



Sep-2017

**Towanda Area  
Historical Museum**

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## It's All Yours, Kiddo

by Peggy Wendler

This is the first newsletter NOT written by Hank, since he retired in June. I don't know how Hank could have prepared us for this. He had to simply just go and leave us to it... with an, "It's all yours, kiddo." thrown my way on his last exit, and let us sink or swim.

We choose to swim. To do anything else would be a dishonor to all the efforts that Hank and others have put into the museum in the last 20 years.

We have made a few changes at the museum, mostly in the office and mostly to the detriment of dust bunnies and anything else that was hiding in odd places. We have had 3 board meetings so far, and would like to extend an invitation to all to attend. All board meetings are open to the public. They are normally held the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:00 pm in the museum. Any changes to that will be posted at the front window and on the website. The board normally has 9 members, but many have passed and Hank just retired and so we are currently sitting at 5: Fred Kemp, Andy Newbrey, Michelle Newbrey, Peggy Wendler, and Mike Isbill. You can see we have some room for growth there. We ask that anybody with a desire to **help the museum move forward** would volunteer to help with a project or two, maybe observe a board meeting, and see if it is the right fit for you and the museum. We hope to make some FUN happen, and for this we need community help and involvement.

Mike Isbill is helping with the technology, that being his specialty. He has given our computer a clean bill of health after applying a couple of bandages. So for the time being (age affects all things), we are good to go. To reach out better to you, our supporting members, and to the public, our future supporters, Andy Newbrey has put up a new website and Facebook page, linked in with the City's pages. Go check us out if you can, at [www.storyoftowanda.org](http://www.storyoftowanda.org).

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Membership-Renewal

If you would please renew your membership, we would be most appreciative. Please fill out the enclosed membership form and make sure we have you correct address. **We would like EVERYBODY to fill out the new membership form or renew on-line, so we can verify addresses and get emails. If you have already paid this year, just indicate so on the form. Mail renewals will renew on Jan 1 each year. On-line New/Renewals will renew on anniversary of first pledge on-line.** We will soon be sending out newsletters and notice of events to your email address, providing you supply us with that information. For those of you who do not use email, we will still send out newsletters via our good ol' U.S. Post Office, just let us know your preference. **Any questions, please call.**

We hope you will come join us. We are organizing our collections, rearranging displays, adding exciting new displays, updating our technology to showcase the pictorial part of our collections, taking on other fun projects, and planning new fundraiser events. See ya soon! \*

**Speaking of Fundraisers...** We are reviving the ANNUAL CHILI FEED fundraiser. No pie auction this time, but we will be having a BAKE SALE at the Chili Feed. If you would like to donate something for the Bake Sale, or help serve or clean up or any of the other tasks involved, please contact the museum. Details are:

<h1>ANNUAL CHILI FEED &amp; BAKE SALE</h1>	
Sunday, October 22nd 11:00 am to 2:00 pm Adult \$6.00 Children 12 & Under \$4.00 Children Under 6 FREE!	<b><u>Location:</u></b> Wilbur Wiens Community Building 315 Main St Towanda, KS
 Meal includes Chili (or soup) Condiments & a drink	<b><u>ALSO!:</u></b> <i>1st Annual Support Towandamus Artifacts Sale!</i>
	



## **HALLOWEEN EVENT:**

One of the new events in town is a TRUNK-OR-TREAT. It is planned for Oct 29 this year, from 3-6. Local people and businesses gather in the downtown area with sweet goodies in their trunks to give out to any little spooks haunting the streets that day.

The museum plans to have a small scale SPOOK WALK fundraiser during that time. If we don't do the spook walk we will at least hand out treats for the kiddies.



## **SPECIAL PROJECTS:**

There are some special projects the museum will be working on in the near future. We will be setting up some committees to work on these. When done, these projects will allow the museum to host some exciting new events for the community. These special projects include:

- 1) Expanding the Blacksmith Shop in the south yard of the museum. Olde Time blacksmithing demonstrations can be given. We plan to build an event around that with much more to see.
- 2) Rebuilding the Wagon that also sits in the south yard of the museum. This can be used for parades and other fun thing. This will be a fun project for anyone into John Deere equipment.
- 3) Cleaning up the old John Deere motor that was donated to the museum. It can be used to run many things, including an ice cream maker. Doesn't that sound good for a hot summer day?!
- 4) A new Archival System is being considered that will help us keep track of all the artifacts in the museum.

If you would like to help with any of these projects, either by working on the committee to rebuild these items, or by donating funds for these projects, please contact the museum, or see the PROJECTS tab on the website.



## Hank's Corner

By Peggy Wendler

A new addition to the newsletter will be what we are calling "Hank's Corner", where you will find a story of a veteran, whether above or below ground, of any age, who has served our country.

With all the hubbub at the museum the past couple of months, there has been little time for research. So, I will tell of a veteran of the Korean Conflict who is buried in the Towanda Cemetery, who's story I know well, but is unknown to most of you.

Marvin was born in 1930. He was a quiet and unpretentious person, taking life's ups and downs in stride. He struggled a little in school, as did his brother Orville, both being held back twice in the earlier years. This may have been due to all the moving around the family did during those years. As a teenager he helped his father at his propane business as the company clerk and at other tasks. Marvin was a junior in high school when he registered for the draft in Sep-1948. His brother Orville registered in 1950.

They were both called up to take their pre-induction physicals in April of 1951. Once they took their physicals, the rules said they could not choose which service branch they wanted to go into; Uncle Sam would put them where Uncle Sam wanted to, which was usually in the Army. Marvin and Orville both received their draft cards for the Army within 1 week of each other in early June, but they had not opened them yet. In a June issue of the local newspaper a notice appeared saying this rule was rescinded till July 15th. They had about a two week window, and you better believe they jumped on that opportunity! They packed their bags and left that day for Kansas City, where they enlisted in the Air Force under the Buddy System. This meant that they would be stationed everywhere together and could look out for each other. Marvin was 21 and Orville was 19. Orville dropped out of high school to go into the Air Force. Marvin & Orville took their basic training together, and served all 4 years together at the same bases. Marvin became a payroll clerk and Orville a mechanic. The brothers served 20 months and 22 days at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines from late 1952 thru April of 1954. They completed their 4 years of active duty in Texas, and were released to civilian life in July of 1955, but they still had to complete 4 years of Air Force Reserves duty.



This picture was found in Marvin's wallet. He had laminated it and carried it with him all his life. It shows him (left) and his brother Orville at a stopover at the Hawaiian Islands on their way to or from the Philippines.

One of the stories Marvin used to tell was of the children in the Philippines. Whenever the soldiers would eat anywhere off-base, when they finished their meal, the children would scurry up and ask very politely if they were done and could they clean up the table. As soon as they were allowed to do so, they would scoop everything into bags and take them away to feed their families. The people were very poor.

Marvin received the National Defense Service Medal and the Good Conduct Medal. He & Orville received Honorable Discharge on July 1, 1959.

All 5 of Marvin's children lived in Towanda at some point. Marvin came thru every day on his way to and from work and would stop and visit his children and grandchildren. While Marvin was not born or raised or ever lived in Towanda, he is buried here, and deserves recognition for his service. Though he did no singular great deeds in the service, he is still great in my mind. He was my father, Marvin B Wendler. ✨

## A LOT OF FUN IN THIS OL' TOWN

From interview with Frank Schomaker in Sep-2017, by Peggy Wendler

Frank Schomaker lived in Towanda from his grade school thru high school years. He comes back several times a year to visit his family that still lives here. In June he came back for the school reunion. Frank came in to the museum, and we got to talking. He has a lot of interesting and funny stories to tell.

Frank was born in 1941, just before WWII started, in Neosho Falls, KS. Six uncles, 2 cousins and a future stepfather all served in that war. Frank's turn would come in due time. In 1950 when Frank's family moved to Towanda, he was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. He tells...

Well, that museum you're working in there right now, well, when I was in the 4th grade my Uncle Chet lived in Towanda and he used to take me down there to that rifle range and we'd shoot 22 rifles, right there in that museum building (basement). I enjoyed that.

**On Pee Wee Basketball:** Mr. Arnold, the superintendant, he started this program of Peewee basketball tournament in Towanda, and you had to weigh 100 lbs or less. All the boys wanted to play in that tournament, and a lot of them were a little heavy, you know. One in particular I remember was Norman Mosier, he'd run around the section there were the cemetery is and ol' Clay Hill was, well he'd run around that thing 2 or 3 times and he'd come back and weigh, and he was still a little heavy and he'd take off running again. He ran until he weighed 100 lbs so he could play in that tournament. He put a lot of effort in that, a lot of guys did but Norman is the one that sticks out in my mind.

**On Groceries and Candling:** In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, that's when I went to work for the Headley and Powell Grocery and Dry Goods Store. You know where the museum is. OK, right there on the corner just west was a feed store. The next building was Headley & Powell's Grocery Store, and the next building was Headley & Powell's Dry Goods Store. I went to work for Headley & Powell, and it was kinda neat. I got \$7.50 a week; I was working after school and on Saturdays. In those days the people would call in their grocery orders, and then they would box them up during the day, you know, and then in the evening why, when I got there, what needed boxed up I'd go around and get all the stuff off the shelves and put it in the boxes. Then I'd load 'em up in the back of the car, and then Mrs Headley would drive me around Towanda and I'd deliver those groceries to the house.

The other part of my job was candling eggs. They'd buy eggs from farmers, and I had to what they called 'candle' them, look thru the light, look in there and see if there was any baby chicks in it or blood spots or anything like that. That was kind of a big deal for me, back in that day. Yeah, I thought that was neat, they'd buy eggs from the farmers and bring 'em in and then we'd check 'em out, make sure they was good and then they'd sell 'em in the store.

**On Clay Hill (the hangout):** We used it for a backstop for target shooting. We'd go out there and wax our cars, and just hung out up there, and anything we wanted to do well that's where we went to do it, out there to Clay Hill. You can't get to Clay Hill anymore. I checked that out last time I was in Towanda. It's pretty much blocked off. I've got several pictures around here of my old cars with Clay hill in the background. We used to take cars out there and we'd polish 'em and wax 'em and take pictures of 'em and there was the target shootin' and just to hang out. It was like a little park right close to town.

HIGH SCHOOL CAR  
1949 OLDS. ROCKET '88"  
PICTURE FROM 1958



**On his cars:** Oh, I had a bunch of 'em. Some of my favorite ones was a '41 Ford convertible, and I had a '49 Oldsmobile Rocket 88, and a '53 Studebaker coupe. In 59 Studebakers were really popular; I bet there were 6 or 7 of them in town. Warren Davis had one, Carl Brush had one, I don't remember who all had those Studebakers, but they were really popular; that was the first year for that little, low body style, you know? When I went to the Army my mother either sold or gave mine to my ex-brother-in-law. I came back and it was gone.

HIGH SCHOOL CAR  
1953 STUDEBAKER  
PICTURE FROM 1959



**And the Hugh Kelly drag race:** This was in '57, and Hugh Kelly lived in Benton, Kansas and so we all knew him. He bought this brand new red '57 Chevy convertible and he put loud pipes on it and everything. So, a bunch of us boys was hangin out down there in Towanda and here come ol' Hugh Kelley in from the east headed west, and he stopped at the stoplight there. So, we was all out there visiting with him and having a lot of fun and messin' around and pretty soon 'Rrrrr' we heard this other car comin in. Ol' Carol Shasteen(?) from Benton, he had a red '55 Ford convertible with loud pipes on it too. So we visited awhile and ol' George Muncy, I guess he saw too many

of those movies back in the 50's. He took his shirt off, got right out there in the middle of that stoplight and he swung his shirt around and jumped up in the air and flagged 'em off and away they went headed west. Man, the dust and the dirt was flyin' and, that road used to go pretty much straight outta Towanda, it didn't go up to that new highway. When they crossed that river bridge you could hear them pipes just a crackling, you know. I'm not positive who the deputy was that night, but I think it was Raymond Day. He came from the north with his red lights and 'sireens' on and headed west after them. Pretty soon he come back into town and ol' Lanny Varner come driving into town from the north in a gray '53 Ford. Ol' Raymond Day pulled him over and tried to talk to him about drag racin' and stuff, you know. We all got a kick outta that, cause he didn't even get close enough to them to see what color those cars were let alone what kind they were. That was really a good drag race. I've been to NHRA drag races and a lot of drag races but I never had one I enjoyed as much as that one. That was the best of all.

1960 CHEV. IMPALA  
AT CLAY HILL  
FALL OF 1962



**To Be Continued...**

This complete interview can be heard or read at the museum. Come in sometime and see our growing collection of living history... the story of Towanda.



## Historical Dig:

Towandamus has unearthed these funnybones...

**Where did Nicholas Romanov II get his coffee?**

**Tsarbucks**

A Roman walks into a bar,  
Holds up two fingers and says,  
"Five beers, please."



**Towandamuse** is the quarterly newsletter for the Towanda Area Historical Museum.  
The museum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

*Our mission is to tell the story of the people, places and events that have influenced the Towanda Area of today, through historical artifacts, family narratives and educational, cultural events (e.g., Pow Wows, art & music festivals, seminars, etc.)*

We welcome letters, stories, articles and comments to include in this newsletter.

Items submitted become the property of the museum and may be edited.

Items may be submitted to:

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The museum is normally open Thu, Fri, Sat 1-5 pm, and by appointment.

**Board of Directors:** Fred Kemp, Andy Newbrey, Michelle Newbrey, Peggy Wendler, Mike Isbill.

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