Dr. Dengler both as a co-worker and physician; she worked with him from 1978-81 and again from 1990 until his retirement in 1993. "He was a very special person, always there when you needed him," she remembers. "He was easy to work with, and he really cared about his patients."

Clinic Manager, Jill Blair, worked with Dr. Dengler for

two years and had many opportunities to see him in action with patients and staff. "What I remember ever so much was how George treated everyone with respect," she says. "As far as he was concerned, there was only one level of care for everyone, and that was the best."

There's no doubt Dr. Dengler set the standard for the high quality of care provided on Lopez. Although he had worked in cities for much of his career, he understood the unique needs of a remote, rural community. In 2004, when the Clinic celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, Dr. Dengler reminisced about his new role as the only doctor here. "Our very first night on the island, someone came knocking at our door at 2 a.m. There was a wreck, and the driver had a broken back. We transferred him to the fire hall in an old hearse and took care of him there overnight. He went to the hospital the next day and survived."

Back then, as now, there also was an influx of people with different health needs in the summer. "The island was busy with the fish-

continued on page 2

## How to Contribute to Dr. Dengler's Memorial

Many people have contributed to a fund established for the commissioned portrait of Dr. Dengler. Donations are still welcome and can be sent to:

CWMA  
P.O. Box 309  
Lopez Island,  
WA 98261

If you have questions about the memorial, please contact CWMA Board member Tammy Cowan at 468-2191

# Doctor Dengler

continued from page 1



**Dr. Bob Wilson uses the desk Dr. Dengler brought to the Clinic in 1974**

ing industry,” Dr. Dengler remembered, “with several hundred people working at Mackaye Harbor in the summer. Camp Nor’ wester kept us busy, too. It brought about 350 people to the island in the summer and we took care of injuries and illnesses ranging from falling off horses to sore throats and rashes.”

Dr. Dengler’s experience proved invaluable to current Clinic physician, Bob Wilson. “When we first interviewed here on Lopez, Susan and I went to see George and Hildegard,” Dr. Wilson says. “They were warm, welcoming, supportive, and very informative about what it would be like to work here. I always considered him a mentor and a colleague. We’d talk about what it’s like being a doctor in an isolated place – something other doctors really don’t understand.”

Oscar and Alie Smaalders are among many people who benefited from Dr. Dengler’s understanding that practicing medicine on an island is a little different than on the mainland. “A few years after we moved here in 1982, Oscar had his first symptoms of a heart problem,” Alie recalls. “It was Labor Day weekend, and we thought, ‘what do we do?’ Well, we just called Dr. Dengler at home, and he met us at the Clinic and took care of Oscar.” Another islander who got a house call from Dr. Dengler is CWMA Board member Tammy Cowan. “He was the

sweetest man,” Tammy says. “Once he came to the house when my back went out.”

In addition to the fond memories and Dr. Dengler’s legacy of quality care, there is other evidence of his contribution around the Clinic. In 2000, the triage room was dedicated to George and Hildegard. A shiny plaque on the wall commemorates their years of service from 1974 through 1993. Dr. Dengler’s desk remains at the Clinic as well, now in Dr. Wilson’s office. “I remember his big wooden

desk well,” says Alie. “After Dr. Dengler had seen you in the exam room, he’d have you get dressed and go to his office. He’d sit behind his desk and talk to you about your health.”

Soon, there will be another tribute to Dr. Dengler at the Clinic - in April, the CWMA Board commissioned Lopez painter Christa Malay to do a portrait of him. “I’m working from two photos of him wearing his familiar corduroy jacket with patches on the elbows,” Christa says. “I haven’t decided yet whether the painting will be a watercolor or pastels.” When she does, it will serve as one more reminder of this man who gave so much to his community.



**Christa Malay at work on a portrait of Dr. Dengler**

## New Addition to Care Options

# Hamlet Warmly Welcomed

Staff at the Lopez Island Medical Clinic and Catherine Washburn Memorial Association (CWMA) Board members know all too well the distress islanders feel when an illness or injury demands a level of care unavailable here. Clinic Manager, Jill Blair, is one of the founders of Hospice and Home Support, and she and staff members Cecelia Richmond and Heather Arps (see story page 4) all provided home care in the past. Ann Norman, CWMA Board member, conducted research five years ago about the needs of Lopez elders for housing. So it's no surprise that they were oohing and aahing, along with lots of other Lopezians, at the March open house for Hamlet House, the Lopez Housing Options (LOHO) adult family home.

The state-of-the-art facility, designed specifically for adults who need some assistance and can no longer live independently, is part of the LOHO Hamlet in the heart of Lopez Village. Rip Van Camp, LOHO board president, and Nancy Luebke, Adult Family Home (AFH) Committee Chair, explained this facility, along with separate, adjacent cottages, will help assure that people aren't forced to leave Lopez because of health issues. "Our goal," Rip says, "is to make it possible for the island's elders to continue to enjoy this community, their friends and their families." Resident Manager, Terri Fox, echoes that philosophy. "We're here to support people's independence," she says, "and to serve as a cog in the care wheel on Lopez. We'll work hand-in-hand with the Clinic, pharmacy, and other health care providers so we can really serve the residents."

During the Open House, Ann remembered focus groups Jan Sundquist and Ginger Riggins conducted in 2003. "They recruited a representative group of seventy island seniors and caregivers, met with them in small groups, and asked how they felt about having a community-based, congregate housing facility for elders here on Lopez," Ann says. "In the process, they also asked lots of

questions about related needs and preferences. It was so amazing to walk into Hamlet House and see how closely it conforms to what the majority of people said they would prefer."

Each of the six resident apartments has a private bathroom, large closet, telephone and satellite TV

hook-ups and colorful decor. A walk-in tub and shower room is available for residents who need assistance bathing. There's also a dining area, a fully-equipped kitchen, and a small, private room where residents can socialize with friends and family. "The common living room has high ceilings and huge windows that provide lots of light," Ann says. "There's a wall of bookshelves at one end and a nice little fireplace in the corner with a comfy sofa and chairs. And the art is magnificent!" Lopez artists Steve Hill and Colin Goode have provided paintings and plan to change the exhibit every few months.

Licensed by the State of Washington as an Adult Family Home, Hamlet House provides housing and twenty-four hour care. Terri brings over thirty years of caregiving experience to her role as Resident Manager, including ten years managing a six-resident adult family home in Bellingham. She is eager to talk with potential residents about services available, costs, and the application process; she can be reached at 468-3800.



**Hamlet House is just one part of the LOHO vision viewed here by (l to r) Gail McCallum, Chip Paxson, Murray Trelease, and Jan Sundquist.** Susan Breslow photo

## Hamlet House Facts

LOHO Adult Family Home – Hamlet House

Home-like facility for up to six residents

273 Village Rd.

For more information contact:

Terri Fox,  
Resident Manager  
468-3800

hamlet  
house@rockisland.  
com

## CWMA Board Members

San Olson,  
President

Don Langrock,  
Vice President

Wendy Mickle,  
Secretary

Rick Gadd,  
Treasurer

Tamara Cowan

Diana Hancock

Ann Norman

Chuck Pope

Joe Thornton

# Heather Arps Joins Clinic Staff

If you've been in the Clinic lately, you might have been greeted by a new, but familiar, face. Long-time Lopez resident, Heather Arps, joined the staff in December, working two days per week as a Health Care Assistant. Clinic Manager, Jill Blair, couldn't be happier. "Heather has worked in home care for many years, so she comes with a strong knowledge base. She's quickly learning new procedures such as taking x-rays and doing EKGs, and she has a wonderful ability to put patients at ease. We're thrilled she's part of the team."

Being part of a team is important to Heather. She's even coined a new word for it – teamship. "Building teams has been my major focus in home care," Heather says. "I think of it like building a relationship, but it's a team, so 'teamship' seems like a good description." She's put that idea into action ever since she and her husband, Hawk, moved to Lopez in 1988, and she became an independent care-

giver here. As a certified nursing assistant, she's cared for many islanders who might not have been able to remain at home with-

out her physical help and case management. "I do a lot of networking with people to build a strong team of caregivers," she says. "I've always had a good relationship with the Clinic, and working here makes the partnership that much more seamless."

When she's not at the Clinic, Heather has plenty to keep her busy. She continues to provide home care and supports the network of caregivers so vital to the team approach she promotes. For months she's been applying her "teamship" skills to the Odlin South

Preservation Project, an effort to preserve 103 acres of undeveloped land near Odlin Park. She's also Mom to two sons (twenty-one-year-old Kestrel and sixteen-year-old Mica) and somehow finds time to quilt, knit, and garden as well.



**"I feel really fortunate to be working where I am and to be caring for the elders in our community," says Heather Arps, new Health Care Assistant at the Clinic.**

## Health Matters

Catherine Washburn Memorial Association  
Lopez Island Clinic  
P.O. Box 309 • Lopez, WA 98261  
Phone 360-468-2245

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Bellingham, WA  
PERMIT No. 114

CWMA Communications:  
Ann Duecy Norman  
Editor: Iris Graville

