

They served in our wars and the building of America

by Jerry Bates

OUR guest for the January General Meeting was Jackie Jones-Hook of Tacoma's Buffalo Soldiers Museum. Her father was the founder of the museum. She is carrying on his dream of recognizing these African American units of the U.S. Army. Besides promoting the black soldier's contribution to America's history, a story often forgotten, her organization is also deeply involved with needs of today's youth; working with the Tacoma schools as a history resource and with kids who have challenges and are in need of positive life skills.

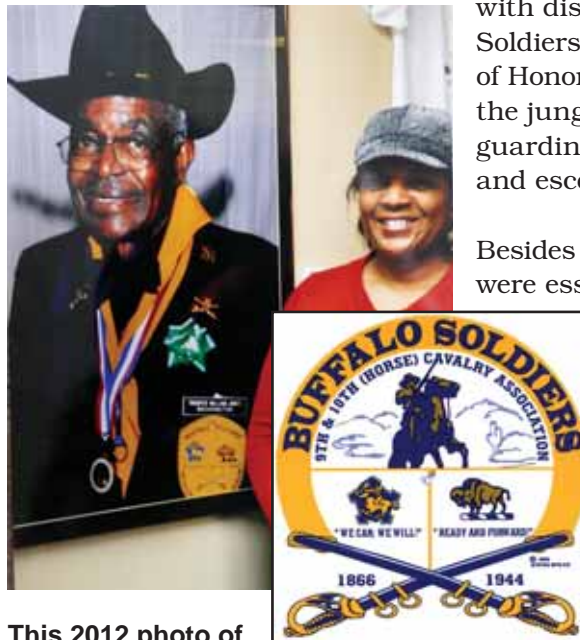
The establishment of an all-black unit in the Army was started after the Civil War in 1866 to help rebuild the country and patrol the remote western frontier. They protected settlers by fighting Indians and bandits, guarded stage-coaches, built forts, roads, and mapped the wilderness. By the 1890s they comprised 20 percent of the America frontier cavalry, winning 18 Medals of Honor, all while having the lowest desertion rate in the Army. During this period, they earned their name "Buffalo Soldiers," thanks to the Indians, who compared their hair and toughness with that of the Buffalo. This title was seen as an honor, for the Buffalo was sacred to the Indian culture.

After the west was won, future units fought in the Spanish-American War serving Cuba and the Philippines. The 9th and 10th Cavalries fought beside Theodore Roosevelt's "Rough Riders" helping them to storm San Juan Hill, again serving with distinction—six Buffalo Soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor. They also fought in the jungles of the Philippines—guarding communication lines and escorting supply trains.

Besides battlefield duty, they were essential in the formation of the United States National Park System—guarding the parks, building trails and facilities.

The black soldier pulled his military duty with honor, but a deeper motivation propelled them—to prove themselves as good as white soldiers. The opportunity was fulfilled

in World War II with the all black "Triple Nickle," 555 Paratrooper Battalion. Most in the Army thought black men were not up to jumping out of a plane into enemy territory—but *they* knew they were! Their jumping skills were also used as smoke jumpers putting out Japanese balloon bomb forest fires in the continental U.S.



This 2012 photo of Jackie Jones Hook shows her standing beside a picture of her father Williams Jones a Buffalo Soldier in WWII and the Korean War.

Another contribution their units made during the War was the monumental task of building the Alcan (Alaska) Highway. This road from the continental U.S. to Alaska was built to block a possible invasion route from Japan. The road was an emergency program constructed in the most severe weather conditions. Cut through the freezing wilderness in only eight months, the highway was completed ahead of schedule—one-third of the road builders were Buffalo Soldiers.

In 1948, President Harry Truman desegregated the American armed forces.

Tacoma's Buffalo Museum

The Tacoma museum is just one of two in the nation dedicated to Buffalo Soldiers. Jackie's father and museum founder served in World War II and



Jackie Jones-Hook Tacoma Buffalo Museum at January's General Meeting

the Korean War—spending two and a half years as a Prisoner of War in North Korea. He created the Tacoma museum in 2005—displaying books, artifacts and videos he had collected for most of his lifetime.

After her father's death in 2009 at age 91, Jackie, with her management skills work-

ing for State Government, took on the operation of the museum, a demanding challenge during her retirement.

Currently, the museum not only preserves the Buffalo Soldier history but also is working with today's young people, especially apartment-living single-parent kids. The museum works with organizations such as the Pierce County Arts & Culture Coalition, and the Puyallup and Tulalip Indian tribes to offer these kids, who need direction, exposure to the evolution of history and how they fit in. Jackie asks them, "What kind of history will you make? Good history or bad history?"

The museum supports a summer learning program called Summer Excitement, Exploring

& Discovery or "SEED," focusing on American military history in Washington State. It's a week-long program of activities. Included are museum tours and historic site visits, participants visit the Billy Frank Wildlife Preserve, the 1904 Buffalo Soldiers Bivouac Site at Sequelitchew Creek at Dupont, and the National History Park at Fort Vancouver.

Each day a word is emphasized that's associated with the tour such as Bravery, Adventure or Music with discussions that follow. Jackie explained, "These kids are looking for purpose in a crazy, mixed-up world and understanding history and where they fit in is huge for them."

While Jackie's making sure us old-timers also don't forget the Buffalo Soldier's part in American history—the Museum is looking ahead by doing what it can to help the next generation get off in a positive direction with the help and appreciation of history.

Visit From The Deputy Fire Marshal

Deputy Fire Marshal Chris Spurlock has a long career in the fire department. According to Chris, he has done and seen many things in that role but the most rewarding for him is giving talks to groups such as ours, sharing information and knowledge to help people protect themselves. As Chris explained, "When the big red trucks show up, we've had a failure—now I get to help prevent that."

After many years responding to fires, Chris spoke of a few simple things we can do to avoid home fires, "Simple things make the most difference," commented Chris.

With the holiday season approaching, the most dangerous fire source is live Christmas trees and electrical decorations. An unwatered tree can catch fire and engulf a room in 45 seconds. Keep the tree well-watered and away from flame sources. The small electrical lights are dangerous because a small nick in the wire can cause a spark or overheating—inspect the wires—especially those lights repeatedly folded up season after season and stored in a closet or attic.

Two other leading causes of fires are unattended cooking (stuff left on a stove) and improper use of electrical cords; e.g., extension cords. The extension cords are especially hazardous when used with space heaters. Part of the problem according to Chris is that older homes don't have enough electrical outlets for all the electrical devices people use today.



**Deputy Fire Marshal
Chris Spurlock**

Some home fire extinguisher tips include keeping them charged by observing the gauge. Also, their location is most important. Have the extinguisher easily accessible—not buried at the back of shelves. Also, keep the extinguisher away from a likely fire source so you're not running into a fire to access it.

The Fire Marshal concluded with these lifesaving recommendations: Make a room or house easy to exit in an emergency. Avoid clutter and don't block back doors with hard to move objects like refrigerators. Don't paint doors and windows so the dried paint seals them. He commonly encounters these problems when responding to fire emergencies or making fire inspections.

In an emergency, know who's in the house and what room they're in. A fire site is chaos so when firefighters arrive, they need to know what is their first priority—a rescue situation or putting a fire down. Finally, have a predetermined gathering place for fleeing occupants such as a mailbox or driveway.



**facebook.com/groups/
SouthHillHistoricalSociety**

From the Treasurer

by Ben Peters

Please call, e-mail or write any change of address to me, Ben Peters, 253-845-7028, poppa-ben2002@yahoo.com, South Hill Historical Society, Box 73582, South Hill, WA 98374.

Also, don't forget that we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Dues, donations, etc., are fully deductible from your income taxes if you are able to do so. If you need a receipt for tax purposes, contact Ben.

Dues Reminder

I will attach a sticky note to the Society newsletter mailed closest to your renewal date. **No need to fill out the membership form unless there is a change of some kind.**

The South Hill Historical Society meets regularly on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of the month, 11:00 AM, (no meetings July and August) at The Highlands in the Community Center. This complex is located at 502 43rd Ave. SE, adjacent to and east of the Mel Korum YMCA.

We welcome you to our monthly meetings. For more information, go to our website southhillhistory.com.

South Hill Historical Society Board of Directors

President, Bob Ballou

Vice-President, Vacancy

Secretary, Susan Beals

Research Coordinator, Carl Vest

Public Relations, Wes Perkinson

Treasurer, Ben Peters

Newsletter Editor, Webmaster, Jerry Bates

History On The Hill is published quarterly
Editor Jerry Bates, Editor-at-Large Debbie Burtnett
Copyright 2020

Visit our website!
southhillhistory.com

South Hill Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

Name		
Address	Phone	
City	State	Zip
E-mail Address		
Signature _____ Date _____ Renewal, check here <input type="checkbox"/>		
Annual Dues: Society membership \$25.00 <i>Note: Please do not send cash.</i>		Make check or M.O. payable to South Hill Historical Society and mail with this application to: South Hill Historical Society, Box 73582, South Hill, WA 98374



Box 73582
South Hill, WA 98374

To: