

## Memorial Library/Senior Center

After King County taxpayers passed a levy in 1942 that formed the King County Rural Library District to provide library services to rural areas, Vashon requested a branch library. The County agreed to supply the books and librarians if the community would build the building.

Approximately \$10,000 was raised in a campaign that began in 1944 led by the newly formed Vashon Library Association. The Library Association was formed after the Island Women's Club held a meeting with invited representatives from all the island clubs, churches and organizations. The subsequent fund raising campaign for the new library was led by James Smyth, and began with a well-attended open meeting. This led to a comprehensive campaign with district captains for each area of the island, and solicitors with receipt books and instructions to contact everyone in their community. Island clubs and organization were also contacted to contribute to the campaign. Construction began in 1945 and took over a year. The Vashon Island Memorial Library, "one of the finest libraries in the state", was opened in 1946 and was dedicate it to those who served in World War II. Marjorie Stanley was the first librarian in the new building.



Behind the Library, father and mother Gus and Caroline, and brothers Don and Sid Bacchus built a Memorial Garden in remembrance of the Bacchus brothers Tom and Ladd who were killed during WW II. Tom was a naval fighter pilot who was killed in action in the Philippines, and Ladd was killed when his plane

crashed in the Oregon Mountains as he was returning to Vashon from flight training in Texas. With the death of the two brothers, the other two brothers Don, a sergeant in the U.S. Army clearing mines in Europe, and Ladd, who was in naval training on the East Coast, were returned home.

The building functioned as the Vashon Library for 38 years until the new Vashon Library was built at Ober Park and opened January 14, 1984. The Memorial Library closed on December 10, 1983 and the next week began “moving week” that moved all the books and materials into the new Ober Park Library building.

The former library building, which belonged to King County, was then transformed into the Vashon Senior Center. It has served that function since 1984 and is now the hub of activity for Seniors on Vashon-Maury Island.

The original photograph was taken shortly after the Library opened. The façade has changed little, but notable is the unpaved street that was not paved until the late 1950’s, the obviously newly installed curb without a sidewalk, and the new plantings surrounding the building.



The current photograph taken in 2009 shows the building with the Vashon-Maury Senior Services sign surrounded by paved walkways, a newly installed handrail that echoes the motif of the building entrance, a street sign, a stop sign and a painted crosswalk. The three-window opening on the 100<sup>th</sup> Ave. side of the building has been replaced with a single plate glass window and an accessible ramp has been added to the same side of the building.

The building was expanded to the rear in 1986 and the accessible entrance enters into that expanded part of the original building. The mature trees on either side of the entrance, and the mature hedges reflect the passage of time. The Memorial Garden remains with the brass plaques memorializing the Bacchus brothers and others who served during WW II a poignant reminder of the original memorial purpose of the building.

1947 Photo – courtesy of Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Association

2009 Photo – Terry Donnelly