Wenatchee Valley YMCA History

1910-1919

"There is no institution that could be established in Wenatchee that would bring greater returns for the amount of money invested in it than a Young Men's Christian Association. The benefit of this institution to any community is no longer a matter of mere conjecture, but it is an established fact…The time is ripe for the beginning of an organization at this time and if someone could be found to take the leadership in the movement, a ready response would be given to it."
-*Wenatchee World Editorial, August 13, 1908*

The time may have been ripe in 1908, but the organizing of a YMCA was nearly 2 years away. As early as 1904, a Women's Christian Temperance Union reading room was established on Orondo Street with the hope it would one day evolve into a YMCA, but the time was not right. In November of 1909, State YMCA Secretary Charles W. Wilcox visited Wenatchee and interviewed businessmen about the prospects of a local YMCA. He indicated that as far as he could see, the city should be able to support an organization for young men. In January of 1910, a meeting of committees from various churches met to establish a permanent citizen's committee to look after the interest of the YMCA movement in Wenatchee. At the same time, W.A. Stevenson, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, opened a reading room in the basement of the church. Under the sponsorship of the Presbyterian Brotherhood, the room was open every evening with games, books, newspapers and facilities for correspondence.

In early May of 1910, an executive committee meeting was held to design a campaign to raise $35,000. Dr. D.W. King was elected as campaign chair. On May 20th, an inspirational banquet was held and a six-day campaign began on May 23rd under the direction of State Secretary Wilcox. The campaign was officially closed on May 28th at 11:00 p.m. with over $36,000 having been raised. Secretary Wilcox said it was the most successful canvass that he had ever known.

At 4:00 p.m. on May 30, 1910, the YMCA was officially incorporated and then formed a Board of Trustees and appointed members to the building, finance and site committees. The original Board consisted of Arthur Gunn (president), P.P. Holcomb (vice president), C. C. Bacon (secretary), Howard Thomas (treasurer), L. V. Wells, B. C. Collier, George Pfau, Guilford Marr, Clarke Cox, J. H. McGohan, C. C. Ward, George W. Coburn, Dr. L. F. Buck, C. F. Schlitz and R. S. Ludington. One of the first orders of business was to find an appropriate site for the building. A site on the corner of Orondo and Chelan was purchased from Guilford Marr in June of 1910.

The estimated cost of a two-story building was $49,739.00. With $37,500 raised, the Board felt safe in letting the contract for the building. Construction of the YMCA building began in November of 1910, but had to be halted because poor economic conditions made collection of pledges very difficult. The former Mayor of Wenatchee, John Gellatly, had such a strong conviction that Wenatchee needed and must have a YMCA that he took a full month away from his business in order to secure sufficient new subscriptions to complete the building. He raised $31,000.00 in pledges, most payable over a five year period. In 1912, a $25,000 loan was obtained to finish construction.

When the building was nearly completed, the contractor came to the Board with the suggestion that a third floor be added to allow for a larger dormitory space. He told them the sidewalls and other

under girding were strong enough to carry the additional weight and that it would cost considerable less to do the work at that time than at a later date. The Board voted to follow the advice of the contractor. John Gellatly signed a personal note for $13,000.00 for the addition. The addition of a third floor cost the Association some of the larger contributions pledged in the two previous campaigns. Many people said they had given with the understanding that a two-story building would be built and therefore, refused to pay the balance of their pledges. In one instance, the Board filed a suit to collect on a large pledge. The suit was unsuccessful and created additional hard feelings in the community.

Although difficult economic times continued to slow construction, the YMCA building was finally opened to the public on September 28, 1914. Board President Arthur Gunn began the week-long opening celebration with the words, *"I hereby give possession of this building to the people of Wenatchee for their profit and enjoyment. It is the finest Young Men's Christian Association building in a city of this size in the world."*

From 1915 to 1919, the YMCA was a busy place. Staff included the general secretary (three different ones during the time period) and a physical director. Although women and girls had officially been eligible for membership since 1913, Ida Elder was hired in 1919 as the first Women's and Girls' Work Secretary. Basketball and volleyball were invented by YMCAs in the 1890's and were integral parts of programming at the Wenatchee YMCA. The YMCA gymnasium was the only building in town that could accommodate basketball tournament games. The Wenatchee High School team played at the YMCA and there were also volleyball leagues that utilized the gym.

In 1916, an attempt was made to refinance the lien against the building, but sufficient funds were not raised to meet the terms of the bank that held the note. In October of 1917, the public was shocked to learn that the YMCA might have to be sold to satisfy the bank unless $25,000 was raised. In November, John Gellatly led a "Wipe Out the Whole Debt" campaign to raise $47,500. The campaign was supposed to last four days, but stretched out three months. Although the whole debt wasn't wiped out, it was decreased to $20,000 and the YMCA was saved.

During World War I, members of the Home Guard held meetings and practices at the YMCA. Soldiers waiting to ship out or returning from service were able to stay at the YMCA for free. National Guard members stationed around the area used the YMCA's showers. Later on, soldiers returning from the war were given free memberships.

In the spring of 1918, the women of the YMCA launched a drive to increase membership to 500 members. As the first decade of the Wenatchee YMCA came to a close, the organization was on sound financial footing. There were 30 residents in the dormitory. Not only were the bills being paid, but the debt was being reduced each month. The incoming General Secretary, G. I. Sovereign, summed up the work of the YMCA in November of 1919 by saying, *"It is the unconscious tendency of human beings to judge a community by the health and vigor of its people. If the health and vigor of a community is at par or above the average, the other characteristics of that community will take care of themselves. It is our ambition to get everybody in town interested in themselves, in their health, and teach them how they may have that health by the sensible employment of a few hours a week in gymnastic and athletic work."*

1920-1929

During 1920 and 1921, under the leadership of General Secretary G.I. Sovereign, Women's and Girls' Work Secretary Ida Elder, and Boys' Work Secretary R.E. Crompton, the YMCA was self-supporting and the mortgage was paid down to $18,500. Outgoing Board President, W.O. Dow, spoke about the state of the Wenatchee YMCA during its annual meeting in May of 1921: *"The question will never rise again whether the YMCA is to continue here. Go to the Y any day during the week and you will see the spiritual and physical effect it is having on boys and girls and men and women of Wenatchee."*

Good times continued into 1922. An additional staff person, George W. Hedger, was hired as Physical Director and 56 dormitory spaces were full. Improvements made to the YMCA included a new hardwood floor in the gym, new linoleum in the halls and stairways, and enameling in the pool and shower rooms.

In October of 1922, G.I. Sovereign suddenly left the YMCA to work at a local insurance company. The position of General Secretary was not filled until the following June when Alva Snyder was hired. Due to a number of outstanding bills and needed improvements, the Board of Trustees refinanced the mortgage with a different bank and increased the principal to $25,000. Apple packing schools were a big part of the YMCA each September as a workforce was trained to handle the valley's largest industry.

When Alva Snyder left in August of 1924, he was replaced by S.Fred Hazzard. Hazzard would remain General Secretary of the YMCA for nearly ten years. At the annual meeting in March of 1925, Hazzard presented a plan that included the beginning of a Hi-Y organization. Committees included Boys' and Men's Work, Women's and Girls' Work, Educational Program, Membership, Social, Religious, Finance and General.

Campaigns for operating funds continued through the 1920's. Probably the most memorable was in 1927. On the evening of April 4, the Great Northern Railroad whistle blew for half an hour to announce the beginning of the drive to raise $12,500. The Daily World reported the next day: *"The inhabitants of the valley certainly knew that something had happened. Some of them, not having noted the announcements (in the Daily World) called up the police, the fire department, the YMCA, the Great Northern and the Daily World to find out what the whistling was all about. So altogether it was a fitting announcement for the opening of the campaign. The public certainly knows by this time that something is about to happen."*

The biggest development in the YMCA during the 1920's was the start of boys' and girls' summer camps. In August 1923, Alva Snyder held a boys' and girls' camp on the site of a Boy Scout camp at Alta Lake near Pateros. The Board gave him $150 for the camp and purchased a truck to haul the gear. In 1926, the program moved to the Whaley farm near 25 Mile Creek at Lake Chelan. A boys' camp, began July 12 and lasted for three sessions of ten days each. Some of the activities included boating, swimming, fishing, track meets, hiking and an excursion to the head of Lake Chelan. Carter Bass, camper and Editor in Chief of the "Camp Whaley Snipe" described his time at camp this way: *"These experiences will ever remain a part of the life and memory of each one through the great years ahead. But the biggest thing of all was that through all the camp, and in tent groups and individually every fellow made the attempt to live down the meaner things of his own life, and tried to live with those about him as did Brother, the Master – namely a life of helpful service and*

forgiving faith and love. Something of that spirit, in our all too short stay at Camp Whaley, was the best memory that I shall always have of our family of twenty-one 'Pioneers of the Truth'- July 12-22, on the shores of wonderful Lake Chelan."

In the summer of 1927, G.A. Sellar led a committee that recommended land on the north shore of Lake Wenatchee as a site for a permanent camp for the Wenatchee YMCA. The land was purchased from the Great Northern Lumber Company for $1,250 and the first work party was held on May 12, 1928. Over 50 men, women and boys participated. Tasks included draining a large field, grading the entrance, clearing trails and road building. The ladies formed a refreshment committee. A short program was held after lunch with W.O. Dow reviewing the past history of the Wenatchee association in which he pronounced the development of the new camp as the best piece of YMCA work undertaken in many years.

At the end of its second decade, the Wenatchee Association was again on solid ground with the crowning achievement of the purchase of a camp for youth. Unfortunately the stock market collapse in 1929 and the ensuing depression would change the course of the YMCA.

1930 – 1939

The Wenatchee YMCA continued providing numerous programs for the community through the early and mid 1930's, seemingly sheltered from the depression gripping the nation. A Wenatchee World article published on March 5, 1935, spoke of the YMCA: *"To walk past the brick building on Orondo and Chelan which houses the Y.M.C.A., the casual observer would not realize that inside is a swarming hive of athletic activity."*

The YMCA offered a variety of athletic activities for men including: basketball, indoor baseball, boxing, wrestling, handball, badminton, ping-pong, billiards, and swimming. Volleyball was available to both men and women. Supervised physical classes for boys were offered which gave youngsters physical training, mental development and a sense of teamwork and fair play. The YMCA even hosted the Skyline Ski Club for high school aged boys. YMCA Athletic Director, George Wallace, held a sports pageant open house featuring exhibitions in the sports offered during the winter of 1935.

Swimming was a popular pastime for adults and youth alike. Howard Mann participated in youth swim sessions as a young teen and described them this way: *"We used to swim without (swimming) suits. There was a steam pipe that ran the length of the pool on the bottom to heat it. We would dive in the deep end and follow the pipe all the way to the other end without taking a breath. The great guys could go all the way down and back in one breath."*

Lifesaving classes were offered to young men and women every Thursday night by Adrian Douglas, principal of the South Wenatchee School and a Red Cross lifesaving examiner. He encouraged all members to participate by saying, *"Lakes and rivers take their toll of death every summer simply because individuals lack adequate knowledge of lifesaving methods."*

The Wenatchee YMCA was not just available for physical development. There was a progression of groups and clubs dedicated to developing the character of members. At nine years of age, a boy could join the Friendly Indians. The groups of 10 to 20 youth would go on Saturday hikes and have

scheduled meetings which included games and rituals patterned after Native American traditions. The Pioneers was the club boys graduated to at the age of 12, and although similar to the Friendly Indians, it emphasized the ideal character traits that a boy should embrace. During junior high, the Junior Hi-Y program met weekly and allowed boys the opportunity for fellowship and to discuss problems they faced at that age. They also sponsored supervised mixed parties with junior high girls. Hi-Y was the club for high school boys which assisted in building the bridge from boyhood to manhood. Elbert Love, 1936 Secretary-Treasurer of the club, described Hi-Y this way: *"We have three principal interests which occupy our attention as a club and as individuals. These are: our school, ourselves and the Y.M.C.A. Organized on 'Y' ideals, we have a solid foundation on which to build, and to aid us in solving our school problems, determining its policies and mapping our own lives. Also as members of the Hi-Y club we have the use of the 'Y' swimming pool, gymnasium and game rooms, assuring us our physical education will not be neglected."*

The Wise Men's Club (not to be confused with the later Y's Men's service club) was open for men from age 20 to 35 and continued character building into adulthood by providing an opportunity for fellowship and religious observance to men with a Christian background.

The YMCA ran limited camping programs for youth members in the early 1930s. In 1930, Y Camp cost a dollar a day or two weeks for $15.00, which included a truck ride to and from the camp. Vance Earhart attended camp that summer when he was 12 years old. He recalled waking up one morning, going down to the lake and seeing hundreds of fish. He caught one about 12 inches long and the camp cook was kind enough to cook it for him. Baseball games and hikes up Dirty Face Mountain were popular camp activities.

The majority of camp usage during the 1930s was by church rental groups. Wilfred Woods remembers going up to the camp for a week during the summer as part of the Wenatchee Methodist Church. He remembers hiking and being the camp's designated bugler. No further development took place on the camp property during the 1930s with the only existing building being a cook shack left over from the previous lumber company owners. Camp was used for 15 to 30 days out of each year.

Along with offering a variety of programs to its members, the Wenatchee YMCA continued to be a strong voice in the community. Sometimes that voice was controversial. In March of 1935, the YMCA placed an advertisement in the local newspaper promoting its strong character development of youth. A small part of the ad featured the line *"In Wenatchee today, you can 'play the ponies' any afternoon. You need not look far to find gambling operating wide open – chips passing across the table with the fall of the cards."* Mayor C.B. Hughes took the ad as a personal attack on him and his policies so he ordered the police chief to shut down all gambling - even games of chance at the carnival which the city commissioners had authorized for the Apple Blossom Festival. K.P. Sexton, President of the YMCA Board of Directors, insisted that the ad was not a personal attack, but merely commentary on society nationwide. The mayor demanded an apology or a statement describing the YMCA's intent, so the YMCA ran the ad again with this heading*: "The Board of Directors of the Y.M.C.A., in publishing this advertisement on Tuesday, desired to call attention of our citizens to the temptations youth faces today – to emphasize the need of providing youth facilities for wholesome use of leisure time."*

The gambling ban was soon lifted, but the YMCA continued to promote itself as a haven for youth against society's vices. In 1936, Irwin Jones headed the YMCA annual campaign, which included

newspaper commentaries with titles such as, “More Y Men and Fewer G Men”, “Y Like a Lighthouse” and “Boys Are Like Apples”. The campaign’s goal was to raise $7,800.

The depression finally caught up to the Wenatchee Valley and its agricultural base in 1937. After less than two years as General Secretary, W. Franklin Bush resigned and Clarence Rayburn took over. There was not much he could do to help the YMCA. The Community Chest fell short of its annual quota and the YMCA was kept open only through the help of the Works Progress Administration. The Physical Director’s job was discontinued and voting membership dropped from 202 in 1935 to 85 by the end of 1938. Once again, the survival of the Wenatchee YMCA was in doubt.

1940-1949

In the early 1940s, economic hard times in the valley continued to take a toll on the YMCA. Businessmen did not have the money to make the kind of donations the YMCA needed to pay its debt. In order to survive and move forward, the YMCA needed strong leadership with commitment to its mission. Four men would respond to meet those needs.

When Armen Tertsagian came to the United States from Turkey, he found shelter and Christian companionship at the Seattle YMCA. After moving to Cashmere, he began serving on the Wenatchee YMCA Board. In early 1941, with the YMCA facing foreclosure, Tertsagian called a group of six men together to discuss the situation. Ross Heminger was one of those men and described the meeting this way: *“Armen asked me to open the meeting with prayer. I cannot remember the words of the prayer, but I know they were labored because a heavy cloud seemed to hang over us. For some months we had actually carried on conversations with Jack Rogers, Mayor of Wenatchee, to see if a plan could be worked out to let the city use part of the Y and we would use the basement rooms…It would have been tragic to lose the Y and its Christian influence in the life of our community.”*

Tersagian’s plan was to try and find a group of fifteen or twenty men who might be able to give enough money to start a larger drive to save the YMCA. After each man had chosen two or three names to contact to garner support for a financial campaign, it was decided that Tertsagian and Heminger would go to Seattle to ask the bank for an extension. On the day of the meeting, Heminger arrived at the bank an hour early, but Tertsagian was unable to attend due to car trouble. Heminger felt unprepared to meet with the bank president by himself, but did the best he could for the sake of the YMCA. Heminger recalled: *“I promised the bank president that we would make every effort we could if he would give us another six month extension. I pleaded with him to give us another opportunity to save the YMCA for Wenatchee. Mr. Schmitz (the bank president) asked about conditions in the valley. I was fearful when I had to tell him we were having a rough time making things go. He said he was familiar with fruit prices and the losses apple growers were taking. He asked how we could possibly raise enough money to make back payments and keep the loan current. I do not recall all the conversation, but I was sure I had failed to obtain an extension.”*
Heminger hadn’t failed. A letter from the bank two months later granted the YMCA a six month extension. The YMCA succeeded in securing the funds for the bank over the next few months.

With the financial crisis under control, the Board turned their attention to the leadership of the YMCA. For over a year, the YMCA had been without a general secretary. Art Pohlman recalled a late night Board meeting:*"I remember the Board was discussing the YMCA situation, debating whether we could operate much longer when it was decided to call Wayne Emory, who lived in Denver…His name had been given to us by the Portland office as one who might be able to help us. It was 11:00 p.m. here, but Ross Heminger put a call in anyway to Emory in Denver."*

Wayne Emory arrived in October of 1941. He described the condition of the YMCA in a 1942 letter to the National YMCA: *"Our membership records have been very poorly kept. It has not been the custom of the Association to make up a monthly membership report. On taking active charge of the Association in October, our bonified membership totaled twenty-six men, boys, women, and girls. A great many people used the Y during 1941 without filling out an application blank or paying for the service…(At the end of 1941) the total for men and boys is one hundred and sixty-three. Total for women and girls memberships is twenty-eight."*

Stu Adams, who worked as Boys' Physical Director for about a year under Wayne Emory, described him as a *"hard cracker to work with who liked doing things his way."* Stu recalled an encounter with Mr. Emory: Stu had been playing in a basketball tournament as a member of the Peshastin Lumberjacks team. After the tourney, the team went to Vic's Hamburger Shop for dinner and, like the rest of the team, Stu had a beer. Wayne Emory found out, called Stu into his office and told him that he couldn't condone those actions from his employees.

Along with Wayne Emory, the other factor that positively influenced the YMCA's monetary situation in the early 1940's was World War II. The industrial needs of the war, and the jobs to meet them, had a trickle-down effect in the Wenatchee Valley and people were once again employed at good wages. The YMCA housed the Naval Aviation Cadets' program and provided space for the U.S.O. At the request of the community, the YMCA maintained a youth center for high school students and a separate area for junior high students.

In the early 1940's, the Regional Agricultural Credit Corporation stabilized the fruit industry by providing secure financing. It was in this positive economic climate that Armen Tertsagian called a group of men together and proposed a campaign to raise enough funds to retire the YMCA debt once and for all. The campaign was successful and on June 6, 1944, a Mortgage Burning Celebration was held with Armen Tertsagian presiding as President of the Board. Ross Heminger recalled the evening this way: *"We were debt-free at last. What a grand occasion to celebrate. Everyone was elated that the YMCA could start developing some plans to improve its service to the folks of the Wenatchee area. Lester L. Gellatly acted as toastmaster at the mortgage burning ceremony. He stated that he had never imagined the force a YMCA could have in a community like Wenatchee until he saw what happened to the spirit around the Y. Lester told us that the improvement in the spiritual, mental and physical condition of those who used the Y was the greatest thing to happen in Wenatchee."*

On June 8, 1944, a second celebration was held to celebrate the 34th anniversary of the Wenatchee YMCA. When Wayne Emory left Wenatchee for a position with the Everett YMCA in 1947, the Wenatchee YMCA was a strong and stable organization.

In the summer of 1947, the YMCA Board of Directors made a decision that would change the course of the Wenatchee YMCA forever. The decision was the hiring of Larry Handy as General Secretary of the YMCA. Handy came from the Tulare County YMCA in California, had an

extensive background in camping programs and was a past president of the Pacific Federation of the American Camping Association. It took little time for Handy to put his experience to use.

In the fall of 1947, a camp committee was formed and Elmer and Effie Smith were hired as caretakers of the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp. They lived on-site and were instrumental in preparing camp for the upcoming summer. In the spring of 1948, the newly formed Y's Men's service club assisted them and a water system was installed with a chlorinator donated by the druggists of Wenatchee. Other preparations included renovation of donated boats, further draining of the meadow so that it could be used for games and rifle and archery ranges, and repairs to the dining hall. Elmer Smith developed a DDT fog machine, which he drove around on the back of his jeep, to take care of the mosquitoes. On May 15, 1948, five boys became the first to register for the first organized summer camping program at the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp in over a decade. By the time the first of two ten day sessions opened in late July, participants were registered from as far away as Moses Lake. 47 boys attended the first session and 45 attended the second. A Wenatchee World editorial, dated August 1, 1948 celebrated the reopening this way: *"With the reopening of the YMCA camp this week for the first time in ten years, another opportunity is being offered for our young folks to have one of the most enduring and worthwhile experiences that can come to a person. Attending an organized camp…is a far different thing from just camping alone. It offers training in the best type of human relations, in spiritual and in moral values, as well as giving the finest kind of outdoor vacation."*

The progress on camp continued into 1949. Elmer Smith constructed a homemade sawmill near Fish Lake and produced numerous two by four's from discarded lodgepole pine. The siding was then used in the construction of new cabins at the camp. By June 1949, a cook's quarters and the first cabin, named Azwell Lodge, had been completed. The Owl Cabin, funded by John Watson and Clay Rule, soon followed. Joe Wood was responsible for the cabin design.

The summer of 1949 featured a week-long Presbyterian youth camp, the first ever YMCA girls' camp session and two sessions of boys' camp. A highlight of the summer was the addition of a 32-foot rubber pontoon raft, donated by KPQ radio. It had been used to hold up the radio transmitter during the flood of 1947, but was enjoyed by many at camp during the swimming and boating programs.

Larry Handy not only revitalized camp, but he brought new enthusiasm to the programs at the downtown YMCA. Along with being important to the revitalization of the camp, the Y's Men's Club hosted Friday evening movie programs for hundreds of youth each week. Wilfred Woods served as the club's first president. Summer programs for youth included day camp programs, swimming lessons – including a free learn to swim week, recreational swims, story hour, craft programs and gym programs. Teen leadership programs such as Junior Hi Y, Tri Hi Y, and Gra-Y were popular year round. Other programs for youth included the Apple Box Derby, youth basketball leagues, dances, an Easter Egg Hunt, and Junior Lifesaving. For men there was swimming, volleyball, badminton, handball, and weightlifting. Women's programs included exercise classes, music, badminton, and swimming. Specialty programs such as leather tooling, knitting and the Shutter Bug Camera Club were also popular.

All these programs could not have taken place without many dedicated staff. Some of the staff that served the YMCA in the 1940s included: Bill Chisholm, Robert Benedict and Eloise Harrison, Mary Dietz, Carol Shoemaker, Mrs. Don Lester, Jay Eller, Stuart Adams, Kyle Waite and Bob Satterwhite. Few physical improvements were made to the facility during the 1940s, but the pool

was rebuilt in 1946 with tile decks and sides. The pool's first filtration and chlorination system was added at about the same time.

The YMCA had come a long way in ten years – from the brink of closing its doors to the reopening of camp. Numerous factors accounted for the turn around, but most of all it was the dedication of a few individuals who believed strongly in the mission of the YMCA. This belief in the mission carried a now thriving Wenatchee YMCA into the 1950s.

1950-1959

Regarding the YMCA's annual meeting on February 5, 1950, The Wenatchee World reported: *"The annual banquet of the YMCA was a fortieth anniversary celebration Sunday as 175 Y members met in the banquet room of the association. Forty years of development were reviewed and plans for the coming decades were discussed by Larry Handy, YMCA secretary."* Larry Handy also reported the YMCA was 813 members strong and 25 different groups and classes either met at, or were affiliated with, the YMCA.

These numbers grew in the early 1950s as the YMCA expanded its programs even further. Organized sports programs were a big part of the YMCA with volleyball, softball, and basketball for adults; and basketball, ping pong tournaments, and free throw contests for youth. Jim Sexton summed up the importance of sports during the 1951 membership drive saying, *"The Y is definitely one of the few basics in the sports life of any area. It would be impossible to total in dollars the enjoyment, the help and the value that our Y offers to the young and old of the valley."*
The YMCA also provided gym classes, weightlifting and handball.

The aquatics programs continued to be strong. Swimming lessons and lifesaving classes were offered to hundreds of youth, including many non-YMCA members during a free learn to swim week. The YMCA also partnered with local schools to provide lessons to fifth graders of local schools free of charge. In 1951, YMCA swimmers combined to finish 15th in a national YMCA contest called "Swim Down the Mississippi River". That same year, under the direction of Mrs. George Fox, the YMCA Swim Club was formed and performed their first pageant. The group disbanded after a couple of years, but was reorganized in 1956 and became a women's water ballet group known as the Dolphinettes. A year later, the Swanettes was formed for younger girls.

In 1951, Paul Pugh began the YMCA Youth Circus with help from the Y's Men's Club. By 1954, the group was performing wire acts, acrobatics and clowning to thousands of people at shows throughout the state. The Wenatchee World stated in an editorial on August 22, 1954: *"The value of such an enterprise to the young boys and girls who take part in it and are provided a healthful and interesting occupation for their leisure time, is one of the 'intangibles' that cannot be measured. This character-building is an important function of the YMCA and other youth organizations and in the circus they have found an ideal means of doing it."*

The Therapy Swim program for handicapped adults also began in 1951. The program expanded quickly in response to the polio epidemic of 1952. Bill Smith, the only physical therapist at the Deaconess Hospital, looked to the YMCA pool as a needed option for his patients' rehabilitation. Carmen Bossenbrock, who volunteered her time to the program for 38 1/2 years, described the early years of the program as a community effort. A ramp was built into the lower level of the YMCA to

provide easy access for those of limited mobility, wheelchairs and materials to construct a set of walking bars for the pool were donated, and Bill and Carmen donated their expertise as physical therapists.

One Therapy Swim participant was Dan Miller who was 18 years old when he contracted polio during the summer of 1955. Years later, Dan remembered being loaded onto a stretcher covered with towels, transported by ambulance to the YMCA, and lowered into the pool via a pulley system which hooked into the stretcher. He credited the YMCA Therapy Swim program with helping him to learn to walk again.

The YMCA was Wenatchee's Youth Center in the 1950s. At the 1951 YMCA annual meeting, Larry Handy stated: *"As the Grand Coulee dam transforms its energies into electrical power so the challenge of the 'Y' generates youthful energies into a Christian force for good."*

Youthful energy was definitely abundant at the YMCA. Numerous clubs called the YMCA home including Junior Hi-Y, Junior Tri-Hi-Y, Hi-Y, Tri-Hi-Y, Gra-Y, a junior college club, Youth and Government and various leader councils. All of these clubs held social events, participated in community service projects and contributed hundreds of dollars each year to YMCA World Service. Caring adults volunteered their time as advisors and these clubs served as vehicles of character development for a generation of youth in the Wenatchee Valley.

All of the YMCA's activities in the 1950s had one thing in common – they needed space. As early as 1951, building committee chair Frank Taylor wrote, *"After careful thinking, both the committee and the Board of Directors agreed that steps should be taken to acquire a new building site. Further, that all steps necessary should be taken to adapt the present building to the growing demands."* During 1952, a portable partition was made in the dormitory area to create a club meeting space in the winter and a residence area in the summer. In 1954, five dorm rooms were converted to three club rooms. Throughout the 1950s, the YMCA struggled to find land on which to locate a new YMCA building. In 1954 the Board of Trustees secured a suitable site, but the City of Wenatchee refused the permit to build based on neighborhood opposition. In 1956, the YMCA nearly purchased land from William and Emily Brown on the corner of Russell and Miller Streets. On November 26, 1956, an emergency meeting of the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees was held. Minutes from that meeting state*: "There was a feeling expressed by several that our first responsibility was to make our present building usable. In light of this they further expressed themselves by raising the question where money would come from to do both things – improve the present building, and at the same time, purchase property for a future site."*

The endeavor to purchase the Brown property ended in January 1957. In 1958, the YMCA began a temporary renovation which included converting thirteen dormitory rooms on the second floor into six club rooms, enlarging the men's and boys' locker room, and adding air conditioning in the locker rooms. A body conditioning area was also added – including dumbbells, dip bars, chinning bars, incline rack pulley weights, jump ropes, a walker, a punching bag and a bicycle machine. In late 1958, the YMCA purchased the adjacent Columbia Building for future expansion.

Camping continued to be a large part of the Wenatchee YMCA. In 1951, two-day camp sessions were operated for the first time on the Don Phipps ranch up Squilchuck. The sessions were very popular with 91 youth attending. Sessions and attendance grew throughout the decade. The Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp facilities also continued to grow under the leadership of JP Watson and

the Camp Committee. Joe B. Wood was responsible for the cabin and lodge designs. Twelve cabins and various other projects were completed during the 1950's:

- 1950 –Y's Men's Cabin, Cashmere Cabin, Evergreen Cabin, a craft hut and a caretaker's cabin
- 1951 - Muirhead Cabin, a boathouse, a bulkhead for the dock added by the Exchange Club of Wenatchee
- 1952 – Tertsagian Cabin, Whiteman Cabin and Rotary Cabin
- 1953 – Taylor Cabin, pump house and water main
- 1958 – Meikle Cabin and Miller Cabin
- 1959 – Mary Woods Cabin and the Rotary Bell Tower (with a bell from the Methodist Church of Wenatchee)

In 1954, excavation work was begun for the ground floor of the lodge. The ground floor was completed in 1957 and included flush toilets, showers, a modern kitchen and an indoor dining area. The first camp group utilized the lodge in July of that year, but work on the remainder of the lodge was halted for the rest of the decade due to a lack of funds. Attendance at camp continued to rise and by 1958, ten years after camp reopened, nearly 400 campers attended YMCA camp with nearly 600 more using the facility in association with churches and other community groups.

The Wenatchee YMCA also showed leadership on a community and national level. The YMCA continued to be the host for the regional gathering of Apple Blossom princesses who yearly took over the gym for a week during the festival. The YMCA and YWCA operated jointly in 1958 and 1959, but eventually decided to remain two independent organizations. Nationally, Don Phipps was elected Vice President of the National Council of the YMCAs in 1952 and the Wenatchee YMCA joined YMCAs throughout the country in celebrating 100 years of YMCA's in the USA in 1951.

1960-1969

The Wenatchee YMCA began the 1960s with a celebration of its Golden Anniversary. In many ways, the entire decade turned out to be golden for the YMCA. Building on the renovations of 1958 and the purchase of the Columbia Building, the YMCA undertook an unprecedented series of three capital campaigns in eight years.

In 1960, the first campaign with a goal of $150,000 was launched. The Wenatchee World editorial page headline on January 6, 1960 declared, *"Y Campaign will be Tribute to High Regard for Youth"*. It compared the amount to be raised as small when placed against other sources of revenue in the community and continued, *"…how do you measure the value of a fine YMCA?....We feel that the creation of a better Y contributes in a great measure to the most important task of all…the building of sound Christian character, in a healthy body, motivated by a clean and alert mind."*

Led by Big Gifts Division chair, Ross Heminger, and Teams Division chair, Jack Crowl, the campaign successfully raised $185,000. Construction did not proceed smoothly, especially in the pool area. At one point Joe Wood, architect and project manager, reported, *"If any lesson is to be learned from our past experience to guide future planning it would be to anticipate the worst and then double it."* Projects completed with the funds raised included: widening of the east deck of the pool, retiling and glazing of the pool deck, a new cement bottom for the pool, new paint for the pool, new electrical wiring to the basement and a new staircase from the side entry to the

mezzanine level. In 1963, the YMCA borrowed money from the building fund to pay off the mortgage of the Columbia Building. Over the next several years, the money was paid back through rental income garnered from a business on the street level of the building.

Twelve projects were listed for funding as part of the 1964 campaign. The goal was set at $325,000. When asked why citizens of Wenatchee should contribute to the fund drive, Campaign Chair Al Morrison answered, *"Second only to our schools, the YMCA exerts more influence on Wenatchee Valley youth than any other single agency I know of."* 427 persons worked on the campaign which began with a Big Gifts Campaign, led by Don Fager, in December of 1963. Bud Movius chaired the public campaign which took place January 23 to February 10, 1964. With only five days left in the public campaign, the Wenatchee World editorial board once again threw its support behind the YMCA stating: *"We applaud the YMCA and its aggressive, progressive board of directors for the courage to take initiative and lead us in the plan to keep our Y a place where tomorrow's decision makers are proud to congregate, learn and grow, physically, spiritually, and morally. We hope the Y makes it. With your help, it will."*

$301,000 was raised. Although the original goal was not met, the funds were sufficient to provide many changes. Perhaps the biggest accomplishment was the completion of the lodge at camp. Other projects completed during 1964 and 1965 included: extensive remodeling in the Columbia Building to meet fire code and better accommodate programs; the addition of space for a new ladies and girls locker room; the mezzanine was expanded and converted to usable space including a new General Secretary's office, conference room, and men's and women's restrooms; the west stairwell from the mezzanine to the top floor was removed and redone; the offices on the main floor were gutted and remodeled; and a new lobby was developed including a new limestone fireplace, refurbished furniture, new carpet and a new color TV. In 1966, the ladies division was completed and included shower, dressing, toilet and lounge areas, a separate stair hall and a locker room for both junior girls and ladies. The east stair hall from the pool level to the second floor, the physical director's office on the mezzanine level and the frame work for the second floor kitchen and staff office were also completed. In order to accommodate the changes, the number of residence rooms was reduced from 37 to 14. All of these projects were helped to completion by hundreds of volunteer hours from YMCA members, Board members, and staff and business work parties.

Regulation handball courts, second floor club meeting rooms, gym renovations, a front entrance ramp and a fire control sprinkler system still loomed as projects the YMCA needed to have completed. Also, a $25,000 emergency loan had been taken out in early 1967 to replace the boiler which was in danger of a major rupture after years of patching. It had only been four years since the last campaign, but the YMCA decided to launch the "Come Grow with Us" campaign, beginning with special gift solicitation in November of 1967. The public campaign was held January 25 to February 15, 1968. Al Libke served as campaign chairman and Wilfred Woods was chair of the Special Gifts Division. Over 350 individuals assisted with the campaign. As in past years, the YMCA received much positive publicity during the campaign. Unlike past campaigns, there was also some negative. On Sunday February 18, 1968, in a Wenatchee World letter to the editor, a member of the community who described himself as a self-appointed devil's advocate commented: *"…I must protest most vehemently to your 4th phase of the YMCA building program. Pure and simple, it is money down the drain. And I doubt if the old YMCA sewer system is functioning well enough to accommodate it….. How much of this $350,000 expenditure will actually help our youth?"*
Al Libke responded for the YMCA saying that much modernization had already successfully taken place and that: *"Young people are attracted by, and show respect for, modern facilities designed to*

allow a natural release of their healthy energies…The Y is one of the few places in this, or any community, which attracts and serves three or more generations at one time and in relatively complete harmony…"

Even with some negative feelings about the campaign, it was successful with $330,000 raised. Projects completed as a result included: three handball courts and a spectator balcony (the remaining 14 residence rooms were eliminated); a 3,000 square foot club area (used by the Wenatchee Youth Association through a lease agreement); second floor club rooms, kitchen, and lounge and dining areas; a new gym floor and remodeled interior; new locker facilities for the men, young adults and youth; a sprinkler system; and a new Orondo Street entrance and sidewalks. On the eve of the YMCA open house to showcase the improvements, Wilfred Woods wrote in the Wenatchee World, *"A building is not a program, of course, but it is a visible sign of the depth of concern that this community has toward its youth. Today the building is almost exploding with activity. That is the best evidence of the needs that are being served in today's society."*

Operating programs during the many periods of construction was difficult, but it was worth it as the YMCA experienced unprecedented growth in membership and program participation during the 1960's. Fitness classes were very popular among adults and the YMCA's Slim n' Trim classes for women had nearly 50 participants per class. The HELP (Health Encouragement to Lose Pounds) program gained a lot of publicity around the valley for its success. Other classes included men's and women's volleyball, badminton, and basketball. Youth programs included Youth and Government, numerous Hi-Y and Junior Hi-Y clubs and tumbling. Boxing, wrestling and a self-defense class were all added for a time in the 1960's. Swimming lessons for all ages were overflowing with swimming program attendance of well over 20,000 most years. The Dolphinette and Swanette synchronized swimming groups performed through most of the decade. Even though the threat from polio had disappeared, the Therapy Swim Program continued to serve hundreds of people with a variety of physical therapy needs. Y-Indian Guides, a father-son program, began at the YMCA in 1960. In 1961, the Wenatchee Youth Circus separated from the YMCA and became its own non-profit organization. The first multi-week, extended-day, day camp was held during the summer of 1967. Membership was strong, ranging in number from 1300 to over 2000.

At the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp, the building of the 1950s continued. In 1960, the Isenhart and Leslie D. Lewis cabins were completed and a bridge was built over the ravine. The Wenatchee Lions Club contributed a new swim float in 1960 and a new dock in 1961. The Kiwanis Health Hut was completed in 1966, but by far the greatest construction accomplishment was the completion of the main lodge. Four carpenters, led by Carl Syring, began work on the structure on April 15, 1964. They were aided by a parade of volunteers and work parties who helped with a variety of tasks – including cleaning yards of salvaged brick that later became the lodge fireplace. The brick came from the former John Gellatly home which was the original Deaconess Hospital. The boards for the lodge floor, came from a local school and were stored for eight seasons before being installed. Both the brick and the boards were donated by Clair Vandivort Construction. Finishing work continued until December of that year when it was halted due to weather. Construction began again in May 1965 and the lodge was occupied for the first time on July 15, 1965.

The 1960's saw a vast increase in the number of people using the camp. Summer camp enrollment increased from 289 campers in 1960 to over 400 midway through the decade. Doug Johnson, a camp counselor during that time, credits the success to good staff and a sense of fun. He tells a story about when his cabin full of eight year olds, and a fellow counselor's cabin, took a day hike up to Hidden Lake. It was a hot day and when they arrived at the lake, the campers – all boys –

decided to skinny dip in the lake to cool off. Suddenly they heard singing and realized that a group from Camp Zanika Lache – all girls – was fast approaching. As the boys crouched in the water up to their ears, Doug said all the counselors from both camps had a good laugh. The Zanika group waited down the path until the boys were dressed. There were quite a few giggles, as well as red faces, when the boys marched down the path past the girls on their way back to the YMCA camp.

In 1961 Cashmere schools held the first five-day outdoor education program at the camp. By 1969 there would be eight full weeks of outdoor education held at the camp. Rental groups (churches and other non-profit organizations) increased to 26 by the end of the decade.

None of the growth the YMCA experienced would have been possible without strong leadership. For nearly 20 years, Larry Handy had been the vision for the Wenatchee YMCA. When he left for a new career in Seattle in 1966, his legacy was recognized by having the camp lodge he fought so hard to complete named in his honor. Pat Vest became the Executive Director in early 1967 and led the YMCA through the final campaign of the decade. He left in the summer of 1969 and Bill Wilde took over in September of that year. Other notable staff members during the decade included: Harry Garrison, Camp Director,1960-62; Bob Cline, Physical Director.1961-67; Carmen Bossenbrock, Director of the Therapy Swim Program throughout the 1960s; Larry Frazier, Youth and Camp Director, 1963-65; Paul Netzel, Youth and Camp Director, 1966-67; Bob Smeenk, Associate Executive (camping),1968; and Larry Hartog, Associate Executive (athletics),1969.

As the decade ended, a statement of national policy from the National Council of Young Men's Christian Association of the United States previewed the change that was to come. It read, *"We recommend that each unit of the YMCA (local YMCA's)… be prepared to share in the development of public opinion by taking positions on the issues that have deep bearing on the lives of persons"*. Newly appointed Executive Director Bill Wilde cited ways the Wenatchee YMCA could meet this challenge – adult sex education classes, classes on the draft and what each boy faces as he become 18 years of age, and new weekend youth camps with an ecology theme. Other recommendations from regional YMCA staff included the development of community drug action programs and a move in the direction of more parent support and family enrichment programs.

1970-1979

The YMCA was active on a number of fronts in January 1970. A membership campaign was held under the experienced leadership of Don Fager and Wilfred Woods, a family life series led by Dr. Movius was attended by over 100 individuals, and an association study was planned to provide future direction for the YMCA. In addition, there was interest in the summer camps and Al Libke was commended on his work to collect on the Phase IV capital pledges from the 1960's. However, the February membership campaign was extended for a week after achieving only fifty percent of its goal. There was a $27,000 deficit on the bank loan taken out to cover the Phase IV project. The deficit would grow to $30,000 by March.

At the end of August 1970, the YMCA had an operating deficit of $4,333 with a projected year end deficit of $12,845. In addition, the deficit at the camp was $6,184, with a year end deficit projected to be $8,265. The combined projected deficit of more than $20,000 was nearly 20% of the total YMCA budget for 1970. The Finance Committee's recommendations included: mortgaging camp, borrowing on savings, obtaining additional sustaining monies, and cutting expenses in the short

term. Long-term recommendations included renting the Columbia building, establishing membership and sustaining accountability, determining the market value of camp and conducting an operational study for camp. In November, Executive Director Bill Wilde announced his departure, effective January 1971. Larry Hartog was named Acting Executive Director and Bob Smeenk was named Associate Director.

In early 1971, Ernie Elder reported that a $100,000 mortgage loan on the YMCA building and camp had been secured. A ways and means committee, under the leadership of Jack Blosser, was created to look at the long-term financial picture of the YMCA. The Board hired Fuller / Howe Associates to assist with financial development. Their first priorities, as recorded by Larry Hartog, were: *"To aid our Y in overcoming our present deficit, financing our Y through sustaining funds, providing a camp subsidy to re-establish a summer resident camp at Lake Wenatchee and a good endowment program."*

Joan Hinderer, who worked as a bookkeeper for the YMCA for 30 years, credited the YMCA's strong Finance Committee, including Al Libke, Don Campbell, and Ernie Elder, for keeping the YMCA open during this time. Lay leadership was also the key to the development of a successful Ambassador program. Comprised of 15 past and present YMCA Board members, this group raised nearly $100,000 by the end of 1971, with the majority of the money going to a special needs fund for payment of the loan and smaller amounts for the beginning of an endowment fund and a sustaining fund. Larry Hartog also gave credit to the Wenatchee World for their support of the YMCA. Perhaps one of the biggest decisions made regarding the future of the YMCA involved stock from the AZ Wells Trust which was distributed to the YMCA in 1971. Even in the midst of a dire financial time, the Board did not sell the stock. In a special Board meeting on April 22, 1971, the following motion was made: *"Don Campbell made a motion that this Board of Directors goes on record as recommending to future Boards that the future management of the Wenatchee YMCA be made aware that the Board of Directors has accepted with gratitude the stock from Wells & Wade Fruit Co. and Wells & Wade Hardware with the sole thought that the stock be retained for continued benefit of the YMCA."*

With a plan to overcome the financial crisis in place, the YMCA turned to serving the needs of an increasing member population. In 1970, the YMCA had 1460 members. Thousands more non-members participated in programs each year. In 1972, Jim Haglund was hired as Physical Director. During his five years at the YMCA, he expanded the youth aquatics programs to include pre-school and infant swimming lessons, began a highly successful youth gymnastics program, taught hundreds of members to play racquetball, and oversaw an active adult fitness program including a jogging club and an early circuit training class called Y's Up which he taught with future Board member Caitilin Newman. Other programs during the 1970's included: Slim and Trim, handball, Y Indian Guides, youth basketball, Saturday teen nights, Youth and Government, dance classes, weightlifting, yoga, and Therapy Swim. The day camp program continued to gain popularity and in 1978 a 32-passenger bus was purchased to transport children to area parks.

Due to financial difficulties, the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp did not hold a summer session in 1971. In February of that year, much discussion was given to the thought of selling camp. At that time, Jack Blosser stated: *"We are going to have to invest in the area of $20,000 to $30,000 which will include an operational deficit and some Capital fund improvements…If we as a Board are unwilling to subscribe to this, then we feel group camping should be discontinued and we should close the Lake Wenatchee Y Camp facility and should consider leasing or selling so that this huge*

investment in terms of dollars and lay and staff manpower can be redirected in more productive areas."

Most Board members were in favor of leasing the camp over selling the camp entirely. Although the Board explored a number of possible leasing opportunities, neither leasing nor the sale of camp ever happened. Summer camp operated on a balanced budget in 1972. In 1973, Jeff Meredith was hired as Camp/Program Director and took camp in a new direction. He began the YMCA Outdoor Leadership Camp with the help of Robert (Skip) Stoffel, a former USAF Global Survival School instructor. The program made the YMCA camp its home base and went into the surrounding wilderness areas to practice survival techniques, canoeing, rafting and backpacking. As stated in a 1973 YMCA newsletter: *"Emphasis will be on character education through the creation of challenges that can be met and overcome in our natural environment. Every student camper will be given the opportunity to assume leadership roles in the process."*

In essence, camp was changed from an arts and crafts fun oriented camp to a specialized school, teaching young people sound leadership and skills necessary to involve themselves safely in all outdoor adventures. The new program proved successful and operated near capacity for most of the 1970s. Tragedy struck during a backpacking trip to the White River in 1975 when David Converse was swept into the river and drowned. Outdoor education and other rental groups helped the camp serve between 3,000 and 3,500 youth per year. Improvements at camp during the decade included: the addition of a two car garage and workshop, new metal roofs on the cabins and manager's house, the purchase of six new stoves for the cabins, the construction of a 40-foot rappelling wall, renovation and drainage of the sports field, construction of a ropes course, completion of a walk-in cooler in the lodge, installation of a new water line from the lake, renovation of the lodge restrooms, purchase of two commercial grade electric ovens, and a new roof for the lodge.

During 1979, with the budget under control and a growing endowment fund, the YMCA conducted a comprehensive survey to determine what community needs the YMCA could better serve. Surveys were distributed to members, printed in the Wenatchee World, placed in local businesses, presented at service clubs and filled out at three Junior High Schools and Wenatchee High School. In June, the tabulated results showed that the YMCA was well thought of in the community, but there was a desire for expanded facilities.

In 1979, the YMCA Board began exploring options for facility expansion. Two options were considered: expansion into the Columbia Building with a new gym and running track; and/or collaboration with Wenatchee Valley College on a joint facility.

1980-1989

In 1980, the YMCA Board of Directors moved ahead with its facility expansion plans by hiring a fundraising firm to conduct a feasibility study. At the conclusion of the study, the Board of Directors voted not to conduct a capital campaign. Board minutes cited the following reasons for not pursuing a capital campaign: *"General economic climate; level of interest rates; non-availability of loan money on a long term basis; large gift contributors essential for the campaign did not identify themselves; reluctance on the part of a large number of persons interviewed to work on the campaign; achieving the desired goal was questionable and the goal recommended by*

Campaign Associates would not complete the project." It would be nine years before the issue of facility expansion would be seriously considered again.

Through the first five years of the 1980s, business continued as usual at the YMCA. As Harry Raab noted in the Board President's report in 1985, *"In its early beginning, YMCA programs were developed to meet the educational, spiritual, and physical needs of the people of the Wenatchee Valley. Some of the programs are changed today, but not the Christian mission of the YMCA as evidenced in the character building emphasis of current programs."*

Slight deficits were noted annually in the YMCA and camp operations, but nothing that presented a long term problem. Programs such as swimming lessons and gymnastics expanded and Youth and Government, Indian Guides, and the game room continued to be popular. You and Me Baby, racquetball, basketball, volleyball, Therapy Swim and other fitness activities served the adult community. New youth program offerings included Youth Wrestling (1981), Summer Adventure Club (1983), a summer excursion program for youth aged 10-14 (1984), School's Out (1984), and break dancing (1984). In 1981, a scholarship/membership committee was established under the direction of Caitilin Newman to provide memberships and programs to youth who could not otherwise afford to participate. The committee coordinated its work with local schools and churches.

The most notable renovation project at the YMCA in the early 1980s was the conversion of the upper floor of the Columbia Building into a youth gymnastics center / multi-purpose room in 1983 and 1984. The renovation cost nearly $17,000 and was paid for with endowment fund interest and contributions from a number of local physicians. Over 2,000 volunteer construction hours were provided to keep the costs down.

In 1982, camp faced a $10,000 void in the budget when the Wenatchee School District outdoor education program moved to another site. Rental income increased slightly, but summer program enrollment declined. A pilot program, featuring more traditional camping activities mixed with adventure activities, was offered in 1984. The new program model, combined with lower fees, allowed summer camp enrollment to double. Insurance funds allowed Owl cabin to be rebuilt after it burned to the ground in 1979. Endowment fund income allowed completion of a new dock and expansion of the beach area in 1984.

The YMCA was open, classes were happening, memberships were being paid, but no real progress was being made. The overall budget of the YMCA remained solid due to contributions of the United Way and trust funds and the sustaining campaign raised about same amount each year from 1980 through 1985. Membership income dropped after 1982 and program income varied depending on the year. Caitilin Newman, a Board member during the time, recalled the YMCA during this period as, a laissez faire type of organization: *"People had a desire for better organization, but weren't sure how to get it."*

In early 1986, the YMCA would have to face some harsh realities. First, YMCA membership declined. Second, insurance premiums for the YMCA and camp facilities increased by more than 50%. Third, the camp was forced to discontinue 70% of its programs due to the inability to obtain liability insurance. Some of the program areas affected included the ropes and rappelling courses, snow inner-tubing, windsurfing, and rafting. All but one of the 1986 winter rental groups canceled and the camp faced a $10,000 budget deficit. In February of 1986, the Board voted to close the camp for six months beginning in October and to cut the Camp Director's position to part-time.

In March 1986, at the YMCA's request, Ned Shafer, Executive Director of the Walla Walla YMCA and John Ireland, National Field Consultant for the YMCA of the USA, conducted an evaluation of the YMCA. The purpose of the evaluation was to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the YMCA and to prepare and document observations and specific recommendations to strengthen the YMCA. In April, the findings of the evaluation described major challenges facing the YMCA: a lack of a unified vision or long range plan outlining what the YMCA and the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp could and should be; a lack of reserves for emergency repairs; a low profile in the community; other entities in the community providing services the YMCA had traditionally provided; and lagging efforts on staff training, sustaining contributions, endowment development, facility renovations and equipment purchases. As a result of the challenges identified, two immediate problems were apparent: a lack of sufficient earned income and evidence of dissension among and between staff and volunteers. In response to the challenges, the report detailed eight summary recommendations: Plan, generate volume, develop program, develop staff, promote, develop the Board, fund assets and dreams, and fight for camp.

The Shafer/Ireland Report was the wake-up call for the YMCA. Under the leadership of Board President Ev Myer, work on the recommendations began almost immediately. By June, the Board had adopted rules addressing Board and Committee attendance, uniform meeting procedures, and a mission statement. Irv Conner recalled how Board member Dick Johnson, Superintendent of Wenatchee Schools, was instrumental in moving the Board forward. According to Irv, Dick got them to get off the dime and start doing some of the forward thinking that was needed. In August, the Board approved five goals that would guide them through the next four years:

1. Develop a vision for the YMCA to enhance direction, unity and enthusiasm.
2. Determine if the YMCA should purchase, lease, rent, build or otherwise provide additional space to meet the program needs of the YMCA of the future.
3. Develop an educational process whereby all Board members have a working knowledge of the budget. Recommendations should be made regarding cash reserve, ideas for fund-raising and a systematic approach for providing monthly budget print-outs for Board members.
4. Develop a policy statement regarding all personnel issues, including but not limited to, staff selection, job description, performance standards, evaluation, staff training, promotions and salary schedules.
5. The YMCA camp facilities will be developed to the maximum potential for use on a year-round basis, primarily serving YMCA youth and the outdoor education programs.

By May 1987, significant steps had been taken to address many of the goals: an assessment was conducted to determine the needs of the community and the desired role of the YMCA; the multi-purpose/gymnastics room was remodeled to include a fitness center and hydro-fitness equipment was purchased; a new format for the financial reports was developed; job descriptions were written; the Camp Director was reinstated to full-time status; and a basketball court was scheduled to be completed at camp in 1988. The YMCA would end 1987 with a $19,000 surplus, and that surplus would grow to $52,488 by the end of 1988. Progress on the goals would continue through the end of the decade. In 1988, in an effort to unite camp and the downtown facility, Dave Campbell was hired as Youth Program/Camp Director. Jeff Meredith continued for one more year in the position of Camp Manager.

As 1989 came to a close, the YMCA was once again awaiting the results of a community study. This time it was being conducted by the City of Wenatchee to determine if the community would support the construction of a $10 million community center at Walla Walla Point Park. The proposed facility would be managed by the YMCA and include a senior center. If the study was favorable, the YMCA would have a new facility in which to serve the spirit, mind and body of its community.

1990-1999

Since the 1950s the Wenatchee Valley YMCA had dreamed of a new, larger more modern facility. In February of 1990 the results of a public survey regarding the building of community center in the city, operated by the YMCA, were released. The results were mixed, as former City Commissioner Dick Woods stated, *"The survey showed a lot of undecided people who could be key...I think you can take it (the survey) and say anything you want to because of the numbers of undecided."* Even with the large number of undecided voters, two factions stood out. As mayor Jim Lynch observed: *"It looks to me like the combining of it (a senior center) as a community center won't fly. It's primarily younger people for it and older ones for a stand alone senior center."* In March of 1990, the YMCA Board of Directors acknowledged the diminished likelihood of a community center. The reasons cited included: a change in city commissioners and apparent negative feelings; a group of seniors had bought property for a stand alone senior center; vocal opposition from the for-profit health clubs; and negative feelings concerning the proposed location and the cost of the project.

A year later in the spring of 1991, Gary Huff, YMCA of the USA Senior Field Consultant, visited the YMCA to evaluate the current strengths and weaknesses of the Wenatchee Valley YMCA and to interview Board members on their perceptions of the feasibility of building a new facility. Following the interviews, the YMCA decided to work on developing a three to five year plan to assist in achieving the goal of a new facility. Not all of the Board members were in favor of the process. Of the ten Board interviews conducted, only two out of ten respondents said the YMCA should build a new facility. The rest said no or maybe.

Other issues confronted the YMCA in the early 1990's. Two YMCA employees were arrested in the community for inappropriate contact with minors outside of the YMCA. This led to a revamping of hiring procedures and to mandatory child abuse prevention training for all staff. In addition, the Portland and Tacoma YMCAs faced lawsuits as for-profit clubs challenged YMCAs' tax exempt status, based on what percentage of their members received financial assistance. Although the Wenatchee Valley YMCA didn't face legal action, it spent considerable staff time determining that approximately 23% of its program participants were being subsidized and the organization was complying with all state and federal standards for tax exempt organizations.

In 1990, a 1984 sixty-five passenger bus was purchased to serve the ever growing needs of the Summer Day Camp Program. The purchase also allowed the YMCA to reestablish an after school program for elementary school children. The program provided a safe place for kids who would otherwise be going home to empty houses. In December of 1991, the YMCA launched a series of Saturday Teen Nights that would eventually come to be known as Saturday Nite Live. During the program, teens in grades six through nine had exclusive use of the YMCA facility and special events such as dances were held. In April of 1992, the YMCA was bequeathed one-half of the Carden Hadley estate in the form of a trust. The gift amounted to $800,000 and was designated for

maintenance, operation and general activities of the YMCA. Larry Hartog, Executive Director at the time, remembered the long-time member and volunteer, *"…being very pleased with the YMCA and telling me he would leave something in his will. I was shocked at how much it turned out to be."*

1992 to 1995 proved to be a time of great transition for the YMCA. In September of 1992, Peggy Kriebel was hired as Physical Director and was placed in charge of all adult programs and the summer day camp. Larry Hartog announced his retirement as Executive Director in June of 1993 and Dave Campbell resigned his position as Camp Director in August of the same year. At the same time, uncertain about the future of the YMCA, a number Board members resigned. Because of the tumultuous times, Board President Jim Suthers and a few other Board members took the reins of the YMCA to give it some direction. They hired staff, purchased a new computer system and remodeled the lobby to provide better service to members. In September, Judy McKinley was hired as Operations Director. In October, Eric Nelson joined the Wenatchee Valley YMCA as Executive Director and Bonnie Hilory was named Camp and Teen Programs Director.

The first six months of their employment proved to be a rocky time for the new staff, as they tried to determine where their experience fit into the framework of the YMCA. Also, the Board of Directors that had taken control in the absence of staff was having a hard time determining their role now that professional staff were on the payroll. Finally in April of 1994, a policy delineating the Board/Executive Director Relationship was passed by the Board of Directors. It stated: *"The Board is responsible for ensuring the YMCA is adequately financed to carry out its goals and objectives. The day-to-day management of the YMCA and the administration of Board policies is the responsibility of the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall supervise all staff who shall report to him."*

With this issue behind them, the staff and Board turned their attention to the future of the YMCA. The community was once again surveyed on their feelings about the YMCA through community leader meetings in 1994. The general feeling was that the facilities were old, lacking in programs and amenities, and many leaders did not know what the YMCA really did. In August of 1995, the Board voted to purchase six acres of land on McKittrick Street for $367,000. At the same meeting, the Board also approved $150,000 in capital expenditures to remodel the auxiliary gym, purchase Nautilus, free-weight and cardiovascular equipment, relocate the youth game room to the third floor and remodel the fourth floor into a multi-purpose room. Eric Nelson acknowledged it was risky to approve both a land purchase and a significant facility remodel at the same time, but the decision was pivotal for the future of the YMCA: *"Buying the McKittrick property at the same time as we developed the fitness center pushed the YMCA along two different tracks, but both options needed to be pursued to finally bring clarity to our vision for the future."*

The new fitness center, named the Carden Hadley Fitness Center, was quickly successful. In 1996, YMCA membership increased by sixty percent. Outreach to the Hispanic community and yearly increases in youth scholarships awarded contributed to YMCA membership growth through the rest of the decade and in 1999, the YMCA was serving more than 5,000 members. Success was not limited to the Fitness Center. From 1995 to 1998, summer camp enrollment increased by fifty percent and from 1993 to 1999, the number of youth scholarships awarded grew from 118 to 1,812. In order to manage this growth, new staff was added. Aaron Lindholm became Aquatics Manager in 1994. He took on the additional responsibilities of Physical Director in 1996 and managed both aquatics and fitness center programs. Christy Filby was hired in 1996 as Teen and Family Director.

By the end of 1997, there were 20 full-time staff at the YMCA, which was double the number in 1993.

Facilities weren't the only thing improved on during this time of growth. New purchasing and budget procedures were put into place, a new mission statement and by-laws were adopted, a master plan for the McKittrick property was completed in 1997, and a new strategic plan was implemented in 1998.

In summer of 1994, the first season under the direction of Bonnie Hilory, numerous forest fires broke out in the vicinity of camp. Christy Filby, Assistant Camp Director at the time, remembered the chaos that happened after a fire broke out on the ridge across the lake above the Camp Zanika Lache: *"No one was ever in immediate danger, but all the campers from Camp Zanika Lache evacuated to our camp, doubling the number of youth to serve. Working together with their counselors, we provided programming to everyone and tried to make sure the kids were still having fun."*

A day later, the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp would be evacuated. There was no fire damage to the camp, but one session had to be canceled. In 1995, camper enrollment declined, partially due to the safety concerns of parents due to the previous year's fires. In 1996 a day camp program was run at the camp, but was discontinued the next year as the day camp shelter collapsed under the weight of nine feet of snow. A Master Plan Task Force, under the leadership of Doug Johnson, completed a much needed blueprint for the future development of camp in 1996. Capital projects during the period included connection to a sanitary sewer system in 1992; a maintenance building completed in 1994; a new cabin completed in 1994 through the efforts of the Cashmere School District; a new boathouse completed in 1998; and a new water system installed in 1999.

Other programs at the YMCA included: Pre-Dance, Tiny Tumblers, swimming lessons, Youth and Government, youth basketball and wrestling, Saturday Nite Live, volleyball, basketball, Therapy Swim, Tae Kwon Do, various other adult fitness classes. A new summer teen program called T-WAVE (Teens With a Van Experience) began in 1997 to complement the Summer Adventure Club Program and in 1999 the Youth Game Room was relocated to the lower level of the Columbia Building.

In 1999, the YMCA was once again at a crossroads. They owned land and had a master plan for a new facility, yet membership was at an all-time high at a facility that was once thought to be too small. Eric Nelson put it best, *"In four years a paradigm shift had occurred. For many years, the thought was that we needed a larger facility to attract more members, but then membership increased in spite of the small pool, small gym and lack of parking. The YMCA building was centrally located and was debt free. The question was how could we best serve our members - through a larger facility or through our traditional location?"*

In June of 1999 a Board retreat conducted by David Diehr, YMCA National Field Consultant, answered that question. The Board wanted an entirely new building, but recognized that acquiring land and expanding at the current downtown location would cost about one third what it would cost to build a new facility. At the end of the retreat, the Board concluded the divergent directions did not lead to an acceptable future, there was a strong desire and a need to have a YMCA presence in downtown Wenatchee, and there was no need to retain the McKittrick property.

The next step was be to determine how to develop a downtown location. In August of 1999, the Board authorized the purchase of the Noyd Building for $750,000. The property was just east of the YMCA. In addition, Gus and LauraJean Noyd gifted the Ogan Building, located to the south and across the alley from the Noyd Building, to the YMCA. The gift was valued at $350,000. Alan Crain, vice president of the Board at that time, commented: *"For a long time there was a "lost in the wilderness" feeling – where and what do we want? It was a conscious decision to refocus on downtown and the die was cast when we purchased the Noyd Building."*

As 1999 came to a close, the YMCA was a much different organization than it was ten years before. New leadership had competently managed significant growth, new staff were serving more people in more programs than ever before and for the first time in 50 years, the YMCA was content to stay where it was.

2001-2010

The years 2001 through 2010 may prove to be less important as the conclusion of the Wenatchee Valley YMCA's first century than as a decade in which several key initiatives positioned the YMCA for its second 100 years of service.

In 2001, the YMCA signed an Operating and Management Agreement for the Eastmont Pool. The pool had been owned and operated by the Eastmont Recreation Services Area, but was going to be closed because of two successive levy failures. A unique agreement was developed that kept an important community recreation facility open, provided YMCA financial assistance to pool users, and gave the YMCA an expanded presence in East Wenatchee. The collaboration, that also included Douglas County and the City of East Wenatchee, was successful and set a positive example of how entities could work together to meet the needs of the community. From 2001 through 2009, taxpayer support of the Eastmont YMCA Aquatic Center averaged less $45,000 per year compared to the $286,000 that was allocated in 1999 alone. The agreement was extended for an additional ten years in 2007 based on a steady increase in the number of satisfied participants.

In 2005, the YMCA launched its first capital campaign in more than thirty years. The goal was to raise $750,000 to remodel and reequip the Youth and Teen Center and build a parking lot adjacent to the YMCA. The campaign was chaired by Rufus and Wilfred Woods and successfully raised more than $1,100,000. The new Youth and Teen Center featured a fitness arcade, a learning enrichment center, a meeting room for a Youth Advisory Board, a new kitchen, twenty new computers, and a new youth entry. It was the first time in the YMCA's history that YMCA members had access to off street parking. As construction projects were completed over the next three years, membership grew to more than 5700 members. The planning process included a site master plan that would allow the YMCA to expand at its traditional downtown location.

Also in 2005, the Wenatchee Valley YMCA received an endowment gift of $1,800,000 from the Prebble Family Trust. Distributions from the Prebble Family Trust, the Carden Hadley Trust, the AZ Wells Foundation and a number of other planned gifts put the YMCA in the enviable position of receiving more than 10% of its annual income from endowment earnings. This support allowed the YMCA to continue to subsidize a variety of youth programs and services through challenging economic times.

In 2001, the YMCA awarded 2592 youth program and membership scholarships. The number of youth scholarships awarded increased to more than 6,000 in the year 2009. The YMCA's policy that no child is ever denied participation because of inability to pay had become a cornerstone of the YMCA's service to the youth of the community. In 2006, the Board of Directors implemented a new pricing structure that created an open door category that allowed adult members from households whose income was below the median for the area to pay a reduced membership fee. Strategic Plans adopted in 1998, 2003, and 2008 contained specific targets for increasing the number of YMCA staff who spoke Spanish. All of those efforts allowed the YMCA membership to look very much like the communities it served in terms of age, gender, race, and income.

About every five to ten years from 1960 through 2010, the idea of selling the camp property had been considered by the Board of Directors. From a purely business perspective, it did not make much sense to significantly subsidize programs at a facility with a market value three to five times greater than the YMCA's annual budget. From a purely mission perspective, it did not make much sense to consider selling a piece of property that provided a unique setting for the programs that most purely embodied the YMCA mission. In 2007, the YMCA Board of Directors began a multiyear process to determine the best possible use of the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp to meet the YMCA mission. A team of camping experts was convened to review the camp operation and recommend operating models that might be more financially responsible while optimally meeting the YMCA mission. Based on the team's recommendation, the YMCA Board moved camp to a seasonal operation with a greater focus on summer youth camp programs and began exploring a partnership with another YMCA. The Board created a detailed record of the process to help future Boards understand the work that had been done. During this time of camp evaluation, investment in camp facilities continued: one to two cabins per year were renovated; the Don and Thea Fager Outdoor Education Center was built in 2003; and in 2009, the camp lodge was completely renovated with $600,000 in insurance money after a fire cause significant damage throughout the facility.

The celebration of the YMCA's Centennial is a tribute to staff, volunteers, members and donors who have been committed to an enduring vision of service to the community. Through good times and challenges they have given their time, talent and treasure in pursuit of that vision. As the YMCA begins its second century, it will have the benefit of a stable organization of staff and volunteers. The annual Partners with Youth Campaign has regularly involved more than 150 volunteers. For much of the last decade, more than half of the full time staff and more than a third of the Directors and Trustees have been with the Wenatchee Valley YMCA for ten years or more. This wealth of experience combined with a constant infusion of new leadership and ideas allows the YMCA to build on a record of past performance, to be a voice of present appeal, and to have a vision of future service.

Wenatchee YMCA Presidents
Arthur Gunn (1910-1914)
Dr. L. F. Buck (1915-1917)
George W. Coburn (1917-1919)
W.O. Dow (1920, 1924)
E.R. Van Leuven (1921-1923)
John Isenhart (1925)
Wellington Pegg (1926)
B.W. Ludington (1927)

E.D. Gensinger (1928-1930)
Frank V. Taylor (1931)
Rueben G. Benz (1932)
Frank V. Taylor (1933)
K.P. Sexton (1934)
E.T. Pybus (1935)
A.L. Tertsagian (1936)
Ross Heminger (1937)
Irwin Jones (1938)
Duncan McQuaig (1939-1942)
F.O. Brownson (1943)
A.L. Tertsagian (1944)
Don Phipps (1945-1946)
Les Lewis (1947)
Clarence Johnson (1948-1950)
Walter Young (1951-1952)
John P. Watson (1953)
Dr. Archie Van Doren (1954-1955)
Frank Taylor Jr. (1956-1957)
A.A. Morrison (1958)
Rev. Russell Hendrickson (1959)
William McHaney (1960-1962)
James W. Welch Jr. (1963-1964)
Don Fager (1964-1966)
Frank Baird (1966-1968)
Al Libke (1968-1969)
Jack Blosser (1970-1972)
Mel Johnson (1972-1973)
Ernie Elder (1974)
Al Janssen (1975-1976)
Joe Evans (1977-1979)
Bob Kiesz (1979-1981)
Marguerite Shamberger (1982-1983)
Harry Raab (1983-1986)
Ev Myer (1986-1988)
Irv Conner (1988-1990)
George Thompson (1991-1992)
Jim Suthers (1993-1994)
Gary Riesen (1995-1997)
Rob Johnson (1997-1999)
Caitilin Newman (1999-2001)
Alicia Nakata (2001-2003)
Alan Crain (2003-2005)
Katie Kavanaugh Pauly (2005-2007)
Chuck Zimmerman (2007-2009)
Chuck Strawn (2009-)

Wenatchee YMCA General Secretaries / Executive Directors
O.E. McLaughlin (1910-1911)

E. Roy Van Leuven (1911-1912)
A.P. Storey (1912-1913)
R. J. Clarke (1914-1915)
J.L. Cramer (1915-1917)
George Link (1917-1919)
G.I. Sovereign (1920-1922)
Alva L. Snyder (1923-1924)
S. Fred Hazzard (1925-1935)
W. Franklin Bush (1935-1936)
Clarence E. Rayburn (1937-1940)
L. Wayne Emory (1941-1947)
Lawrence A. Handy (1947-1966)
Pat Vest (1967-1969)
Bill Wilde (1969-1971)
Larry Hartog (1971-1993)
Eric Nelson (1993 –)

The information in this history of the Wenatchee Valley YMCA was gathered from a number of sources including The Wenatchee World, Wenatchee Valley YMCA Board and Committee Minutes, interviews as noted, and a variety of notes and recollections prepared by Larry Handy and Wayne Emory. The collection of this information would not have been possible if not for the efforts of many YMCA employees and volunteers who, over the last 100 years, gathered and preserved pictures, newspaper articles, minutes, and program information. Particular thanks go to Christy Filby who is the most recent staff person to collect, sort, and compile the information used in this history. Christy also wrote the initial drafts for the first nine decades of this history. A number of other employees and volunteers gave considerable time editing and proofing the final version.