

# Reunion to Mark A Special Time, Place -- Greenwood Boys & Girls Club Looks Back

Tuesday, Dec 15, 1992 Seattle Times

By [Constantine Angelos](#)

It was World War II in the Greenwood District. Streets were blacked out. Parents were off to war or busy in shipyards and defense plants.

Young Don Aicher and his friends were prone to roam the streets.

And if boys from Ballard or Wallingford or Fremont tried dating Greenwood girls, there would be a pipe-swinging, chain-slashing turf brawl in the alley behind the old Ridge Roller Skating Rink at 85th and Greenwood.

It was out of this crucible of troubled, footloose, unsupervised teens that the Greenwood Boys Club, which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next spring, was born.

"There was all sorts of mayhem," recalled Aicher, 62, now a retired telephone-company executive and chairman of a steering committee planning the anniversary weekend.

King County Sheriff Harlan Callahan doubled patrols in the area (85th Street was Seattle's north city limits in those days), assigning among them Sgt. Joe Woelfert, a personable lawman who won the confidence of the street kids. Their message?

"The kids complained that there was no place for kids to go," Aicher said.

But there was an old empty nightspot, the Canton Club at 8537 Greenwood Ave. N. In 1943, the owner, Charles Johnson, agreed to rent the building for \$1 a year to start the Greenwood Boys Club. Aicher was issued card No. 3, as a charter member.

There was a pool table and Ping-Pong, and the kids put up basketball backboards, "but the ceilings were so low, we had to learn not to arch our shots," Aicher said.

The same year Puget Sound Power & Light Co. allowed the club to use land it had at Fremont Avenue North and North 85th Street for a playground.

"Incidents of crime dropped by 500 alone in the area in the two-year period following the opening of the club," Aicher said.

Originally affiliated with the YMCA, the organizers split with the Y in 1944 and went it alone. North Central Lions Club member, Roy Davidson, a Greenwood jeweler, led a campaign to sell community bonds at \$50 each to help pay for a new club at the playground site.

Two years later, on Dec. 13, 1946, with Father Edward Flanagan, founder of Boys Town present, the \$40,000 concrete-brick building at 8635 Fremont Ave. N. was dedicated.

The club, which didn't begin catering to girls until the mid-'70s, was big on sports - Golden Gloves boxing, the "green-and-gold" Greenwood football team, basketball, baseball and even crew at Green Lake.

Besides Aicher, some of the early members included Nick Uren, now a Woodinville construction-company owner; former Seattle Police Chief Robert Hanson; David Quiring, president of Quiring Monuments, Inc.; Darrell Blumenthal, president of Blumenthal Uniforms & Equipment, and Charles Mullavey, Ballard attorney.

The club grew from the original five members to about 500. In keeping with the times, it changed its name to the Greenwood Boys & Girls Club. Now on the eve of its golden anniversary, the club is trying to get the word out and enlist the help of former members, said Bill Dalziel, club director.

Dalziel said the anniversary and reunion, whose theme is "Miracle at 85th and Greenwood," are planned for next April 23-25.

Taking a page from the club's past, organizers tentatively are planning a boxing "smoker," an old-timers' basketball game, a reunion dinner, a Sunday brunch and even re-enactment of a late '40s KOMO-Radio show, "The Clubhouse Party," which originated at the club.

The boys and girls club today is still doing what the original club set out to do, Dalziel said - "giving kids positive things to do, with role models . . . keeping them off drugs and illegal activities."

While sports are still a big part of club activities, "today we deal with a lot of social and cultural things . . . helping kids make decisions and build self-confidence," the director said.

The anniversary and reunion will give former members a chance to give something back to the club, Dalziel said.

"A lot of them, if it were not for the club, would have gotten into a lot of trouble," he said. "There are lots of ways they can help - coaching, volunteering, being role models and sustaining donations."