

The Directors of BAA (there are 19) have been trying to organize several different Centennial Events. At our last meeting on June 1st we decided we were stretching our pool of willing hands too thin by planning too many events. So change of plans, again! We are now planning one really big day that will include all of the planned centennial events.

**JULY 24th will be BIG ARM'S BIG 100 YEAR BIRTHDAY BASH! With Food & Fun! Family Fun Day & Living History Days at the Historic School.**

**Big Arm Association Chefs will prepare a great BBQ!**

This action packed day will also be a fund raiser to help turn the old school into a valuable community building and to pay for insurance and maintenance. We will be selling tickets.

Big Arm's Despot Dictator, Paulus Maurerus, will be battling in the infamous Water Wars. We will have a village field day with an old fashioned twist. Renowned local historian Joyce Decker Wegner will give a presentation on the history of one room school houses. Living History Exhibits will be inside the school. We are working on a vintage car show. There will be live music, 50/50 raffles, and lots of other fun ideas.

[Big Arm residents, would you like to help us with this event?](#)  
[Do you have fun ideas? Please call 849-6628.](#)

**JUNE 24th (Thurs) COMMUNITY FAMILY POTLUCK 5:30pm on the lawn at the Gomke lake house.** Thanks Luella and Arnie! We will provide the tables, chairs, plates etc., Sodas & waters may be purchased. Please bring your favorite potluck dish and your family and friends to enjoy the lake and good company.

**JULY 4th, BOAT PARADE!** Please join this parade in honor of Independence Day. How about Decorating yourself and your boat with patriotic colors or sit on the shore and cheer them on. The flotilla will start at the old Arrowhead RV Park at the northern edge of Big Arm at 7pm. Contact Deb Raunig at 849-5398.

**SECOND ANNUAL AUGUST ICE CREAM SOCIAL**

A big hit last year! The date will be posted soon.

**Non-BAA Local Events:** July 9th Juni Fisher Concert & July 10th C.A. Grende Memorial Poker Ride and picnic. Contact Janene 406-260-8899 for information and ticket prices.

**May 28th Potluck:** We enjoyed meeting new neighbors. Karen Roberts won \$30 from the 50/50 raffle. Thanks to Tom Eddy for running the raffle & to everyone who bought tickets.

**Wanelda Schafer Day:** In honor of Wanelda, Ron Roberts, Dave Waterman, Tom & Bonnie Eddy, and Jeff & Alison Meslin stripped the rocks from one of the flower beds, tore out weeds, installed a weed-mat and replaced the rocks. The Census workers in a gesture of appreciation for using the fire

hall for their meetings and, we think, because they thought us a very sorry sight, completed the other two rock beds on their own time. A big thank you to Ron Friez, Craig Rennie, Derick Dickinson, Kristin Osborn, Kyle Geyer, Linda Malone, Marty Martinez, Patty Webber, Reg Wearly, Renata Scott and two husbands Bob Geyer & Carl Malone. Also thanks to Lester Johnson, Dave Waterman, Tom/Bonnie Eddy, Roger Rogers and Alison & Jeff for offering to mow the lawns each month.

**A Big Thank you to all Volunteer Firefighters for the great service you provide our community.**

Unfortunately three of our 7 Big Arm volunteer firefighters recently resigned. A letter from them to the community is included below. We are sure you will want to join with us in giving very special thanks to Ron Friez, Arnie Gomke and Jeff Meslin. For the past 4 1/2 years they have given us an enormous gift of their time. They have taken great personal risks to protect this community and the surrounding 200 square mile rural fire district. Hundreds of hours were spent in training. When possible they were ready to respond to our emergency calls no matter the time or the day. If that wasn't enough these three gentlemen also spent many hours renovating the fire station, they donated money, provided materials and continue to help maintain the building and grounds. We hope many of you will personally thank these special men.

*To the Big Arm Community: We have been volunteer firefighters for Big Arm since 2006. During this time we have learned a significant amount about fire equipment and firefighting techniques and have enjoyed helping our community.*

*Both Big Arm Firefighters and Polson Fire Department Firefighters work together within the Polson Rural Fire District under the Polson Fire Chief. Over the last few years relationships between the two units have frequently been strained. Big Arm Firefighters restarted the Big Arm Volunteer Fire Company in 2008 in order to have more freedom and autonomy from the Polson Fire Dept.*

*Recently, with two new elected members, the Rural Fire District Board has reversed some regulations that were put into place by the previous Board. This action appears to threaten the Big Arm Autonomy. Some of the Big Arm Firefighters were concerned and asked for an explanation as to how the changes were going to affect us electing our own officers, selecting new firefighters, keeping donations in Big Arm. The response was disrespectful. Our questions were not answered. The three of us have resigned because we will not tolerate the continuing problematic relationship with the Polson Fire Department and in particular with its Chief John Fairchild.*

*Sincerely,..... Ron, Jeff and Arnie*

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**Historic Big Arm School:** At the end of the month we should hear if we are successful with the Lowes Grant. Keep your fingers crossed for the old school!

For our special Living History Day, July 24th, Earle Schafer's family donated a vintage waste basket, a popcorn baker and some Readers. Marcie Bishop donated a set of children's encyclopedias. Gene Atherton will be loaning a vintage saw. Thanks you! These items and others will make a very interesting display. We are still looking for more vintage items, they do not have to be just related to a school. Thank you Lee Engbretson for volunteering to apply for a local educational grant that will provide funds to help us preserve some of Big Arm's precious history. If successful, we will make copies of the donated photographs and build protective cases to display them for everyone's enjoyment, now and in the future.

### **Memories of Big Arm**

**An Excerpt from *Tune on an Aspen Leaf* by Gladys Bibee Price.** Chapter 6. (Ranch on Walking Horse Lane, Big Arm.)

To tell of this particular place in the world, my impressions of it and of the people living here, without including Gramp, would be impossible. For his spirit is here. My memories are not the sentimental nostalgia for a lost and lovely childhood. There are others who feel about Gramp as I do. They miss him and think of him often, but none was as close to him as I, nor does anyone else realize how much he loved this small spot of the earth.

Coming west from Missouri, where he had been a grocery man, farmer, trader and stonemason, he found this place and loved it. Others came and went, fortunes rose and fell, but Gramp stayed. My father, Gramp's youngest son, came to love it too, as did my mother, but it was, and still is, Gramp's country-everything in it-though he has been dead now nearly for seven years. My grandmother died when I was two. Gramp's family, of course, was grown, his major responsibilities finished. So he made his home with us; and had time to devote to the joy of living, and to me.

Gramp tramped over every hill and valley, explored every inch of the surrounding country intimately. He loved horses, but he loved the earth more, for he rarely rode horseback into the hills. He liked to see the tiny growing things and collect pebbles, some of which turned out to be beautiful moonstones. He liked to sit quietly hidden behind tall rye grass near a den of young coyotes until they came out play. His eyes were keener than mine, for he always pointed out the grouse sitting on her nest or the shining eye of a rabbit who thought he was safe with his white fur blending into a snow drift under a pine bough.

Gramp loved quiet and solitude, but he loved people and entertainment equally well. He enjoyed everything in life to the fullest. Everyone knew "old Jim Bibee" and everyone was glad to see him. His quick wit and humor could turn any ordinary conversation into a bright spot in the day. He was the life of the party wherever he went.

Except for the busy harvest or branding season, there were

frequent "doins" at the community hall in Big Arm. Everyone went, taking all the children. In winter, sleighs and horses came from every direction, each filled with sweet wild hay and warm blankets. In spring and fall, wagons and buggies and one or two Maxwells carried the ranchers and farmers to the entertainment.

Gramp never waited for my mother and father, my two sisters and me. Around noon, he'd quit whatever he was doing, haul the galvanized tub into his bunkhouse, get his heating stove red hot, take a good "scrubbing" and get ready for the party. He'd shine his best shoes with a black, bitter-smelling liquid applied with a swab on the end of a wire. He's put on his best shirt and tie with a stickpin fashioned of one of the lovely moonstones he had found himself, and then start out. He'd take all of the paraffin wax my mother had for covering jams and jellies. That was to be shaved fine with his pocketknife to make the floor slick for dancing.

Part of the excitement for Gramp was getting their first to help the town people of Big Arm open up the musty hall, start the fire, sweep and wax the floor and tie the coffee in a clean muslin sack ready for brewing. I don't remember that Gramp ever entered into the dancing, even the square dances, but he kept time with his foot and enjoyed seeing others having fun as much as if he'd been on the floor himself.

He talked crops with the farmers and horses with the cowhands. He joked with everyone and played with the children. When refreshment time came he was right in the middle of everything as the women brought out wonderful cakes, salads, sandwiches, homemade doughnuts and freezers of ice cream. Gramp was a good cook himself and his help in the kitchen was gratefully accepted, with much chattering and merriment by the ladies.

On his annual "visiting" trip Gramp was welcome everywhere. He'd be in the little town of Big Arm for a day or two, thrilling with the crowd when the steamer Klondike docked with mail and supplies, spinning yarns in the back of McDonald's General Store or looking over the horses at Knox's livery stable. He'd spend hours at C. L. Sterling's blacksmith shop, that intriguing place of hissing bellows, sizzling hot horseshoes, steam, clanging hammers and the peculiar smell of hot charcoal and molten metal, where above the roar you could hear more news and gossip than anywhere else in town.

Gramp always paid a call to the law office of John McGrann, that polite, sedate gentleman with the black string tie, who boasted more education than almost the whole community put together. He had a degree in law and had studied for the priesthood. He had handled business with integrity and dispatch for everyone in the valley and surrounding country.

Gramp never failed to spend a night or two with Baptiste Papin, full blooded Canadian Cree Indian. He and Baptiste enjoyed a friendship that lasted thirty years. The color of a man's skin, his religion, his education, his financial status made no difference to Gramp. If he was honest, intelligent, dependable and kind, he was Gramp's friend. Baptiste had all these qualities, so Gramp valued his friendship as highly as that of John McGrann, the lawyer.

*More excerpts next month.....*

**We encourage you to forward your stories & photos!!**