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← NEIGHBORS IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK (see inside) →

ROSLYN CELEBRATES HISTORIC MARKER Gov. Inslee unveils William Craven Tribute Stand

by Jim Fossett

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ROSLYN – A long list of dignitaries who drove in from Olympia and other parts of Washington gathered with a good showing of locals in front of Roslyn’s NWIC Building to honor William Craven as Washington’s first Black mayor on Wednesday, Aug. 4.

Governor Jay Inslee, who made a special trip with wife Trudi to be at the unveiling said: “Today we’re celebrating Will Craven. He’s a role model for many – from his time on the Roslyn city council to coaching hundreds of kids over the years. His kindness and leadership have made us all better people. Thank you, Will.”

Comments from Inslee and several other speakers concluded with the unveiling of a *Tribute Stand* for William appointed with William’s photo, a bird roosting on a branch to symbolize the way William loved to care for birds, and – Governor Inslee’s Feb. 20 proclamation declaring the day *William Craven Day*.

The proclamation highlights Craven’s lineage and his public service record as a sexton, voluntary cemetery caretaker, school janitor, youth mentor and coach, city councilor and mayor.

It also includes a Craven quote dated back in time to his term as mayor: “Some people will like me. Some people won’t. I didn’t run for this job as a Black man, but as a man. I wanted an equal chance to try. If I can’t do it, the people will vote me out in September.”

The proclamation ended with mention of just some of the special things Craven and his wife Virginia contributed to the community:

See **CRAVEN TRIBUTE...**, page B7



A HANDSHAKE OF CONGRATULATIONS. William Craven (at left) with Governor Jay Inslee at the Tribute Stand just after the unveiling. A special memorial unveiling was held in front

of the NWIC Building in downtown Roslyn on the afternoon of Wednesday, Aug. 4. See more coverage of this historic event inside this week’s edition. Photo courtesy of Gov. Inslee’s press office

Coverage in the local newspaper,
by reporter Jim Fossett,
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the Northern Kittitas County Tribune
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HISTORIC EVENT

CRAVEN TRIBUTE...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

“In 1978, Mayor William Craven was instrumental in getting Roslyn’s 26 ethnically distinct cemeteries on the *National Register of Historic Places*, helping to preserve the area’s history, and he and his wife Virginia provided a place to mourn the four firefighters who perished in the *Thirtymile Fire*, including their son Tom.”

The Tribute Stand, the ceremony and accolades from attending dignitaries served to officially anchor William’s legacy in the heart of Roslyn.

After the unveiling, William – characterized as a precious chapter of our living history – stood at the podium and said, “It’s nice to see all these people visit with an old man like me. Do what makes you happy and that’s why we’re here. All these people are a family and it makes it nice ... and no one had to pay you to show up,” he smiled.

Following are excerpts from some of the comments made at the unveiling. If you’d like a copy of the proclamation e-mail jim@nkctribune.com.

Celebrating William, an Upper County icon

AUTHOR’S NOTE: because there were so many speakers they were asked to limit their comments to two minutes. Here are some excerpts.

Cheri Marusa, Roslyn Downtown Association’s president and the organization’s engine behind William’s Tribute Stand and the unveiling ceremony: “It is a great day for the Roslyn Downtown Association and our board of di-

rectors who really stepped up to work with Governor Inslee and his amazing staff to honor our beloved William and the legacy of his entire family today.

“I don’t use the phrase ‘so grateful.’ I use the phrase ‘soul grateful,’ because when you truly embrace life and all that is good, and when you look for common ground and leave your legacy in making a difference – it comes from within.

“So to pay it forward I always say I’m soul grateful because it comes from my heart, and individuals such as William, his children and many others autograph our hearts leading us to be grateful beyond and to break all barriers of politics and difference with respect, integrity and kindness. That’s how we want to be treated and how we should treat others.

“William you led by that example with true, genuine goodness. We’re honored to honor you today.

“Thank you to our community and everyone who made this possible.”

Governor Jay Inslee:

“I’m so excited I may rename Roslyn – *Cravenville*.”

“Mr. Craven it is an amazing thing to be loved by your town. But I think what’s more amazing is the town you are loved by, because there is no community that represents so much blending of ethnicity and nationalities as represented by the cemetery you have cared for and that you put on the National Register. That’s why I’m so pleased to

be here with you.

“Now on a personal note I just want to tell you that finally I can honestly say I have shaken hands with the first Black president of the United States and the first Black mayor in the state of Washington. I’m pretty excited about that.

“We want to honor your son Tom and his public service as well. Your whole family has been involved with public service.

“As you know your William has not hung his hat on this historical leadership as first Black mayor. The reason he is loved is that he represents so much, doing everything you can imagine for his community, including his noble pursuit of being a school janitor. It is a noble pursuit. That’s who kids love the most. And they love you for years and years.

“When I meet someone in Washington who really inspires me, someone who is really a cut above, someone who really gets to my heart and lifts me up, I name him or her *Washingtonian of the Day*. And today that person is William Craven.”

With that, the governor removed the Apple pin from his lapel and affixed it to William’s shirt collar.

WA Senator Judy Warnick:

“It’s a special honor to be here to recognize you William. I’m very impressed with you and your family for what you’ve done for this community.”

WA Rep. and Master of Ceremonies John Lovick:

“Today is a great day. English writer **William Penn** wrote, ‘An able yet humble man is a jewel worth a kingdom.’

“William Craven dedicated his life to public service and to helping others.

“He once worked as a school custodian and a gravedigger.

“He also served on the city council before being appointed mayor in 1975, the first Black mayor in Washington. When he ran for election he won by a landslide.

“In 1975 William Craven may have made history, but back then he clearly was not looking to make headlines. In the process what he did was make headway.

“He made sure the roads were plowed when it snowed and he protected the city’s watershed. In addition to plowing the snow he paved the way so others could follow in his footsteps.

“The road he paved will last forever. In 1995, twenty years after being appointed mayor there were five black mayors in Washington.

“Mr. Craven, I want to thank you for all you’ve done. You opened many doors for a number of us. Because of your journey, many of us were able to go further than we ever envisioned or ever dreamed possible.

“Sir, we are here to thank you for that and to tell you that you not only did your job but you did it well, not because it served your interests, sir, but because it served the interests of others.

“Your legacy is worthy of respect, admiration and ... a kingdom.”

WA Rep. Jamila Taylor:

“As the daughter of a Black historian I see evidence here of living history.

“I can tell you that having living history amongst us and knowing the contributions of African Americans have been part of our storied history since the state’s inception, it’s



TRIBUTE STAND honoring William Craven was unveiled last week in front of the NWIC Building in downtown Roslyn.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Michael Richard photo - 2021



FORTERRA’S Tobias Levey (at left) and Jeff Dade presented William with this commissioned painting entitled, *The Promise* by artist Tiffany Hammonds.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jim Fossett photo



IMPROMPTU AWARD. Governor Jay Inslee pins William Craven with an Apple pin and named him *Washingtonian of the Day*. “I do this when I meet someone who inspires me, lifts me up,” Inslee said.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jim Fossett photo - 2021

great to see and honor the legacy of William Craven. Thank you so much for honoring him today and forever.”

U.S. Representative 8th District Kim Schrier:

“It is such a privilege to learn a little more about Roslyn’s history and you sir, William Craven, your amazing wife Virginia, and your family.

“**Gary Snyder**, a bit of an environmentalist and a bit of a radical, once said, ‘Find your place on the planet. Dig in and take responsibility from there.’

“I love that spirit. And I get it that we all have a role to play in improving a place as well as living there.

“People who step up, volunteer, roll up their sleeves to serve on boards, lead efforts to conserve natural spaces, and take initiatives in preventing forest fires – that’s something that you embody, William. So I want to thank you.

“As a lifelong resident and son of a coalminer you are deeply connected to the city’s past and you have devoted your life to this place. You were unanimously appointed to lead, but I have to say, as a

representative of this district – I’m just a bit jealous (*audience laughs*). You weren’t overly concerned about historical significance. You just wanted to do your job. And we are so grateful.

“From here on out your name will be in the history books. I hope, one day, I can earn the same kind of love and support from the community, and I thank you for your legacy of citizenship and public service. It’s really an honor to know you.”

WA Representative Frank Chopp, former Speaker of the House:

“When I first saw Will Craven, I saw him from the chest up because he was that deep in a grave he was digging for one of my family members in Roslyn Cemetery. Will put one hand on the shovel handle and with the other he waved at me. He was very friendly.

“Over the years Will dug graves for many of my relatives. When they would talk about Will it was always with respect and affection. More specifically, they really liked him. I can see why he was elected mayor. Only later was



Cheri Marusa



Judy Warnick



John Lovick



Jamila Taylor



Kim Schrier



Frank Chopp



Louie Osmonovich



Pastor Colby Jones

HISTORIC EVENT

a Black mayor elected on the westside. *(audience laughs)*.

“We should remember Will’s accomplishments and the accomplishments of others who make us proud, but also we must remember the labor strife and racial prejudices of the past.

“The NWIC Building behind us, the so-called Northwest Improvement Company, is today a symbol of Roslyn’s revival, but decades ago it was the source of much pain.

“Do you remember *(Chopp pauses momentarily, overcome with emotion)* the song by **Johnny Cash**? The lyrics of *Sixteen Tons*: ‘St. Peter don’t you call me because I can’t go, I owe my soul to the company store.’

“Well, the NWIC Building was the company store, and quite frankly my family hated the company.

“Did you also know that this very company blatantly discriminated against Black miners and their families? And for years that was an extra burden to the 16 tons Cash sings about. In the 1930s the governor at the time called out the state troopers to suppress the strike by the coal miners, my father among them. State troopers tear gassed them.

“Since then, we have made some progress. **Rep. John Lovick**, for example, a former state trooper, now serves graciously as our Speaker pro tem.

“We’re here to honor William Craven for his outstanding service. By force of will and a lot of hard work he became important not only to Roslyn and the state of Washington but also to my family. “Thank you so much. You’ve made us all proud.

“Now,” Chopp shouted, much like a football coach would, “Everybody! Let’s hear it for Will Craven!” and the audience responded with a raucous cheer.

❖
Louie Osmonovich, an Upper County icon in his own right and longtime friend of the Craven family: “Cheri said we only have two minutes,” which brought a laugh from the audience, because in addition to being an accomplished educator, musician, and a beloved member of the Upper County community, Louie is known as a consummate storyteller and humorist. He made the ‘two-minute’ remark because he knew he would have to struggle to make the cut – and everybody in attendance knew that, too.

“Governor Inslee thank you for being here, but if I’d known you were going to wear jeans I would have worn mine. I might have even worn my spurs, too.

“We’re allowed two minutes so I can’t tell everybody everything about Will. He was, is and will always be a great man. Anyway, I have some notes. Can everyone hear me back there? Good. Well, I dunno if it’s good or not *(audience laughs)*.

“I was born and raised in Roslyn. I lived down in *Ducktown*. Will lived uptown a couple of blocks from here, so every day I had to walk by his family’s home to school, not by myself, with my sister and others, so I was never alone.



VIRGIL LEWIS, vice chairman of the Yakama Nation Tribal Council, presented William with a blanket on behalf of the Tribe.



WILLIAM shown here with daughter **Corrine** when they addressed the crowd.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jim Fossett photo - 2021

“From that experience I know where Will got his compassion, sense of humor and his gift for making good friendships. He got that from his mother. Why?”

“Because every day when I’d walk by Will’s house his mother would be sitting on the porch. She was always happy and always waved. Eventually she found out my name and would shout, ‘Hi Louie!’ all the time. She was just a wonderful woman. I also knew his dad, **Sam**, who was about seven feet tall. At least he seemed to be seven feet tall *(audience laughs)*.

“Sam worked in the coal mines, dug graves, and worked hard. That’s where Will got his work ethic. So thanks to them you turned out pretty darn good, Will.

“In junior high basketball, you wouldn’t believe this, but Will was taller and he was a lot heavier, kind of like one of his sons seated over there *(audience laughs)*.

“Now in basketball Will would either go around you or shoot, and if he missed I didn’t dare go in for the rebound because he could jump higher than I ever could, so I got out of the way so he wouldn’t land on me *(audience laughs)*. Will, do you remember all that fun we had? *(audience laughs)*.

“And, uh, oh ... there is one more thing I have to tell you about *(audience laughs knowing that Louie is pushing past the two-minute mark)*. Will and I schooled together from kindergarten through eighth grade. We’re old but we can still remember. Oh, by the way Will, in a month you’ll be as old as I am.

“Alright! But, uh, age doesn’t mean anything. We’ll still go to the casino – oh that’s another thing *(audience laughs)*. I run into Will once in awhile at the casino. We don’t have much money – but we lie to each other. I’ll say, ‘How’d you do Will?’ And he’ll say, ‘Oh I won a little bit.’ Then I’ll say, ‘I broke even.’

“The truth is we both probably lost about \$100. *(audience laughs)*. But we’ll go back, Will, and win some more.

“Okay I guess I’m way past two minutes at this point *(audience laughs)*. But, oh, I want to say one more thing. *(more laughter as the Master of Ceremonies edges up to Louie’s side)*.

“If you don’t think Will works hard, take a drive up to the Mt. Olivet Cemetery if you haven’t been up there and see what he’s done with the **Thirtymile Fire Memorial** at his son **Tom**’s gravesite. That will show you what a worker he is.

“Okay. Can I tell one more thing? *(audience laughs)*.

“When Will was a custodian at the grade school he worked with **Mr. Steele**. I don’t think there’s anyone alive at my age who remembers him. Anyway, one thing he did to entertain us kids was take his wide-brush broom and balance it on his

JOSEPHINE HOWELL, the woman who sang at the Thirtymile Fire anniversary last month held at Roslyn Cemetery, sang at the unveiling. “Lord, she can sing,” said one bystander.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jim Fossett photo - 2021

chin, then he’d walk up the hall with his arms outstretched. You ever learn to do that, Will?” Louie smiled. “Well, there’s still time.”

At that point the audience laughed again while the Master of Ceremonies coaxed Louie with ‘the look.’ “Okay,” Louie said, with a broad smile.

❖
Corrine Craven, William’s daughter: “Thank you everyone for this honor.

“This town stands on the shoulders of those who came before them.

“This was a town where many people from many cultures lived and worked side by side in the mines, relying on each for their lives.

“They built community and they built strength and they realized they had more in common than they had differences.

“And over time they built deep, lasting friendships. I can attest to that because when we need anything I can call my old family friends and old high school friends and they are the first to jump in. That’s a testament to this community and to what a diverse culture can do if they have open hearts and open minds.

“I hope people will remember that we all have more in common than we have differences.

“I’d like to thank all the special guests who came today. I’d like to thank my family and all our friends in our community, and I would also like to recognize those who are new to Roslyn: I hope you will show this community as much love and compassion and openness as it will show you.”

❖
U.S. Senator Patty Murray offered her respects by way of a comment she made from Washington, D.C., a couple days after the unveiling: “William Craven is a fixture of the Roslyn community, and as the first African American Mayor in Washington, he was a true trailblazer. He has left behind an impressive legacy of public service and will forever be remembered for his unwavering commitment to the people of Roslyn. I am excited to see him receiving this well-deserved honor.”

Bearing gifts

Several visiting spokespersons made short comments before gifting William.

Mike Flood, Seahawks Vice President of Community Relations: “I’ve got a gift for you Will. We want to bring you and your family to a Sea-



THE UNVEILING of the William Craven Tribute Stand with Governor Inslee on Wednesday, Aug. 4 in Roslyn.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jim Fossett photo - 2021

hawks game this year, because this is a very inspiring story for us. For now, this is for you, a football autographed by Seahawks quarterback **Russell Wilson**.”

Forterra’s Jeff Dade, Community Outreach Director: “I was born in 1975 when you were mayor, and when I heard about you Mr. Craven, I had to be here.

“I took a tour of the cemeteries. There’s so much history here. That’s another reason why I had to be a part of this.

“I have a gift for you. We commissioned this painting by **Tiffany Hammonds**, entitled *The Promise*. The paint is barely dry.

“Across this state and this country what you’ve done is important. We just wanted to honor you. We have so much respect for you.”

Virgil Lewis, vice chairman of the Yakama Nation Tribal Council: “I know we’re here to honor an individual who deserves every honor bestowed upon him.

“William, I would like to read this letter to you. It’s from Delano Saluskin, Chairman of the Yakama Nation Tribal Council.

“Dear Mr. Craven, On behalf of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation we would like to acknowledge you and your family for the legacy of care they have brought to the Yakama Nation ancestral lands.

“We understand your family has been involved in caring for those who have passed away and have been part of the stewardship of our sacred lands and forests.

“These are qualities which we understand to be of benefit to all of us. In our way, such care is how we honor the creator and his creation.

“We recognize the significance and importance in your term as the mayor of Roslyn from 1975 to 1979.

“You are the first African American to hold the title of mayor in Washington.

“In our time as tribal people on this land our elders have witnessed the changes of how the people treated the land and each other.

The Tribute Story

In January, Roslyn Downtown Association President **Cheri Marusa** reached out to the Governor’s office requesting recognition by proclamation for William. “It was long past due to recognize him,” she said.

Due to COVID, the proclamation was held via a phone conference on Wednesday, Feb. 20.

Marusa said the Roslyn Downtown Association had commissioned a steel stand for the proclamation to be permanently displayed in downtown Roslyn.

“**Chris Flowers** of Flowers Fabrication designed the Tribute Stand,” she said.

“The Roslyn Downtown Association followed up with the Governor Inslee’s staff to invite him to Roslyn to meet and honor Will in person and unveil the Tribute Stand.

“By late July we were contacted that Inslee would be coming to Roslyn, so we sprung into action: from getting invites and information pulled together, lining up speakers to entertainment, program content, and the after-party reception at Basecamp Books & Bites.”

She said she also reached out to the Heritage Club’s **Jeff Adams**. “Without any hesitation he took the lead on logistics, including chairs, parking, city approval, and everything in between.

“**Jeff Adams, Dick Watts, Bubba Simplot** from Roslyn Public Works, **Pat Weaver**, Police Chief **Kirk Bland**, **Devin Casto**, **Maria Adams**, the Kittitas County Chamber and others represented community teamwork at its finest.

“**Jo Anne Hutton**, who shared her beautiful flower pots, and event runner **Stephanie Zipperer** helped with the guests.