

Polish Club



Democrats call the hall home

THE Polish Club is the home of the Grays Harbor Democratic Party.

When it first became so is not exactly known as the records of the party were burned by an irate secretary in the early



1970s when the Vietnam War and George McGovern's candidacy set off internecine squabbling.

The Twin Harbors can stake a good claim to the title of being the most Democratic counties in the state over the past 65 years.

Consequently, virtually all major state Democratic officials have found their way to the Polish Club at one time or another, with Sen. Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson, Sen. Warren G. Magnuson and Gov. Albert Rosellini among the notables.

Party politics festered in 1972 when the McGovern

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forces (led by longshoreman Glen Ramiskey and flamboyant Westport attorney Jim Duree) out-dueled Scoop Jackson's far more conservative "favorite son" contingent for delegates to the state convention.

The process of jockeying for delegates will be long remembered in the annals of the club and the party. By all accounts, the Harbor's premier politician, county commissioner John Pearsall, turned in a masterful performance as party chairman. He retained control over those heated debates.

Then there was the night the sheriff and a few politicians decided to continue some political discussions in the bar — a time-honored tradition — after a party meeting and became hapless witnesses to an armed robbery. The thief cleaned out the till. Legend has it that the

sheriff sat on his wallet. The case was never solved.

One of the most challenging speeches a politician must give is the one before his peers. Candidates' Night at a Democratic Party meeting at the Polish Club has been the platform for many classic speeches — some that elevated candidates to high office, while others stumbled to defeat and obscurity.

The wheeling and dealing of classic behind-the-scenes politics, episodes that have shaped our government, could never be adequately chronicled.

The echoes of those conversations are encased in the walls of the Polish Club, never to be released. As long as the walls stand, they will be a monument to the Democrats — some liberal, some conservative, most in between, who have shaped public life here on the Harbor and around the state.

Labor union roots run deep at the Aberdeen Polish Club

By Don Norkoski

Club president/manager/janitor

THE Polish Club's long history with organized labor is symbolized by an article in its archives — a ballot box for the Airplane & Piano Parts Workers' Union.

In the 1940s, the club became home to the largest union on Grays Harbor, the Plywood Workers, with more than 3,000 members. Union officials maintained an office at the club. The upstairs meeting room was the scene of regular sessions as they met with representatives from dozens of local mills.

The Machinists' Union met at the club during the same era.

The Association of Western Pulp & Paper Workers, Local 315, (Grays Harbor Paper) met there for more than 20 years.

Weyerhaeuser sawmill workers still meet at the hall once in a while, while the club's tavern workers belong to the Culinary Alliance &

Bartenders' Union, Local 791.

There was an attempt in 1990 to form a labor temple at the club. Many union officials showed interest but some negative reactions from the rank-and-file in a couple of the unions killed the project.

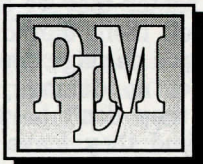
There's no better example of the relationship of a labor hall to its members than the bitter strike between AWPPW Local 169 and the ITT Rayonier pulp mill.

Local 169 turned to the club as a bastion to solidify its members. Dinners, dances, a rummage sale, a Christmas party and many meetings were used to inform, encourage and supply the needs of its members.

Windows were shot out at the club, arrests on the picket line and even threats of striker replacements could not break the solidarity that jelled at the club.

Local labor history may not record this as one of its major victories, but it will always be remembered as a profile in courage.

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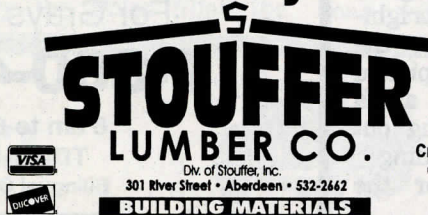
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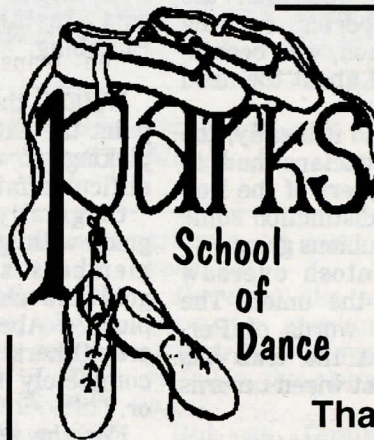
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