

[Grays Harbor Democrats Say Goodbye to a Former Chair, and Friend with A Tribute to Winona Hammonds](#)

Local News

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[The Daily World Reports](#) former Grays Harbor County Clerk, Winona A. Hammonds, died at Pacific Care Center in Hoquiam on Sunday, June 24, 2012. She was 98.

Winona Hammonds leaves a legacy for us all - written by Jim Eddy and edited by Guy Bergstrom

Early in her life, Winona didn't think much about politics. She did after the Depression started and she needed a job, which she got after FDR started the WPA.

"That saved my life," she exclaimed. "I got \$5 a month and was able to buy my second washing machine."

After a brief pause for perfect timing, the glint in her eye came and she said, "My first washing machine was a scrub board!"

In 1929 she married Wes Harner. She and Wes felt quite fortunate to have jobs as Fire Lookouts for the US Government. They would climb up tall trees to the shacks built in the top. Regularly they would scour the countryside looking for smoke. Other jobs were necessary for this energetic lady willing to do whatever it took for her family. She cleaned houses, peeled bark, hauled wood in 60 pound loads and picked berries to make ends meet. Winona spent time in a cannery, as a housekeeper ("I lost 11 pounds one winter and swore I'd never clean house for money again!") and as the bookkeeper for Engren's Ford Garage, formerly in Montesano. When she saw the job posting, she asked what it entailed. She was asked if she could add and subtract and keep track of paper. She said she could and got the job.

For the Democrats, she started as a Block Captain. She knocked on many doors in support of any Democratic candidates. She remembered vividly her efforts for Representatives Eric Anderson and Julia Butler Hanson. Winona has worked for the GH Democrats at the Fair every year for years. Nowadays she limits herself to sitting in the Information booth. "I quit working in the Burger Booth when I turned 90. I thought I would leave it to the younger Democrats."

For many years Winona was responsible for the coordination of the cookies for the monthly meeting of the GH Democratic Central Committee. She passed that torch last year but served coffee and cookies in her dining room while recounting an early County Convention in the Courthouse when they needed coffee. She looked around and found a coffee pot in the Clerk's office. She used it and later got into a lot of trouble. It seems the pot belonged to the Clerk and she didn't want it used. Almost 11 years later after getting a job in the County Treasurer's Office due to her years of experience with Engren's, she was elected to the position of County Clerk.

"Then I could use the coffee pot anytime I wanted!" She remembers "beating Barbara Kent in a landslide."

She proudly held the office of County Clerk from 1970 until 1977. She gave up her seat as Clerk to spend more time with her second husband, Mack Hammonds, who had owned H & H Body Shop. She wasn't quite up to quitting at first until wise counsel from then Judge John Kirkwood convinced her. "He said, "Winona, it may not be fair, but, you have to make a choice; your marriage or your career." He was right and I chose my marriage." She never had any regrets and had 12 years of wonderful travel with Mack until he, like Wes years earlier, passed away.

Winona was busy until the end, active in the Eagle's Auxiliary, VFW Auxiliary, Rebecca Lodge (International Order of Odd Fellows), her First Methodist Church in Aberdeen, and, of course the Grays Harbor Democrats.

Her best Democratic moment was Bill Clinton's election ("both of them"), and she has autographed pictures, "to Winona, from Bill Clinton" to prove it. But, her proudest moment was standing in front of the friendly faces at the Polish Club in Aberdeen as the leader of her Party. Winona Hammonds was an icon. She wasn't just a former county clerk and chair of the Grays Harbor Democrats. She was a friend, a mentor and an example for all of us to follow.

written by Jim Eddy and edited by Guy Bergstrom