

History Nook

The Last Resort

by CLARK MCABEE

for the Orcas Island Historical Museum

"Your son is a menace!"

With the utterance of those words a messy haired legend was born. Henry King Ketcham had the inspiration and angle he needed to fulfill for his life-long dream of becoming a cartoonist. His wife Alice was scolding him about their rambunctious four year old boy Dennis. Ketcham, known as Hank was already a successful illustrator and animator. In 1951 the "Dennis the Menace" cartoon strip debuted in 16 papers and was an instant hit. Born in Seattle on March 14, 1921 Ketcham was age six when he knew exactly what he wanted to be when he grew up. He attended University of Washington for a year in 1938 but left after his freshman year. He moved to California to become an animator working for Walter Lantz of Woody Woodpecker fame and then Walt Disney. For Disney Hank helped draw Bambi and Donald Duck shorts.

During World War II Hank got to fulfill his cartoonist mission. He enlisted in the Navy and began drawing a strip called Half Hitch about a sailor and his interesting buddies. He also did posters for the



Hank Ketcham, the creator of the Dennis the Menace cartoons brought his family to Orcas Island every year for 20 years. These sketches were inspired by their stay at Beach Haven.

Navy during the war. With the "birth" of Dennis the Menace Hank's popularity skyrocketed and his work appeared in The Saturday Evening Post, Colliers magazine and others. By 1953 Hank Ketcham's Dennis the Menace strip was featured in nearly 200 stateside papers and 52 newspapers abroad.

Let us fast forward 60 years to Orcas Island. Over the past three months we have been privileged to work with Eric Eagan on his Senior project at Orcas Island High School. Eric was guest Curator designing and installing our THE LAST RESORT... YOU'LL EVER NEED-The Golden Age of Resorts on Orcas. The museum has done resort exhibits in the past but

Eric's and my vision was to highlight what made the experience on Orcas so special for visitors. Theme in hand, we combed the old newspaper articles, promotional brochures and museum archives. During this research phase we discovered that Hank Ketcham brought his family to Orcas every year for twenty years to vacation. Wonderful news, an internationally famous cartoonist enjoyed Orcas immensely. Hank and his family had such a good time that he was inspired to sketch some cartoons of Orcas. Eric and I hope you enjoy them as much as we did. Visit the museum between now and July 5th to see Hank's handiwork and the Last Resort exhibit.

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