

SANDPOINT

MAGAZINE

WINTER 2010

QUEST FOR

SOLACE AT
WEST FORK CABIN

TRACKS

in the snow

Art in the Ice

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GUIDE



Interview with Classical Guitarist Leon Atkinson, Whitefish on the Comeback, the Sandpoint-Africa Connection, Immigrants in Sandpoint, Preparing for TEOTWAWKI*, Calendars, Dining, Real Estate ... and so much more

*The End of the World as We Know It

Hazel Hall, that's all

By Sandy Compton

Once upon a time at Hallans Gallery – back in the days when it was still on Lake Street – on the wall above Dann Hall's desk hung a black-and-white photo of an absolutely stunning young woman.

"Dann," I said, "who's the girl?"

He looked up, befuddled about which "girl" I might be referring to, and then followed my pointing finger to the picture.

"Oh," he said, with a laugh, "that's Mom."

I didn't confess the nature of my interest to Dann, but I thought, *Holy cow! I've fallen in love with an older woman.*

I'm not the only one who ever had that experience, I'm sure. Hazel Hall was, for all of her 96 years up until her last breath on August 14, 2009, a beauty.

Her beauty went beyond appearance. It manifested itself in her smile, her quick and sure wit, and the twinkle in her eye. Her beauty went clear to her core.

She never forgot anyone she met. If you were engaged in conversation with Hazel, you might forget, for a few moments, everyone but her. She had a way of paying attention that made you believe you were the center of the Universe.

She knew how to laugh – at herself and the rest of the world. She knew how to make the rest of us laugh – at her, at ourselves and the rest of the world.

Once, some years after her beloved husband, Ross, died in 1990, she had a male admirer about whom she joked to me, "He's just after me for my money." She continued, with a wink, "The joke's on him, 'cause I don't have any." And then she laughed that special laugh of hers, the one only she had.

Hazel had an accent that was built of western Colorado, where she grew

up. I don't know why, but that accent and her sensibilities caused her to clip her words precisely, shaping sounds into unmistakable words that no one listening would misinterpret.

Because of this, if you were in trouble with Hazel Hall, you knew it. But her nature was such that you also knew that it would not last forever.

"Wisdom is a woman," so goes the Bible proverb. Hazel lived that proverb for most of her many years. Wisdom and modesty were built into her. Several times I went to interview her about something or other – she saw and helped make three-quarters of a century of Sandpoint history – and she would beg off.

"There are other folks who you haven't written about, yet," she would say. "I think there's been enough said about me."

When she did grant an interview, it was always interesting, refreshing, exhilarating even. And she was a stickler for getting things right. Once, days after we had a conversation involving a pen and notepad, she called me.

"I need to recant part of that story," she said. "It just wasn't true."

I half expected some confession about embellishment or exaggeration, but I should have known better. "It wasn't October when that happened," she said. "It was November."

Hazel had many facets, so many that no one could know all there was to know about her. I did not know, for instance, that she was a talented limerick writer, until after she was gone. I'm sure she entertained many friends with those specially formed poetics.



PHOTO BY ROSS HALL

Sandpoint matriarch Hazel Hall, 1913-2009, shown in the 1932 photograph that caught the author's eye. She arrived in Sandpoint in 1932 with her new husband, photographer Ross Hall

It's a little late, but I couldn't resist writing one just for her. I'm sure it would bring that special laugh of hers bubbling to the surface. I call it "A Short History of Hazel Hall."

*There once was a young girl named Hazel
Who more than once did Ross amaze.
He told her his standpoint
and moved her to Sandpoint
where she lived all the rest of her dayzel.*

Many of us are very glad he did and she did. 