



Cascade Days honors a leader Dwelley's words to adorn Dalles Bridge

by Millissa Macomber

Cascade Days is about reminiscing, seeing old friends, and honoring those who have passed on.

This year the festival will take a moment to remember one of Concrete's legends - longtime Concrete Herald editor Charles "Chuck" Dwelley.

At noon Aug. 19, following the Cascade Days grand parade, festival goers are invited to a ceremony at the Dalles Bridge.

During the ceremony, a plaque, carrying Dwelley's words from a 1948 editorial, will be mounted on the bridge.

The Dalles Bridge, located off Concrete-Sauk Valley Road - was the first bridge to cross the upper Skagit River. In his editorials, Dwelley pushed for construction of the bridge - and an end to the costly, hazardous ferry system.

Larry Kunzler, a ceremony organizer and local historian, said the sign was inspired by Dwelley's own words.

"Dwelley was a very special man that should not be forgotten," Kunzler wrote in an email. "He set an example of what it means to be a Skagitonian."

Dwelley did that by writing short, pithy editorials in his newspaper. Besides challenging the ferry system, Dwelley took on the issues of flooding, dams, recreational sites, taxes and future growth.

A cause close to his heart was completion of the North Cascades Highway. His granddaughter Judy Dawe recalls helping with the cause.

"I remember my sister and I once rode in the back of my Papa's truck in one of the Cascades Day parades with a banner that said 'Future North Cross State Highway Princesses,'" Dawe said in an email.



When the highway finally opened, Dwelley led the first procession across.

"It was one of his greatest honors, in his mind," his widow Helen Dwelley commented.

As a young man, Dwelley didn't exactly pursue an editorial career. After graduating from Anacortes High School, Dwelley took a job as a pressman with the Courier-Times under the supervision of Editor Frank Evans. In 1929, Dwelley, then just 21, was given a choice.

"Evans said he could either take over the Concrete Herald and see if it he could make it pay off or find another job," said Helen Dwelley from her California home. "Not much choice in 1929; there were no jobs. So he went up to Concrete and took over that paper. By hook or crook - scratching and begging I guess - he managed to get enough money to pay for the newsprint he needed to print the newspaper."

After years of "scratching and begging," Dwelley not only put the newspaper back in the black but his editorials made it golden.

"He had never done any writing except in high school but he had a flair for it," Helen Dwelley remarked. "The more he did the better he got. He became quite a force in not only the community but the state."

Dwelley was published in the national publications Readers Digest and Ladies Home Journal and served for a time as president of the Washington State Publishers Association. He sold the paper in 1970 and moved to LaConner where he continued to write a weekly column.

"He would be very honored," Helen Dwelley said of the commemorative plaque. "It's too bad it couldn't have happened in his lifetime."

Dwelley died in 1993 after suffering with Alzheimer's for 10 years