

My Time at Holden - April 17 - 21, 2023

Getting There— and, Another Suitcase Mystery

Like all trips to Holden Village, the adventure begins before taking that first step out of the house.

For me, preparation boils down to three main points: when do we go, what clothing to pack, and transportation. The first point is easy, since the Holden Board-appointed archivist and his wife - Larry Howard and Nancy Winder - decide which weeks out of the year they can spend in the village. When they go, I go also. Besides this trip, we plan to work in June and in September.

Since this was the first trip of the year, I had to think about warmth. We would be going to Holden before Spring Work Weeks (April 24 - May 5, rather late in the spring compared to previous years), so several of the buildings would not be heated. The museum archives are in the Village Center (VC), one of the buildings not used during winter, so it was neither heated nor was its plumbing functioning. I needed clothing that would keep me warm while sitting and working in the archives. A clue I have used in the past was the daily weather report posted on Holden's website. That was not available this time as the website has been in transition, and no weather report was available. (By the time you read this, the new web pages may be in place; I was told that the weather report would be available again.) I had to guess; I packed more than I needed, I thought.

Last year I related how I forgot to take a jacket and my hat. When I was on my way within five miles of approaching the summit of Snoqualmie Pass, I realized that I had forgotten my heavy, warm, black jacket which I intended to take. It turned out OK as I had packed enough layers of clothing with me to compensate for the lack of the jacket.

Transportation has become a challenge. As there is no direct route for a motorist to drive to Holden, a boat service must be taken for part of the trip, both up and down Lake Chelan. For decades the Lake Chelan Boat Co. had been the only such service available. Operating out of Chelan at the southern end of the lake, their boats (*Lady II*, *Lady Express*, *Lady Cat*) go up and down the lake in a day's time. In the past couple of years, a new service, called 'Stehekin Ferry', has offered an alternative. This service is based in Stehekin at the north end of Lake Chelan, and goes down-lake in the morning to Field's Point, returning up-lake in the afternoon. Larry had emailed to Holden about which boat service to use; he cc'ed me. When the village did not respond, he sent another email; he did not cc me this time. While he received a response to his second email, I did not find out about it until it was too late to make changes ahead of time. (Unlike the Lake Chelan Boat Co., Stehekin Ferry does not answer phone calls on weekends.) I had bought tickets from the Lake Chelan Boat Co for both up-lake and down-lake, while the down-lake tickets Larry and Nancy bought were for the Stehekin Ferry. More on this later.

COVID-19 and mask-wearing were not major issues this year, though, if you felt sick, wearing a mask was required. Handwashing and hand sanitizer at meals was still enforced.

At Lucerne, the 'port of call' on Lake Chelan for catching the Holden van or bus, there was no snow on the ground. At Holden, there was lots of snow still on the ground, even in bright sunshine. (The

road was bare and wet, even in the village; most paths were deep in snow.) The sun did not last for long: three hours later it clouded over and began to snow. That was how the weather was like every day we were there: a little sun, some snow, some melting during the day, and below freezing temperatures overnight. If a path were bare and wet in the late afternoon, the next morning there would be slippery ice. The paths were periodically sprinkled with sawdust to aid in traction, though I witnessed people who still slipped on sawdust that covered glare ice.

Upon arriving in the village, I was able to have someone on staff to take my two pieces of luggage to my room on account of all the snow. After lunch, when I got to my room, I found only the large suitcase. When I asked around, I learned that only the one could be found. Both pieces of luggage make a matched set; they are of the same brand of luggage maker, with the same logo. I had thought both pieces of luggage had gotten off the boat. I talked with the directors and other staff people about the missing suitcase. I could get by and proceed with archive work with what I had in the large suitcase. I would miss my electric razor, my Crocs footwear, and some of the clothing items in it, but I hoped it would be found soon. No one in the village confessed to having taken it by mistake, like what happened to me last September on the dock at Field's Point with that same suitcase. Suffice it to say, I did not sleep well that night.

Digging in at the Archives

During that afternoon Larry and I removed the plastic coverings from over the shelves of boxes. They were put there for the winter to protect against water damage and critter excreta. Larry took the plastic, opened the door to the faux balcony to shake out any debris. The next thing to do was to find a power cord. We make use of an old, noisy space heater under the work table. I also power the laptop PC I always bring with me (in the large suitcase) for archive work. It is heavy, in part in that it comes with a CD/DVD drive internally. We left the VC and went to the Shop on the first floor of Lodge 6. We scrounged around for a while, eventually coming up with a heavy 1/2" cord with two outlets available and a three-outlet extension cord; we made use of both items. Upon returning to the archives, we cleaned the worktable top.

Then work really began. Larry wanted me to start an inventory of a new box with materials from the directors. There was also a box sitting in the former office of the directors of documents and letters from around 20 years ago that needed to be brought over (done the following day) and included in the inventory. It turned out there was material enough for two boxes. Most of the material were letters, Faxes, emails, or copies of the same, all dealing with the preparation for mine remediation (these were from 1998 – 2004, while mine remediation took place in 2012 – 2017). The first two items were CDs made in 2011; my PC's drive came in very handy for determining what was on them for the inventory.

One other piece was needed for us to be able to do our work: access to the Internet. Staff people need online access to conduct business, correspondence, and ordering supplies. Short-term staff need it for communication with family and friends, and maybe lining up further education or job prospects. We need it for searches of the Holden Audio Archive (HAA) and other such online reference checking. In the past, it had also been a help for me personally, as I could receive email from the skilled nursing facility - where my father had received care – in case of an emergency,

and respond. Because we are such short-term volunteers who have a narrow range of activity, whatever logins we had from last year were deleted. The IT person, Corky Searl, brought them back on a current, especially after Nancy's login was erroneously listed as 'nancyhoward' (not her legal name). By the second day, we had Internet connectivity.

To demonstrate how well Larry and I work together, let me give two examples. The first one involved something Larry had been working on for a while and in which he became quite frustrated. (We generally work on separate tasks.) After he uttered some "discouraging words," I asked him what was going on. He was on his small laptop making local searches through all the inventory lists for items on Dan Erlander, early village pastor and author of several books on Christian faith from the Lutheran perspective, which he also illustrated. Larry said there was a box that had his books in it, but he could not find the box they were in. He could find "Dan Erlander" in several of the boxes but, of all the boxes he examined, there were no books. I said, "Perhaps you could search for 'Manna and Mercy'," as that was a title of one Pastor Erlander's books. After some consideration he responded, "Oh! ... Yeah. ... I could do that." I went back to what I was doing. Shortly he declared, "Bingo!" for he had found the box in question. After he had finished his task, he chuckled and said that part of the problem was that he assumed the books would be found in one of the boxes in the 100's range instead of where they actually were: in box 76.

The other example involves Queen Anne Lutheran's parish assistant Barbara Bash. I had mentioned to Barb on a couple of occasions that there were recordings of her father, Ewald Joseph (Joe) Bash, in the HAA and wondered if she had listened to them. (Joe Bash was a Lutheran pastor, worked in the Youth Department at the national headquarters of the American Lutheran Church, a predecessor body of the ELCA, and had a significant role in the early years of Holden Village.) During last September, while I was making an inventory of a box of cassette tapes, I came across a tape of "Holden History": a recording of 'Edward J (Joe) Bash' (!!!) where he talks about those early years and the Holden board of directors. Upon searching the HAA for 'Joe Bash' (not Ewald, and definitely not Edward, both of which produced zero results) as well as the exact title as printed on the cassette tape label, I could not find any such entry. It led me to believe that that tape had not been digitized. I did mention the existence in this tape to Barb; she expressed an interest in it, thinking it might have captured her father's voice in a more conversational tone than the "presentation mode" he had been in on most of his recordings in the HAA. I told all this to Larry, who had noticed I was spending quite a bit of time on this issue and not on the inventory he wanted me to do. He told me that, when he finished what he was doing, he would email Carole Young, who volunteers her time digitizing all the recordings, and request a priority for this tape. Then he asked me if the tape had a catalog number. I looked it up, and it did have one. He responded that Carole had digitized all the cassettes that had a catalog number. It took a while for that to sink in. Then I had my "Aha!" moment: I had not searched the HAA for the catalog number.

The cassette tape catalog number was fairly simple: in general it was the presenter's name – first two characters of the presenter's surname + <space> + first two characters of the first name – for the first line, then the second line was the year recorded (two digits) + <dash or hyphen> + numeric order of the presentation. For example, Joe Bash gave a talk called "Getting Inside

Scripture and Getting Scripture Inside” in 1980. It was his first presentation that year. The catalog number was:

Ba Jo
80-1

If he gave ten or more presentations that year, the second line might be “80-01”. The catalog number for the cassette tape in question was:

Ho H
86-6

The first line means “Holden History”. The second line means that it was the sixth such presentation in the Holden History series in 1986. Steeling myself for a return of lots of entries, I tried searching “Ho H”. I got the following error message: *“You must include at least one positive keyword with 3 characters or more.”* I then tried searching “86-6”. The fifth entry in the Search Results was “First Board & Program Years” (not the exact title on the cassette label) and it had the right catalog number. Success! I told Larry to cancel the email to Carole. The tape turned out to be an interview by Charles Lutz (who wrote “Surprising Gift”, the history of Holden Village up to the time of its publication in 1985) of Joe Bash, made in Minneapolis on November 10, 1986. I sent the link to Barb, who was able to listen to it at home.

The Suitcase Returns; Celebration Ensues

On Tuesday afternoon, after he saw one of the directors, Larry relayed to me that my suitcase was found, and he didn’t know anything further. Of course, I became excited and asked questions, which annoyed him. When I returned to the lodge I was staying in after archive work was done for the day, there it was in front of the door to the room assigned to me. I checked it over and found it to be intact. Hooray! I was complete again, as I told everyone I saw after that reunion. I later learned what happened: It stayed on the boat and went to Stehekin. When it was not picked up by anyone there, the Stehekin Ferry brought it back down. As it happened, Kathie Caemmerer-Bach, one of the directors, was at the Lucerne dock, took possession of the suitcase when made aware of it, and went down-lake to Field’s Point assisting a concussion victim (remember the ice), then back to Lucerne. So, my wayward suitcase traveled more miles than I did.

That evening, I celebrated with Larry and Nancy the return of my suitcase, especially as it carried, among the other things I previously mentioned, two bottles of wine. One was consumed then. The next evening, after the staff meeting, I convinced director Kathie to share the other bottle with the other directors and myself at their chalet that night. Once I got there with the bottle carried inside the wayward suitcase, only Mark Bach, Kathie’s husband joined us; Stacey Kitahata was already in bed. So, the bottle was opened and we sat down and talked.

I learned from our conversation a lot of what happened in Holden since I left in September. The start of winter was very cold with little to no moisture. This meant that the accumulated snowfall for the 2022-23 winter at Holden ended being below average. Because of the cold temperatures, the use of wood to heat the buildings was at a greater rate than normal. They ran out of wood in February. Showers became freezing cold. Wearing layers was the norm inside and out. The

directors thought the staff developed grit and resilience from that experience of heat deprivation. All the directors take time to listen to the staff, to the short-term volunteers, and to the guests. They feel this deep listening they conduct helps them with how things are going and how to best run the village. They are not afraid to help guide people who are having coping issues the village environment, and will help people find other opportunities outside if need be.

During our talk, music was playing in the background, which at one point I recognized. I interrupted the conversation to point out I knew this was movie music, from “Once Upon a Time in the West” (1968, dir. Sergio Leone), and I described the scene and the shot which utilizes the music I heard. It’s a famous, complex piece of photography: a favorite among cinephiles. (Ask me about it.) The recording that was played was a collaboration between cellist Yo Yo Ma and the composer Ennio Morricone of the composer’s music arranged for cello soloist. The directors really love the music of Ennio Morricone.

I asked Mark about the work he has done toward writing a history of Holden Village in the years since Charles Lutz’s book. He has done a lot of research, but someone else will need to write the book itself, as he is too busy being one of the directors. We talked of other things until Kathie noted that it was after ‘Holden Midnight’. Upon seeing my quizzical look, she explained that it was after 9 p.m., when most of the staff go to sleep. Soon Mark was helping me negotiate walking in the snow in the dark of night, carrying my suitcase to the eastern steps to the Dining Hall. As the walkway north of the Hotel/Dining Hall was impassable due to snow, especially from ‘roof-alanches’, I walked through the Dining Hall enroute to the lodge to the west. Prior to the pandemic, the Dining Hall was a place for evening gameplayers, jigsaw puzzle assemblers, and late night snackers. That night I was the only one there, just passing through.

Adventures Unearthing the First Holden Stove

There were many familiar staffers still in the village from last September: Rachel Joy (who kindly made a welcome sign for me when my host did not), John Hergert, Sarah, Ben, Jordan, Jonah, Lisa, Paul, and several others. (Pastor Mark Griffith was out of the village while we were there.) There were longtime friends as well. One such friend was and is Terry Sanderson, Holden’s longtime mechanic. Though he is retired now, he continues to come to the village on a regular basis to help maintain its many vehicles. He was already in the village when we arrived. Terry was working on the gear shifter of a red truck, as first and second gear never engaged; the task eventually required opening up the transmission gearbox.

On Thursday, Larry realized a plan to open the Conex metal storage container, in which the stove used by the first cook at Holden Village during the first year of work camps, with the help of Terry. But it was not without mishap. Larry met Terry and the repaired red truck in front of the luggage loading dock. When Terry turned on the ignition ... nothing. The battery was dead. All the repeated testing Terry made in repairing the red truck took its toll on the battery. Terry then took off toward the garage to get another vehicle to jumpstart the truck. Once the jumpstart was accomplished, Terry told Larry to take the vehicle he brought, and he would follow behind in the red truck. Larry asked if he shouldn’t follow him, but Terry’s request prevailed. So, Larry went ahead and drove to the Conex container, and waited. And waited. And waited. After some time,

Larry drove back to the village, to find Terry stuck again with the dead battery. After another jumpstart, both vehicles made it to the Conex container. Upon opening the container, it took some time to find the stove. When they did, they concluded that it was in parts and not a complete set of parts at that. Terry said he could fabricate the missing parts given some plans. The brand nameplate (Lang) was found as well as the stove model (Mabel 16-30). Then came the time to close the Conex. In previous attempts to shut it tight, Larry had terrible problems that nearly caused injury. They thought that, with the use of one of the heavy equipment vehicles, they could close the Conex quickly and safely. Instead, several tries resulted in both the heavy equipment vehicle and the Conex to slide from their intended trajectory and placement on the ground. The Conex eventually was closed, but Larry laughed the whole time he was telling this story to me.

Another longtime Holdenite, who arrived Wednesday ahead of work week, was Mark Bjerke. He has opened lodges and chalets for summer use, ensuring the plumbing is in good working order for over 50 years. He has done the same for closing them for winter non-use. He has deep knowledge about the buildings and their infrastructure. He was surprised at the amount of snow and the cold temperatures, and wondered how much he could do. Things needed to warm up before he could accomplish his tasks.

Two more longtime Holdenites also arrived on Wednesday: Art and Joan Neslund. This was not the first time they were at Holden this year. Joan immediately started in on housekeeping, while Art became the bus driver, as he was the only person in the village with the credentials to drive stick shift. (All Holden buses have stick shift.) They are a fun couple. One morning after breakfast while I was sitting with a family, Joan came by, kissed the top of a young girl's head, and moved on. I turned and said, "Hey! What about me?" She just laughed and kept going. (This was the morning where the people I sat with had brought a plastic container of cooked bacon and shared a couple pieces with me. I responded, "I knew I sat at the right table this morning.") Joan also very kindly brought replacement linens and bed sheets and took the used ones after I vacated my lodging to go home, saving us from all the snow and ice one would have encountered while trying to reach the Laundry in the basement of Agape, which is uphill from the lodges and hotel.

James was also at Holden, vacuuming the floors when people were not around. Without people like Terry, Mark, Art, Joan, and even James, I think Holden Village could not be able to operate at all.

Homeward

During the week, I was able to contact Stehekin Ferry to book down lake tickets for this time as well as the remaining times we will be coming to Holden. I was also able to reschedule my down-lake ticket with the boat co. and make an up-lake ticket for my next visit, as well as purchase more up-lake tickets for the rest of the year. I was relieved after that.

In order to catch the Stehekin Ferry, the bus leaves the village at 10:10 a.m. that makes for a busy morning for last minute packing, tearing down beds, vacuuming and cleaning the rooms, and getting the luggage to the loading dock. Because of all the snow that fell during the week covered

the luggage loading dock, the covered hotel loading dock was used as a staging area for luggage. Staff took the luggage and stored it on the bus.

The Stehekin Ferry is a modest catamaran, powered by two Suzuki outboard motors. The interior holds forty passengers, is spacious with lots of leg room, and has what looked like used commercial aircraft seats. The seats in front of us had pull down trays, and non-working video screens. There is no wall separating the pilot from the passengers. When in operation, all waves can be felt. I made the mistake of being out of my seat and on my feet when it encountered the wake of the Lady Express. The catamaran bounced way, way high, then dipped quickly down such that my feet lost contact with the floor, I lost my balance, and fell down with a loud thump. I got back up on my own after the catamaran settled down. Stacey Kitahata, a village director who was going back to Seattle as part of her job, commented that I missed the seat belt sign. (There were no seat belts, and, unlike a commercial airline, there were no seat belt signs.) I stayed seated the rest of the trip. The ferry Docked at Field's Point between 12:30 and 1 pm; a very quick ride. This made it possible for people to get back to Seattle just in time for rush-hour traffic.

- written on the 70th anniversary of my parents wedding day, April 25th, 2023