

Legendary Locals Of Chugiak-Eagle River



Synopsis

Homesteading in Alaska was not an obvious lifestyle choice for most people in post-World War II America. In an age of gleeful consumerism, early settlers of Chugiak-Eagle River made a decision to live simply. Yet a simple life and an easy one were two different things. Many raised their own crops and a few, such as the Pippels, the Tatros, the Glenn Briggses, and the Vanovers, created larger-scale farming ventures. Other entrepreneurs, such as Paul Swanson, thrived in the frontier environment, taking on multiple enterprises to fill gaps in the area's services. Out of this can-do atmosphere sprang a number of artists, musicians, and performers. The Chugiak Belles dance group revved up audiences at the annual Spring Carnival, and the Chugiak Players staged a variety of dramas and comedies. Eagle River homesteaders Arthur and Eleanor Braendel helped found the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra and performed with them for 60 years. Radio host and homesteader Ruth Briggs sang and traveled with the original Anchorage Concert Chorus. As the area matured and schools grew, athletes began to thrive, creating their own legacy. More legendary locals are being minted every day.

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Customer Reviews

I gave it four stars for nostalgia. I grew up in Eagle River in the late 60's & 70's and it was fun to revisit some important people from my young life. I attended Chugiak Jr-Sr High (as it was known then) and worked at the Eagle River Library after school. I often had Coach Mac or Coach Huff for P.E. class during my time at Chugiak and, like so many of my classmates, loved Coach Mac's class, in particular. A lot of us were little hooligans who wore jeans jackets and smoked cigarettes back then. The ritual in PE class was to line up for roll call. Coach would walk down the line and, as he called your name he would slip his hand into your jacket pocket and take your cigarettes away from you. Not a word was spoken about it. It was his way to try to steer you away from tobacco. He got quite a few packs of mine before I learned not to bring them to P.E. class. I knew Billie and Polly personally and it was nice to see they are still considered an important part of local history. Billie Moore was a very important part of my young life and a mentor of sort. She taught me that one had choice in life and didn't necessarily have to travel the road every one expected you to travel. Joe Kapella used to stop by the library all the time. He was also one of Eagle River's first joggers. I would often see him running up the Loop Road during all seasons. Knowing how hard he was working on his health, I was saddened to read that he passed away at such a young age. Why no mention of Don Sanders and his musical children, Dale & Vicki Sanders. Don was a science teacher at Chugiak but also a local minor celebrity as he wrote and recorded The Earthquake Song in the mid 60's. The song is a little pop rock ditty about the great 1964 Alaska earthquake. Dale and Vicki were also musicians and performed as a duo professional. They eventually ended up in Nashville where they were voted Best New Vocal Duo by Cashbox Magazine in 1989. I looked them up on the internet before penning this review and found that Dale is still very active in the music scene. But they are no where to be found in this book. On the whole the book reads more like a list. It would have been nice if the author had added more anecdotes to add color to a very colorful place. Having said all of that, I acknowledge that there is a very small market for this book and I'm glad to have found it. As I said at the start of this review, it was a fun stroll down memory lane.

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