

## Marrowstone Island Brief 9

Two extensive greenbelt areas in the Marrowstone community are Fort Flagler and Indian Island. Once an Army base, Fort Flagler was purchased by the Washington State Department of Parks and Recreation in April, 1954 from the General Services Administration. Indian Island was purchased by the Navy in 1940 from individual land owners. Today, the keepers of the gate at Fort Flagler State Park, and the Naval Ordnance Center, are Mike Zimmerman, park manager, and Cdr. John Paul Johnston Officer in Charge of the Hadlock Detachment on Indian Island.

Mike and Hope Zimmerman have planted their hearts in Fort Flagler State Park. They moved in June, 1998, into a former Army Officer's house with their two sons Clayton, 11 and Reid, 10. The house faces the panoramic view of Admiralty Inlet with the rim of the Cascades framing the outline of Whidbey Island. Prior to their move they lived a year in Port Elliot, 40 miles south of Adelaide, south Australia. Mike took a job exchange for a year with a ranger from one of Australia's National Parks. A unique experience from living in a different culture for the Zimmermans was the abundance of "chooks" or chickens of every variety. Rather than the ubiquitous dogs and cats running about in an American neighborhood, chooks were everywhere in their Australian neighborhood. The chooks were mostly Bantam or other small species. Having become accustomed to chickens Clayton and Reid began raising them after moving to Fort Flagler. Their efforts have grown into a small egg business. Since there are a variety of chickens the eggs come in different colors. Clayton and Reid ride their bikes to deliver the eggs to customers. Often their delivery is accompanied with a small homemade gift. It may be a flower picked along the way to their customer's house, or an oyster shell filled with suet for the birds. For a delivery of farm fresh eggs call them at 385-1259.

Mike Zimmerman harbors a special feeling for Fort Flagler State Park. He and wife Hope feel a kinship to it that extends beyond the bounds of the park and into the Nordland community. They have both joined MICA and want to encourage the islanders to share the same concern they have for the park.

Presently, Fort Flagler State Park is closed four months out of the year to campers. The museum is open 11-4 on weekends during the winter. The park's potential for operating year round with multi-purpose facilities open to the public is recognized by Mike. As park manager he plans to keep the island community informed of future plans for the park and would encourage everyone to become involved.

April will be the month when a team of planners arrives to do a study on how to improve the visitors' and tourists' facilities, and services. In addition there will be an open house for the public to participate in the planning. The barracks, a theatre, miles of beaches, and a fishing pier are some places on the list for improvements to be made. Everyone is invited to come and offer an opinion to which direction the fort should take in making these changes.

The park's budget allows for physical improvements and maintenance, however, as any entrepreneur knows, the cost of labor takes a chunk out of any budget. The park needs volunteers from the community to man the museum during open hours, and for other sundry chores.

Bob and Marybelle Brown of Fort Gate Road walk the trails daily. They have volunteered their time to help keep the trails clear of debris. Like any other community, it's as good as it's people make it. The Browns help to keep the park clean and enjoyable for everyone. Volunteers like the Browns are needed.

The park's large officers' housing have recently been improved and they are available to rent. They are ideal for anyone looking for housing during a family reunion or to house guests coming from out of state to a wedding. For more information call the office of Fort Flagler

State Park at 385-3701.

Mike would also like to remind everyone that the campground reopens on February 26th; the museum will be open seven days a week beginning the first of May.

Indian Island has always been part of the Marrowstone community. After World War II Navy ships were mothballed in Kilisut Harbor and islanders were hired as watchmen or civil servants on the base. During the Cold War years it stood separate as a Navy entity and its seclusion was looked upon as a barrier between the Navy and the Nordland community. After the Cold War was won, the barrier was down. The Navy has participated in the Hadlock Days celebration by running tours around Indian Island and opening the roadways for the Fourth of July Deer Run. After the demise of Hadlock Days, the Navy has been a major participant in the Jefferson Days Celebration in conjunction with the members of the Tri-Area Chamber of Commerce.

On the 4th of July, the Navy has opened its gate to civilians welcoming them to join in the Deer Run, Duck Egg Contest, old fashioned games for adults and children held at Crane Point, tours around the island; and an evening fireworks display from a Navy barge is the Fourth of July finale.

Commander John Paul Johnston and his wife Brenda moved to Indian Island a year ago. He began his career as a Navy diver and is the last co-holder of the Navy's deep diver record who is still on active duty. In December, 1979, Cdr. Johnston volunteered to participate in the Navy's Experimental Diving Unit's largest hyperbaric activity held in Panama City, Florida. They were the guinea pigs locked in a pressure chamber at 1800 feet for 37 days. Cdr. Johnston did not suffer adverse effects other than cumulative aches and pains from his diving career.

Since becoming the Officer in Charge of the Indian Island Detachment, Cdr. Johnston has not done any diving however, in four weeks he will be assisting in an under water survey of the longest Navy pier on the West Coast which was built 20 years ago at Indian Island. There is an Jettringite intrusion on the concrete pilings caused by a reaction of saltwater to cement. The pilings will eventually be replaced.

After 28 and a half years in the Navy this is Commander Johnston's twilight tour of duty. His orders to the Naval Ordnance Center at Indian Island have been extended another year, adding two years before his retirement when he and Brenda plan to settle in the area.

John Doney and Chuck Russell of East Marrowstone Road are Rotarians who recently returned from a 10 day visit to North Vietnam. Both men are veterans of the Vietnam war of 30 years ago. Their aim was to help establish a Rotary club in Hanoi from which monetary funds could be channeled to help the orphanages and handicapped children. Unfortunately, they could not accomplish this since there was a Tet celebration in progress and all businesses were closed for the holiday. Chuck's tour of the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" prison camp built by the French for Vietnamese dissidents, and later used for American prisoners of war was a chilling experience. Ironically, a new Hilton Hotel now exists next to the prison camp museum. An interesting discovery for Chuck happened in the Ho Chi Minh museum where he saw 10 American squadron or unit patches on display under a glass case. Of all the thousands of different patches worn by the men and women in the military, one of the ten picked for display in the museum was Chuck's "squadron, HC-7's three headed dog.

Valentine Day's Massacre. Pet owners beware of the coyotes. They are brazen creatures who pick off little pets right from your front door. My mixed breed Chihuahua/terrier Minnie was masscared on Valentine's Day. At another time Darlene Good lost her Pomeranian to the wily predators. Beware.