

History Nook

Deer Harbor Christmas: Brechemin Legacies

by SUZANNE P. GOTT
for the Orcas Island Historical Museum

In 1923, U.S. Army Medical Corps M.D., Colonel Louis Brechemin II, and wife, Ruth F. (Miller) Brechemin, bought vacation property at Pole Pass.

Ten years later, after Ruth died, their only child— slim red-headed 25-year-old, Louis Brechemin III, settled into the family's summer estate.

Louis, a truly gifted representative of his mother's musical family of Sausalito, CA., studied and became an accomplished concert pianist and composer.

He fled Marseille, France, when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, and returned to Deer Harbor.

One month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Louis, at 34, enlisted. The Army assigned him to entertaining our troops.

April 1942, Pvt. Louis Brechemin III married Charlotte, daughter of the Bellingham timber baron, Julius H. Bloedel. She was a symbol of elegance and one of the most respected and beloved patrons of Seattle arts.

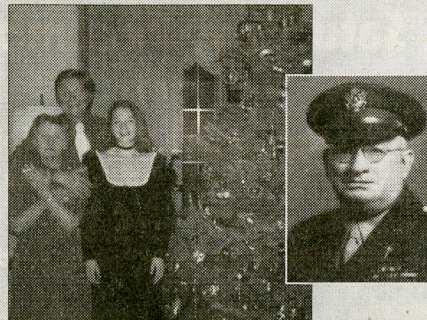
Meanwhile, Louis' father, Colonel Brechemin, continued his military career through WWII. Mid-1944, he retired to his beloved Pole Pass estate.

Colonel and his Dachshund socialized with neighbors, published military stories and attended potlucks at the clubhouse.

He also hosted elaborate private holiday tree-decorating parties.

The old-world ambience in the Colonel's Tudor owed itself to the antique furnishings and exquisite collectibles.

Tree ornaments were fragile and sparkled with color.



Left; Louis Brechemin family, mid 1950s. Right; Colonel Brechemin; circa 1941. (Photos courtesy of the Brechemin Family Foundation)

A buffet table glistened with smoked oysters, rich foods and Secret-Recipe Battleship Punch— “1 wine glass bourbon, ½ wine glass brandy, juice from 3 lemons, juice from 1 orange, 1 wine glass sugar, and 1 wine glass water.”

Christmas Day 1951, Colonel Brechemin passed on, at age 74.

Colonel left a legacy to Deer Harbor: indoor plumbing and a new hand-dug well for the 1905 Clubhouse.

Colonel's generosity ended the Club's decades-old chore of hauling drinking water, in five-gallon cream cans, from Chris Maas' Chinchilla Ranch (end of Community Club Drive).

Louis and Charlotte had an astonishing career-building partnership, as well as a complex marriage. It endured 32 years, until his death.

Louis Brechemin III left a legacy to the University of Washington. It includes the Brechemin Auditorium (School of Music), his brilliant 1968 thesis “The ‘Mephisto’ Elements in the Piano Works of Liszt” and UW's highest music award—the Brechemin Scholarship.

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