

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION

*of the*  
**CAPE BLANCO  
 HERITAGE SOCIETY**



**CBHS BOARD MEETINGS:** Currently held at Point.B Studio at 10:00 AM on the 2nd Tuesday of every month.  
**PLEASE NOTE:** our meetings are open to everyone who would like to attend. We invite and encourage anyone interested in CBHS to participate!

# THE ORIGINAL CREW at the Lifeboat Station



PORT  
 ORFORD  
 CREW  
*Hinderlee - Stursa  
 Ellis - Tichenor  
 Eastman Williams  
 Pointer Nilsson  
 Flake*

From the archives of Becky Flake: a USCG lifeboat on a stormy "boat call"; several original members of the Port Orford Lifeboat Station crew.

The Port Orford Lifeboat Station was completed in June of 1934. It was placed in commission at 8:00 am on July 1, 1934 with Nils Nilsson the appointed Officer-in-Charge. The station was soon equipped with two motor boats, two pulling boats, and a crew of thirteen: *Nils Nilsson, Odell Flake, Roy Mills, Art Hinderlee, Sheldon Williams, Leonard Stursa, Jack Ellis, Jim Holcomb, Oscar Hedman, Larry Eastman, Jim Dare, Earl Corlies and Don Douglas.* The following narrative is excerpted from a two-part interview published in the *Point Orford Society News* in June and October 1995 with Odell Flake's son, Tim. We encourage you to visit our archives to read the full interview:

"When Odell and Harriet Flake moved to Port Orford from Cape Disappointment on the Columbia River in 1935, he was expecting a less intense tour of duty and she was expecting a child. Her expectations were soon met when Odell, Jr (*Tim*) was born at the Port Orford Hospital (*the building that became the Marsh house, and is now the Camp Blanco RV Court*). His expectations, however, were not met. In his first couple of years at the Coast Guard Station here, there were three

large shipwrecks: the *Cottoneva*, the *Phyllis*, and the *S.S. Willapa*.

The declaration of war was announced on the radio while Tim's family was visiting his grandmother in Chinook, Washington. The six-year-old comprehended the gravity of the situation immediately. He had never heard his uncle swear before. They returned to Port Orford, traveling most of the way at night. They were warned via radio only to use dim lights, but were stopped by the Army who ordered them to clamp T-shirts over the headlights for the tortuous crawl down the twisty coast highway.

During World War II, the Navy took over Port Orford's Coast Guard Station, where Odell Flake was stationed. The Flake family lived on Coast Guard Hill. Tim's early childhood was not just 'during', but absorbed by the war.

The Coast Guard Station's large yard became a drill field for the soldiers. At one end of the field was a little tower on a post with cross-beams, where the men practiced shooting a Lyle Gun. There was a firing range "down by the dip"

where Tim sometimes watched target practice from behind the fence. To get inside, one had to give a daily password at the Guardhouse. One place Tim was warned to stay away from was the kennel, where twenty five to thirty vicious attack dogs were kept. These dogs accompanied their handlers each night as they took the road behind "Little America" through the old growth trees down to patrol the north beach.

In the basement of the crowded crew's quarters, there were two pool



**Odell Flake, Jr. (alias Tim)** senior photo from the [1954 Port Orford High School Pirates Log](#).

tables. Other recreation aside from pool and tennis was provided by the U.S.O. who periodically brought movies.

The original Castaway Lodge, which has since burnt to the ground, was used as Beach Patrol Headquarters. Early in the war, Odell Flake was stationed there; coordinating Beach patrols from the California border to some point north. He was often gone for weeks, inspecting the stations along the coast. He also went out to sea for extended periods on a 36-foot motor lifeboat, doing "boat calls" attempting to locate missing fishing boats.

Nils Nilsson was the Officer-In-Charge at the beginning of World War II. He was followed by Elmer Einbeck and when he went to sea, Odell Flake became Officer-In-Charge. The Flake family could not take up residence in the officer's quarters because of the crowded conditions. Men trained and were sent out, usually on landing barges and replaced with new trainees.

As Captain of the Port, Odell Flake had to board any boat that landed in Port Orford harbor. He later told about the boat that looked like a tramp steamer, whose captain refused to let him board. When Odell announced that he was coming aboard since the old

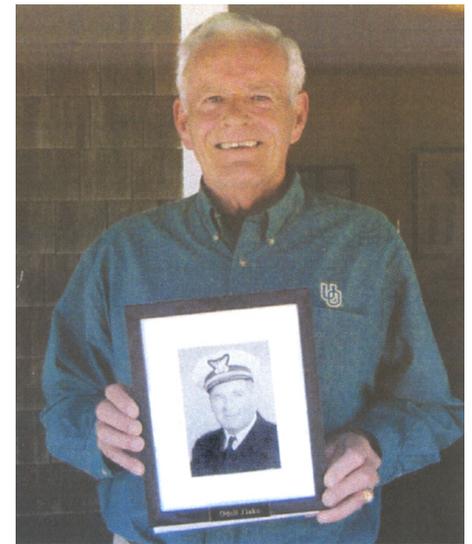
steamer was on federal property, the captain delayed, but gave clearance reluctantly allowing him to inspect the "Q-boat". It was packed with all type of weaponry-depth charges, sonar, etc. Q-boats were designed to evade and attack Japanese submarines, after luring them with their harmless appearance.

Potentially deadly post-war adventures occurred within a few miles of Port Orford, when mines were uncovered at local beaches. Don Winslow, a Navy munitions expert asked Tim and his father if they would like to observe his detonation of a three hundred-pound mine near Cape Blanco. Another 800-pound bomb was detonated at Nesika Beach.

Before retiring from the Coast Guard in 1948, Odell Flake served for a time on the cutter *PawPaw*, a buoy tender, and later commanded a Columbia River Lightship. He was offered duty on Sand Island, but his children vetoed the move away from Port Orford. After retirement, Odell Flake worked for a time running the hoist at the dock, then for Western States Plywood in Port Orford. He died in 1986, three years after his

wife's death, at age seventy-nine.

Tim graduated from Port Orford High School in 1954, and attended Pacific University and University of Oregon, where he received his Masters Degree. He taught English and world history in Sweet Home, served as Vice Principal in Junction City, and for eleven years, was Director of Guidance in Tigard. In 1983, after the death of his mother, he and his wife Becky moved back to Port Orford to be near his father. He was a counselor at Pacific High School and was one of its students' biggest enthusiasts." ✨



## Become a MEMBER of the CAPE BLANCO HERITAGE SOCIETY



OUR MISSION: To provide interpretative and educational services for the Cape Blanco Light Station, Historic Hughes House and Ranch and the Port Orford Lifeboat Station. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and your donation is tax-deductible.

Mail this portion of the form with your check made out to:  
**Cape Blanco Heritage Society. P.O. Box 1132 Port Orford, Oregon 97465.**

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