

# History Nook

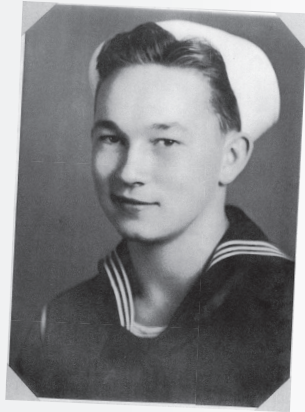
## A hard winter in 1942

By: CLARK MCABEE

*Orcas Island Historical Museum*

I believe a television program coined the phrase "History made fresh, daily." Here at the Orcas Island Historical Museums that is a most appropriate adage. Perhaps discovered daily works better. Recently we received a call from a gentleman who had fond memories of his time on Orcas back in 1942. He was coming to Orcas Island again. Les Skogman was a nineteen year old US Coast Guardsman who spent the winter of 1942 on Orcas. There was rapid growth in the US military in late 1941 and early 1942. War had been thrust violently on a reluctant nation at Pearl Harbor and hundreds of thousands of young men enlisted to do their part. Les was one of those young men. His older brother was in the Coast Guard and it seemed natural for Les to enlist in the Guard. With so many new recruits the military was desperate for barracks.

Orcas Island had housed hundreds of men of the Civilian Conservation Corps over an eight year span immediately preceding WWII. Early in 1942 Guardsman Skogman and more than hundred others were sent to Camp Moran's former C.C.C. barracks while the service decided their assignments and further training. Every day the men went to work in the woods cutting wood after breakfast. A number of men weren't happy with what they felt was a meagre ration of one piece of bacon and one egg at their morning meal. Les said he didn't mind so much as he wasn't a big guy but he could see the point of a man six feet tall and about 200 lbs. wanting a little



more chow. Perhaps an officer was trying to make a name for himself some of the men thought, by not wanting to request a lot of supplies. They enjoyed the outdoors but it was particularly cold that winter of 1942.

The barracks weren't insulated Les recalled and the 55 gallon drum on four metal legs with a stove pipe that passed for a heater at one end of the barracks didn't keep out the winter chill. It was also the first Christmas Les had spent away from home so that was a new experience as well. In about 4 months Les got orders to Coast Guard Station Seattle since they needed a person who could type and Les could. Recently Les and his family came to Orcas to visit where he had spent that cold winter nearly 70 years ago at Camp Moran. One thing Les couldn't remember was what the military did with all that wood they cut that winter! Special thanks to Mr. Skogman and his family for sharing their history, photos and memories of Orcas.

**Thank you to the History Nook Sponsor**

## Orcas Island Historical Museum

181 N Beach Rd Eastsound village

376-4849

[www.orcasmuseum.org](http://www.orcasmuseum.org)

