

## Seth French, Albany jeweler

Sold diamond rings for \$10 down, \$10 a month

**BY JULIE TRIPP**  
MUSEUM MEMBER

Albany residents may remember native son Seth French as the elegant-looking proprietor of Oregon's oldest jewelry store, F.M.

French & Son, where he followed his father to help generations of locals mark the milestones in their lives with gifts celebrating engagements, weddings, babies and anniversaries.

In 1941, my dad, Rod

Tripp, bought a ring there for my mom, Marty, for \$10 down and \$10 a month. It was a little speck of a carat with a big heart, celebrating a marriage that's

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## Celebrate 30 years with Jerry

Friends and associates of Gerald (Jerry) Brenneman are invited to a public reception marking his 30 years of service to the Museum on Sunday, Dec. 12, 2 to 5 p.m.

Brenneman, 79, is the only active founder still serving as a volunteer on the Museum's board. The reception is at the same time as the 31st annual Albany Christmas Parlour Tour in which the Museum, 136 Lyon St. S., participates each year. The Museum will be decorated for the holidays and refreshments will be served. It will be an opportunity for many of Brenneman's former students and friends to visit with him. He retired after a 33 year career in 1990 as world and American history teacher at West Albany High School. There is no charge for the reception.

However, those on the self-guided parlour tour of historic homes are charged a \$10 per ticket fee (\$8 for seniors and groups of 10 or more. Children under 12 are admitted free with a paid adult). Tickets and maps for the tour are available at the Albany Visitors Association office, 250 Broadalbin St. SW, beginning at 1 p.m. on tour day. The tour hours are 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

A graduate of Albany High School, Brenneman has a bachelor of arts degree from Goshen College in Indiana and a master's of secondary education from Oregon State University. He has three adult children. His wife, Katie, died earlier this year.

## 1950 Derby car returns home

Allan Blak, right, displays this 1950 soap box derby car he built as a youth growing up in Albany. The car was sponsored by Courtesy Corner service station, a business still in existence today.

Blake, a retired Delta Airlines pilot who now lives in Issaquah, WA, donated the car to the Museum's collection of Albany memorabilia. Blake is the son of the late David and Alberta Blake. Allan said he constructed the car mostly of wood, light like a model airplane.

He said he entered it in the Salem derby, the second year that the races were run.



## Vote rates our museum 'best choice'

Readers of three newspapers say the Albany Regional Museum is the best historical site to visit in the mid-valley.

In an on-line vote conducted by the Albany Democrat-Herald, the Corvallis Gazette-Times and the Lebanon Express, the Museum edged the Benton County Historical Museum in Philomath, the Linn County Historical Museum in Brownsville and Fort Hoskins in Benton County as the best place to visit an historic museum.

Results of the "readers' choice" were printed in a special "Top of the Valley" section that ran in all three newspapers in October.

The Museum features Albany-area history and voters said they especially liked

the many events that are presented annually.

In an interview story that accompanied the voting results, Chairman John Buchner credited the "gracious, anonymous donor" that provides the Museum a financial base for its success. He said that the Museum was able to concentrate on exhibits and events because it didn't have to spend all of its time fund-raising to keep the doors open.

Museum Administrative Coordinator Tami Sneddon thanked the poll participants for sharing their choice with the community. "This raises our visibility and will be an incentive for more people to learn about the community's history," Sneddon added.

## 500 receive treats

More than 500 youngsters and parents visited the Museum during the annual Albany Downtown Association's Trick-or-Treat event, Saturday, Oct. 30th.

Visitors were rewarded with candy treats and had an opportunity to search for historical objects among exhibits.

# View from Second and Lyon: Family histories

BY JOHN BUCHNER  
BOARD CHAIRMAN

One of the many joys with being associated with the Albany Regional Museum is watching our collection of memorabilia grow.

In recent weeks, additions have included the 1925 desk paper embossing stamp of the Albany Democrat-Herald newspaper, written minutes of the Wednesday Embroidery Club and a collection of documents including family histories from the rural Riverside Community just southwest of the city.

Thanks for these gifts go to retiring Publisher Martha Wells, to Bob Richardson and the estate of his mother Ruth and to 97-year-old Elizabeth Haddan.

The Museum welcomes these kinds of mementos and records that document the Albany area's history.

Mrs. Haddan, now a resident of the Mennonite Village retirement community, moved with her family to Riverside in 1944. There she and her husband, Phillip, operated a dairy and became involved in community activities.

Riverside was typical of the rural communities surrounding Albany. It had a grade school (which no longer operates), a community hall (which still stands) and a thriving organization of its residents (which no longer exists). The community was organized in 1921 "with high purposes of promoting democratic citizenship...and a broad acquaintance and social contacts of its residents," according to a letter written in 1968.

Documents reveal that the community hall was built in 1922 with donated labor, materials and money on a donated acre of land from the Canning

family. The organization had no dues, no membership roll, no debts and five volunteer officers.

A single page printed and quarter-folded brochure welcomed residents to the community. "You are, by reason of your residence here, automatically a member of the community organization, and we hope you will take an active part in its varied activities."

While the Riverside organization itself no longer exists, one of the last activities of its women's club in 1983 was the compilation of past or present resident family histories.

Nearly 50 families contributed their stories to the project; and now that written record is part of the Museum's archives, thanks to Mrs. Haddan. The stories are marvelous.

Margaret Burrough wrote that her parents moved to Riverside in 1942 because the U.S. Army established Camp Adair and took over their farm near Suver in northwest Benton County. "We had to find a new home."

Helen Bryant Gray wrote, "I moved with my folks to Riverside in 1918 when I was 1½-years-old. I was born at St. Mary's Hospital in Albany. We lived on Route 3 when "Bryant Island" was our address; of course there is no real island, but the Calapooia River and the Willamette come together at Bryant Park, and I guess that is why they used the term (still used today)."

Crystal Thompson, who moved to the community in 1952, wrote, "our family has many happy memories of the school and community hall at Riverside. The Christmas programs were a special event. Son Jim remembers being one of the 'Wise Men' in a play. Daughter Jan remembers being a 'gift'

in another. Halloween parties were also very special for the children and adults alike."

Margaret Schlegel, whose family moved to the community in 1920, wrote, "Some of the best memories center around Riverside Community activities. These included covered dish dinners, Thanksgiving at the Community Hall, fund raising banquets, Timber Carnival float building, county fair food booths, program exchanges with other Albany communities, quilting bees, garden club meetings, 4-H in younger days, and best of all, the companionship and fellowship of the best friends in the world."

Wayne Faligowski, who moved to the community in 1955, said, "Riverside was rural living at its best. I recall the warm summer days playing baseball in Stellmacher's pasture, socials held at the community hall, my folks doing the polka until my dad was about to drop, picking beans at Powell's bean yard, fishing at Horseshoe Lake, buying raw milk from the Buchners and making butter from the cream, ah the memories."

Elbert Starns wrote that he attended Riverside School for eight years, beginning in 1915. "While I was in school, our teacher was giving us a lesson on fractions. One student, a very intelligent young man, Everett Atkeson, was slow at talking so the teacher directed a question to Everett. 'Would you rather have one-fourth of a pie or one-half?' Everett said, 'one-fourth of course.' The teacher said, 'you're wrong. I would rather have one-half of a pie. It is more.' Everett said slowly, 'I didn't want to be a hog.'"

Priceless!

## Thank you to these Albany area business members

The non-profit Albany Regional Museum is pleased to recognize the following businesses for annual membership support for 2009-10:

Albany Antique Mall  
Albany Area Chamber of Commerce  
Albany Democrat-Herald\*\*  
Albany Downtown Association  
Albany Visitors Association  
Birchfield Heating & A/C, Inc.\*\*  
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Willamette Community Bank

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## Museum sports new coat for Veterans Day

The 1887 Museum building's south profile, right, provides an impressive background during November's Veterans Day Parade.

The building received a new coat of paint in September, the first in 10 years. Fitzpatrick Painting, Inc., did the work.

The project was part of a major maintenance effort this year, financed by an anonymous donor. Before and after the parade, Museum visitors viewed several temporary exhibits related to veterans and enjoyed hot coffee or chocolate and donut holes.

The Museum is the recipient of a collection of photographs from past Veterans Day parades that need people identification. Volunteers with knowledge of past parades are sought to help with the identification effort.



## French served in Army Air Corps in WWI

■ Continued from Page 1

lasted nearly 70 years.

Mary Kropp Krpalek remembers French delivering the wedding gifts that well-wishers had bought for her at French's that day. He carried them in a big basket and dropped them off as he walked home at the end of the day.

"It was pretty exciting and I always looked forward to Seth landing on the front porch," Krpalek says. "Then, the last day before the wedding, he came by with a great big huge package. With a twinkle in his eye, he said 'Some old guy came by and I sold him something pretty nice'...but of course it was a present from Seth and his wife."

"It was just really fun," she recalls

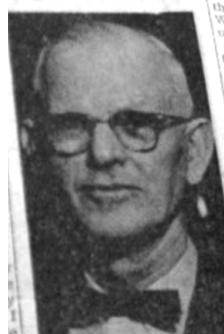
French was also Albany's weatherman, the city's official National Weather Service observer who for many years recorded the routine highs and lows and dreary precipitation, punctuated by the hair-raising details of extraordinary weather events like the Columbus Day Storm and Christmas Flood of the 1960s.

And for decades, he lived in the grand Colonial Revival home at 914 Fifth Avenue, built in the 1860s as the Connor House. A huge deep pink rhododendron bloomed there in two-story splendor. Was it planted around the time of Seth's birth, Feb. 7, 1895?

But how many know that Seth Thomas French, who died in 1973 at the age of 78, was a dashing pilot in World War I? After graduating from Albany College in 1917, he served as a second lieutenant with the Army Air Corps as a military flight instructor in Texas. A photo of smiling French in jodhpurs

and flying gear standing by his biplane graced a wall in the backroom of the jewelry store at 326 First Ave. SW (now the Wells Fargo Bank parking lot).

The photo was next to the engraving machine where Seth showed me how he carved "JLT" onto the dog tag necklace I had saved up for and purchased at his store. He taught my mom how to use the machine, and she then set about putting a "T" on every piece of family silverware.



**Seth French**

Among items in the Albany Regional Museum's collection is a program from the 1913 commencement of Albany High School, where French received his diploma along with 31 other students; and a 1926 "Weekly In-

formant" detailing news of the Albany Kiwanis Club. French was a charter member of the club, which dates to 1923. The committee list of club members is a veritable roll call of Albany's prominent citizenry: Holt Duedall, E.F. Fortmiller, Rolla Ralston, Francyl Howard, Mark Weatherford, Z.E. Merrill, Deo McClain, Ralph Cronise and Clyde Williamson, to name a few.

After college and the Air Corps, French married Ida Bryan and the couple had a daughter, Betty. (Attempts to reach her or her relatives in Cottonwood, AZ, weren't successful.) He joined his father, F.M. French, in the jewelry business that was established

in Albany in 1879. The F.M. French clock, since moved down the street to the corner of First and Ellsworth, stands in front of Sid Stevens Jewelers. The Stevens family bought French's business in 1968.

"He was a real character," recalls Sid Stevens. "At that time, I had a moustache and he told me I should shave it off because I was scaring the customers away. He was being 'Mr. Conservative' with me — and then I found out he flew his biplane under the Albany bridge." Stevens thinks that escapade happened sometime in the 1930s.

His obituary in the weekly Greater Oregon reported that in 1922, French engineered a campaign for Albany's first public swimming pool. He persuaded a dredging company dig out a pond fed by the waters from the Willamette River in Bryant Park. Later he was a key member of the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce and helped attract new businesses to the city, including M & M Woodworking, the predecessor to Simpson Timber Co.'s plywood mill that no longer exists.

In his later years, French and his wife were enthusiastic caravanners, joining the Oregon unit of the Wally Byam Airstream Caravan Club in motoring trips around the country. In 1966, they participated in a world tour, a trip French shared with many Albany gatherings in slide show travelogues.

French was a member of the Albany American Legion Post, the Albany Elks Lodge and the Masonic Lodge. He is buried at Willamette Memorial Park.

*(Julie Tripp is a retired columnist of The Oregonian, Portland)*

# Salem company to develop exhibit update

Enhancement and development of the first floor exhibit area at the Albany Regional Museum is under way.

Interpretive Exhibits, Inc., of Salem, was hired by the board of directors (on a vote of 11-0 with one member absent) November 2 to help plan, design, fabricate and install a first phase of new exhibits. The firm was one of three Oregon companies to bid on the project.

The board's action followed the recommendation of the exhibits committee chaired by Larry Bardell. The board's commitment to the project includes a budget of \$60,000 from the museum's reserves which have been set aside from earnings and savings over the past 10 years.

A museum task force, consisting of three board members, two members of the staff and four community members, worked for several months in 2009 reviewing and prioritizing exhibit goals and objectives. These rec-

ommendations were further refined in 2010 by the exhibits committee consisting of Bardell, Tom Cutsforth, Gerald Brenneman, David Fitchett, Jennifer Jameson and Tami Sneddon.

The first phase of the project is expected to take about 11 months. This will be the first major updating of Museum exhibits in more than 10 years.

The project first came about two years ago during a board goal-setting session where an updating of current exhibits was listed as a major goal. Initially, discussions revolved around improving the current exhibit on Camp Adair. Adair was an army base during World War II located northwest of Albany.

Upon further reflection and discussion, the board came to the conclusion that the scope of exhibit updating ought to be broader than just focusing on one aspect of Museum. Topics discussed included changes in the current exhibit layout, foot-traffic patterns,

enhanced lighting, looking for an overall theme and better signage and exhibit detail.

The Salem firm hired to assist the Museum in the exhibits project has been doing this kind of work since 1989. The principal in charge of the Albany effort, Ed Austin, has 31 years of experience and has worked in every area related to exhibit design, construction and installation. In Oregon, the company has completed projects with the Cannon Beach Historical Society, the Mission Mill Museum in Salem, the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve near Coos Bay, and the Seufert Visitor Center at The Dalles Lock and Dam on the Columbia River.

Board chairman John Buchner said the project is something Museum leaders have wanted to accomplish for several years. This is a major commitment by the board to "enhance the visitor experience of our exhibit hall."

## Rhys Miller Classic features Enduring A's

Enduring A's car club was featured at the Museum's annual Rhys Miller Classic during Albany's Antiques in the Street observance in September. The late Miller, who lived in Albany as a young boy, became an automobile designer and is most famous for redesigning the 1957 Ford Thunderbird. The auto display and show is named for Miller and is among the Museum's most popular annual events. Ed Murray, right, of Lebanon displays a plaque designating his car as the winner of the "People's Choice" award voted on by show visitors. Over a hundred people visited the Museum during the classic.



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## Calendar of events

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12

30th Anniversary Party honoring Museum founder Gerald (Jerry) Brenneman, 2-5 p.m. at Museum, 136 Lyon St. S. Free.

Christmas Parlour Tour of Historic Homes, Churches, Museums and Library, 2-7 p.m. Tickets available at Albany Visitors Association, 250 Broadalbin St. SW beginning at 1 p.m. on day of tour.

### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Free movie at the Pix Theatre, 321 Second Ave., 1 p.m., "In pursuit of a Dream," sponsored by the Museum.

### FRIDAY, MARCH 12

American Association of University Women reader's theater on "Women's Work," held at Museum, 136 Lyon St. S., 10 a.m. to noon.

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### THURSDAY, APRIL 15

Membership Chautauqua Tea (reservations required) featuring program on "Learning history through button collecting.." at Museum. Ilse Christensen, speaker.

### WEDNESDAY, JULY 27

Historic cemetery tour, 7 p.m. (Site to be announced)

# Volunteers earn awards

Three volunteers were recognized at the annual meeting Sept. 19 for their work on behalf of the Museum.

Edward Loy won the Gerald L. Brennenman Volunteer Award for the many hours he gave in writing and producing the illustrated history of the World Championship Albany Timber Carnival. Loy spent in excess of 600 hours on the project. The book, *Tim Burr!*, was published in June. Loy receives no monetary consideration for his work.

Autographed copies of the book are available at the Museum's retail counter.

Loy also won the award in 2008.

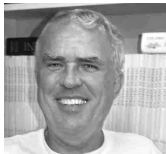
The award, created by the board of directors in 2004, honors those individuals who have made major contributions to the Museum's operations and its growth as a community institution. It is not given every year.

Two others also were honored at the meeting.

Steve Thomas, who recently moved to the area from Arizona, was designated "Rookie Volunteer." Thomas, who became a volunteer after a visit to the

Museum, helps with a variety of duties especially "when we need him," according to Volunteer Committee chairperson Peggy Kowal. He also serves on the

Museum's facilities committee.



**Steve Thomas**

West Albany High School student Sofyan Saputra was recognized for the many volunteer hours he spent during the summer helping the Museum's staff. Saputra first became acquainted with the Museum through his school history class and an essay writing project that brought him to the Museum's research room.

Administrative Coordinator Tami Sneddon congratulated the winners and said there is always a need for volunteers. "There are so many opportunities for volunteers and the Museum can usually match individual interests with specific projects. We couldn't exist without our volun-

# Memorial list adds six names

Six names were added to the Museum's memorial roll since the summer newsletter.

They include Daphne M. Williams, William (Bill) Brickey, Ruth Richardson, Howard Atkeson, Dale Cooley and Ellen Ann Ketsdever.

Special needs of the Museum are met with memorial gifts that honor a family member or friend.

Names of those memorialized are listed in the quarterly newsletter, on the Museum's web site ([www.armuseum.com](http://www.armuseum.com)) and are posted at the Museum for a limited time.

The most common gifts are in the amounts of \$25, \$50 and \$100.

A card of remembrance is mailed to a designated recipient (spouse, next of kin or other) and a thank you card to the person or persons making the donation (which can be used for tax documentation).

Contact the Museum at 541-967-7122 or stop by the reception desk at 136 Lyon St. S. for further information.

## Pictures from the Past



These smiling faces belong to a packaging crew at the D.E. Nebergall Meat Co. The photo was taken in the 1950s. Thanks to Museum member Brian Faligowski, who provided the photo and the names of those pictured. Beginning in the back row (left to right), are Verona Martinak, Charlene Cahill and Bob Crumley. Second row (left to right), are Jo Hoffman, Irma Norman, Helen Griensewic and Nora Decker. Front row (left to right) are Irene Kalinowski (Brian's mother), Lillian Deal, Beulah Hamblin and Donna Jackson. The Museum continues to look for good-quality pictures from family archives that are about Albany people and the Albany area. Drop off submissions at the Museum, 136 Lyon St. S. or e-mail to [armuseum@peak.org](mailto:armuseum@peak.org).

## MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP FORM

To renew or begin your annual membership, indicate the type and fill in the form below.

<input type="checkbox"/> Friends of the Museum	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/> Business	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Patrons	\$115
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Patrons	\$150
<input type="checkbox"/> History Enthusiast	\$250

☐ I want to learn more about the Chautauqua Circle and Brennenman Society.

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## **Looking Back: Saturday night parades**

**BY JACK GILLESPIE**  
MUSEUM MEMBER

There were no rules, there was no planning, there was no real reason for it to happen but it was a spontaneous event that came around a few times during the summer months in downtown Albany in the late 1940s.

The event consisted of a number of cars getting in line on a warm Saturday night and parading up and down First Avenue between Washington and Main streets.

A six-day work week (or a least 5 ½) was not unusual for the workers during these years and Saturday night was a popular "get out and go" time. One could sleep in a little late on Sunday morning.

Come Saturday evening people would come into town and eat out and take in a movie at one of three theaters on First Avenue. Others would come to town to shop for the coming week. For whatever the reason downtown Albany could be very busy place on Saturday nights during the summer.

Some of us teenage boys with cars would

come to town just to drive up and down First Avenue. (It was sort of a man-boy thing.)

One Saturday night we were doing our "Cruising First Avenue Routine" when we noticed the line getting longer. Soon it became apparent that both lanes were filled with the cars going very slow.

It was quite a sight to see automobiles from the 20s, 30s and 40s parading east on First and turning around at Main and heading west to Washington. Part of the turn-around on Main Street was going through the Hancock gasoline station on the southwest corner of Main. The station has a sign offering 10 gallons of gasoline for \$1 and a quart of oil for 10 cents. (A ten-o'clock curfew-declared during World War II-was still in effect and a loud horn would blast meaning that everyone without business should head for home-thus breaking up our cruising.)

Of course, First Avenue is now a one-way street going west and there isn't too much cruising on Saturday nights in downtown Albany. But it wasn't always that way. I remember it well.

**Our mission statement:** "To preserve, exhibit and encourage knowledge of the history and culture of Albany, Oregon, and its immediate surroundings through collection of artifacts, documents and photographs."