New Wallie Funk photo exhibit celebrates Anacortes fishing heritage

Exhibit opening reception and Plaza Dance are June 6

Enthusiastic send-offs of the fishing fleet and weekend fishermen’s dances were central features of life in Anacortes for decades.

Join us June 6 when we celebrate this heritage with two events — the opening of a fishing photo exhibit followed by an old-fashioned Plaza Dance. Both events are free and take place during the Anacortes Waterfront Festival.

The Wallie Funk Fishing Photo Exhibit at the Anacortes Maritime Heritage Center officially opens at 5 p.m. June 6 with a reception hosted by the Anacortes Museum Foundation. The exhibit features Funk’s mid-century photos of the fishing fleet, with an emphasis on a 1958 trip in which he was “shanghaied” by a crew as a prank. Instead of leaving the boat after a few hours, Funk chose to stay aboard — with his camera — all the way to Alaska.

Some of the fishermen photographed by Funk on this trip will participate in an informal discussion of their experiences and on the mid-century salmon industry in Puget Sound and Alaskan waters. The exhibit celebrates our maritime heritage and features some of the images and stories featured in Funk’s new book “Pictures of the Past,” which was produced by the Anacortes Museum.

After the reception, the action moves next door to the Depot, where the community is invited to an outdoor Plaza Dance. Thanks to the generous support of the Manieri Endowment of the Anacortes Public Library, the talented A'Town Big Band will perform at this free event.

The dance is a tribute to our community’s maritime heritage, and the location recalls Great Depression-era “pavement dances” that entertained locals and up to 1,000 visiting fishermen. Anacortes was a salmon-season haven of the fishing fleet for a century. Some local residents may have been unnerved when the weekend population swelled, but most joined the fun of the Fishermen’s Dances, and respected how the fleet contributed to the local economy.

A'Town Big Band, founded in 2013, is Skagit County’s newest big band. Its energetic melodies and rhythms are as versatile as its members. A'Town Big Band performs the music of Stan Kenton, Count Basie, Maynard Ferguson, Bob Curnow, Buddy Rich and more.

Come dance to swing classics and help renew the tradition of the dances that welcomed the crews for fun and music after a hard week’s work.

Bon voyage to Jenny Market;
Welcome aboard Dave Margeson, Lyndon Greene

Visitors to the W.T. Preston will be greeted by new faces this year following the retirement of longtime docent Jenny Market.

Dave Margeson and Lyndon Greene have taken on docent duties, such as leading tours and sharing the history of the retired U.S. Army Corps of Engineers snagboat with visitors. They have also been putting in hours helping to get the brass polished and the facilities shipshape for the season.

Thank you Jenny for your years of dedication to the W.T. Preston, and for your passion for sharing the sternwheeler’s history with visitors. And welcome aboard to Dave and Lyndon, who are great new additions to the Preston’s crew.

This newsletter is produced by the staff of the Anacortes Museum and edited by Elaine Walker
The release of our new book, *Pictures of the Past* by Wallie Funk, was a runaway success in both sales and good will.

Wallie was the star of the show at the book release party May 9, signing books for everyone who was willing to wait in the very long line. Town Crier Richard Riddell opened the events with a rousing cry, then, after speeches, there was cake and the extended book signing. At least 100 people attended the main event.

Foundation Board members Jim Taylor, Barbara Larson and Tom Thompson sold 220 books that day. Barbara also oversaw a silent auction of poster-sized photos that brought in more than $500 for the foundation.

There were many people to thank, including Jack Darnton and the Anacortes American for co-hosting the event and for support for the book.

Since *Pictures of the Past* was released, we have sold more than 350 copies — more than enough to repay the foundation for the cost of printing. And there will be more book events coming up in the next year, as we gear up for the City of Anacortes’ 125th anniversary.

Photos, previous page, from top: Wallie Funk signs copies of “Pictures of the Past,” with solid backup from his family; Center: Anacortes American Publisher Jack Darnton speaks, while book editor Elaine Walker, Museum Director Steve Oakley and Town Crier Richard Riddell await their turns; Lower left: Jim Taylor, Barbara Larson and Tom Thompson sold 220 books at the opening event; Lower right: the book cover made a great cake decoration. Volunteers, including members of the Museum Advisory Board, served cake and cookies to the crowd.

Above left: This newspaper dress by Lisa Kuhnlein was one of the displays celebrating the Anacortes American’s 125th birthday. Above right: People waited patiently in line to get Wallie Funk’s autograph. Below, Carl, Casey, Mark and Pam Funk pose with Wallie. Thank you to the whole family for helping to make this event so special. We couldn’t have done it without you.

**Extra! Extra!**

Fun things began to happen even before the shipment of “Pictures of the Past” arrived. (The books finally got here one day before our first big event, but that’s another story).

On May 6, former Anacortes American paper-boys Dick Iversen and Jim Williamson (pictured below) came in, excited that they had been featured in the American that week and eager to buy copies of “Pictures of the Past.” We showed them the poster-sized version of their photo, which Dick later bought in the Foundation’s silent auction. Dick, at left, was the boy in the center, and Jim was the boy at right. The third boy was Tim Gaynor.