Toledo Cheese Days
Welcome Home
Our Home is Your Home!
CAR SHOW PARADE
AND MORE!
SEE INSIDE!

THIS YEAR’S BIG CHEESES
From Left: Tom Lahmann, Denny Clark, Mick Filla
2019 Cheese Days

EVENTS SCHEDULE

Thursday, July 11th

Cheese Days Kick-Off Celebration
- with a toast to the 2019 Big Cheeses!
Come one, come all! Enjoy a relaxing social soiree with live music and yummy hors d’oeuvres! Toast the 2019 Big Cheeses in style on Thursday night, at 6:00pm!
$10 entry
Location: Morgan Arts Center

Toledo Made: 1pm-6pm
Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Products all made by folks who live in the greater Toledo Community. Contact Di Morgan at 360-864-4ART or www.artgallery505.com.
Location: Art Gallery 505, 205 Cowlitz St, Toledo, WA

Friday, July 12th

23rd Annual “Cheddar Open” Golf Tournament
Registration starts at 10am. Shotguns start at 10am.
Four-man scramble. Contact John Sanford 360-864-6474 or Dale Pomeroy 360-864-6317. Proceeds go to the Toledo Lions Club.
$60 entry
Location: Newaukum Valley Golf Course

Toledo Made: 1pm-6pm
Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Products all made by folks who live in the greater Toledo Community. Contact Di Morgan at 360-864-4ART or www.artgallery505.com.
Location: Art Gallery 505, 205 Cowlitz St, Toledo, WA

BBQ Buffet: 12pm-8pm
Location: Bonanza BBQ, 102 Kellogg Way

2nd Annual Cornhole Tourney: 5:30pm-7:30pm
Sign up 30min before
$25 entry
Location: High School Football Field

Tennis Tournament Begins: 3pm
Events: Men’s Singles, Women’s Singles, Men’s Doubles, Women’s Doubles, Mixed Doubles
Anyone 12yrs of age and over is welcome to play!
Pre-registration forms are available at Betty’s Place or from Mrs. Armstrong. Due to scheduling, please pre-register. Balls are furnished. Trophy/Ribbon prize awards.
$5.00 entry per event
Contact Signora Armstrong, 360-864-2594

Frog Jumping Contest: 5:30pm-7:00pm
Come have a hoppin’ good time racing frogs! Frogs available for rent. Cash prizes!
1st Place: $15 ; 2nd Place: $10 ; 3rd Place: $5
$1.00 per frog/race
Location: Toledo High School Track Field
Contact: Adam Hackett 360-508-1764

Bingo: 6:30pm-9pm
No limit on cards! Proceeds go to Toledo Youth Soccer Club. Hot dogs and concessions available.
Location: Toledo High School Multipurpose Room
Contact Lori Neumann-Niles at 360-880-8527

Saturday, July 13th

Coffee House: 5am-11am
Start the day off with coffee, hot chocolate, muffins, & donuts at the Toledo Lions Club Car/Motorcycle Show!

Ham & All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Breakfast:
7am-10:30am (or as long as the food lasts!)
Ham, eggs, biscuits, pancakes, gravy, and beverages!
$5.00 Donation
Location: Toledo Senior Center
Contact Mary 785-3054

Breakfast Buffet: 6am-10am
Location: Bonanza BBQ, 102 Kellogg Way

Toledo Library Bake & Book Sale: 9am-5pm
Location 241 Cowlitz St., Toledo, WA

BBQ Buffet: 11am-8pm
Location: Bonanza BBQ, 102 Kellogg Way

Cheddar Challenge!
Registration begins 6:45am-7:45am at the Toledo Fire Station. Race begins at 8am. 3-mile run/walk for all ages!
Sponsored by Toledo Girls Softball.
$10 entry, $18 with T-Shirt
Contact Kristi Marcil at 360-219-3177


35th Annual
Mount St. Helens
Bluegrass Festival
August 9-11, 2019
Toledo High School • Toledo, Washington

$35 ........ Weekends Event Pass
$20 ......... Friday only
$25 ........ Saturday all day
$20 ........ Saturday after 4 p.m.
$25 ........ Dry Camping (3 nights: Thu/Fr/Sa)

Free: Friday: Open Mic from 12 to 2 p.m.
Free: Saturday: workshops ~ 9:30 a.m.
Free: Saturday: band scrambles ~ 11:00 a.m.
Free: Sunday: gospel concert ~ 9:30 a.m.

No campers before 9 a.m. Thursday
Free showers in the school
Pets must be on a leash at all times.
Pets are only allowed in the BACK of the audience area.
Not set up for credit/debit. Cash or checks only.

Questions? Contact: General Cothren 360-520-4524 generalandbetty7@msn.com

Quilting room available behind the stage!

FROG JUMPING CONTEST!
COME HAVE A HOPPIN' GOOD TIME RACING BULLFROGS!

Friday, July 12th
5:30PM - 7:00PM

LOCATION:
Toledo High School Track Field

ENTRY: $1.00 PER FROG
No limit on entries!!
**Saturday, July 13th continued**

**18th Annual Car & Motorcycle Show: 7am**
Come see cars and motorcycles from nearly every make and decade! Sponsored by the Toledo Lions Club and over 150 local businesses! Awards
- $20 fee to enter your vehicle
- Awards at 3pm
- Location: Toledo Middle School Field
- Contact Brad Dykstra at 360-864-4634

**Kids Fun Fest: 10am-3pm**
Fun and games for kids that include: End of the Rainbow, Dinosaur Dig, Rock Muncher, Tattoo Parlor, Soda Walk, and much more!
- Location: Toledo Middle School Gym
- Contact Mrs. Ketchum at 360-520-5823

**Food and Assorted Vendors: 9am**
Come see local handmade goods and service providers, grab a bite to eat, and enjoy the car show!
- Location: Toledo Middle School

**Toledo Cheese Days Parade: 11am**
This year’s parade theme is “Welcome Home”.
- Parade registration is ongoing. See registration forms online. All parade entries are assigned assembly and dispersal plans. Parade route starts at 5th and Augustus, moves East on Augustus to 2nd, continues South on 2nd to Oak, then West on Oak to 5th.
- Trophies presented to the 1st and 2nd place winners of each division at the Judges Booth, located at the Presbyterian Church.

**SPECTATORS:** Safety is our biggest concern. That being said, please prevent your children and youth from getting too close to the parade while candy is being thrown. Parade participants may not see them chasing candy that was thrown too close to the parade. Drivers of large trucks and other potentially dangerous vehicles have been instructed not to throw candy from their vehicles. Toledo Lions Club Members will monitor the main parade areas to ensure crowd compliance. Toledo/Winlock Troop 324 Boy Scouts will be selling soda.

**Toledo Made: 11am-6pm**
Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Products all made by folks who live in the greater Toledo Community. Contact Di Morgan at 360-864-4ART or www.artgallery505.com.
- Location: Art Gallery 505, 205 Cowlitz St, Toledo, WA

**Toledo Fire Department Open House: 12:30pm**
Join us for some fire house fun! Cooling Station, Kids Activities, Meet a Firefighter!
- Location: Toledo Fire Dept.

**Barbeque: Noon-5pm**
Featuring baby-back ribs, corn on the cob, potato salad, beans, rolls, and soda. Sponsored by Toledo Market Fresh. $9 per person
- Location: Toledo Market Fresh
- Contact Michael Kirby at 360-864-2161

**Community Auction: 1pm**
Many find handcrafted and corporate sponsored items will be auctioned!
- Location: Toledo Middle School Field

**Wine and Cheese Tasting Garden: 4pm-8pm**
Taste local wines, beers, and cheeses!
- Intro to Wine: $15.00 w/ Commemorative Wine Glass
- Wine Lovers: $25.00 w/ Commemorative Wine Glass
- Beer Clencher: $15.00, 12oz cup, 2 Beers, 2 Free Tastings
- Location: Toledo Boat Launch
- Contact Pam Olimstead at 360-864-2855

**Midnight Dance: 9pm-Midnight**
Free Dance for all ages!
- Location: Toledo Market Fresh Parking Lot
- Contact: 360-864-2161
19th Annual
Cheese Days
Car & Motorcycle Show!

Get a blast from the past with the 19th Annual Cheese Days Car & Motorcycle Show! You'll see cars from every make and every decade!

Want to enter your vehicle? Registration is $20, and begins at 6am

Location: Toledo Middle School Field

Open to the public: 7am
Awards given: 3:00pm

Delta Airlines

Coffee Shop
360-864-8282
Don't forget your Punch Card!
408 Silver Street, Toledo, WA 98591

Michael, Ann, & Anastasia Messmore

Phillipps Insurance Group, Inc.
Office: 360-864-8844    Cell: 360-749-7224
408 Silver Street, PO Box 607
Toledo, WA 98591
Sunday, July 14th

Church Services: 8am
Attend the service of your choice.

Horseshoe Tournament: 8am
Sign up: 8am. Playing begins at 8:30am. Three classes: Beginner, Amateur, Advanced. Total payout each class: $5 entry.
Location: Kemp Olson Toledo Community Park
Contact Stan Spears at 360-864-2096

All Class Reunion: 11am-4pm
Location: Kemp Olson Toledo Community Park

Toledo Made: 1pm-6pm
Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Products all made by folks who live in the greater Toledo Community. Contact Di Morgan at 360-864-4ART or www.artgallery505.com.
Location: Art Gallery 505, 205 Cowlitz St, Toledo, WA

Toledo Lions Club Beef Barbeque: 12pm-3pm
Join the community in savoring the best beef with all the trimmings presented by the Toledo Lions Club! Menu includes: Barbeque beef, baked beans, coleslaw, garlic bread, watermelon, and beverages!
$7.00 Adults; $6.00 Seniors and Children
Location: Kemp Olson Toledo Community Park

Lioness Club of Toledo Cheesecake by the Slice: 12pm-2:30pm
Various Cheesecakes with your choice of topping! Proceeds go to the Lioness Scholarship Fund and other projects benefiting the Toledo Community.
$3 per slice
Location: Kemp Olson Toledo Community Park
Contact Rachel Phillips at 360-864-8844

15th Annual Pie Auction: 3pm (following the Barbeque)
The Toledo Volunteer EMS and Firefighters Assn. has baked some of the most delicious pies to ever grace our green Earth, and they’re all up for auction! Proceeds benefit the Toledo Volunteer EMS and Firefighters Assn. Thank you for your generous support!
Location: Kemp Olson Toledo Community Park

Lions Club Beef Auction: 2:30 (following the Barbeque)
Bid on the delicious BBQ Beef, breads, and watermelons!
Location: Kemp Olson Community Park
Saturdays Vendors
at Toledo Middle School

July 13th

Come join the fun at the Car Show and Vendor Booths located at Toledo Middle School! There’s something for everyone! Whether you’re a collectibles enthusiast seeking that next fine addition to your collection, or want to pick up some hand-crafted wares, there’s always something new to find on vendor’s row at the Middle School!

Bouncy Inflatables!

Punk Tank!

Kid’s Fun Fest!

Community Auction!

July 13th

Barbeques! Furniture! Tools! Oh my!

Come bid on any and all of the auction lots, including new barbeques, home appliances and furniture, tools, and more!

All proceeds benefit the Toledo Lions Club community projects and scholarships, and can be a great tax write-off for you!

Location: Toledo Middle School Field
Meet 2019’s

BIG CHEESES

Mick Filla

Mick was born in 1942 to Roy and Rosemary Filla. During his childhood his family moved frequently as his father worked at several different occupations. He attended the first grade in Castle Rock, grades 2-8 in Longview, then moved to Toutle graduating from Toutle Lake High School in 1961 where he played football, basketball and baseball.

During the summers while attending high school, his first two years in college, and early years of teaching, Mick worked for his dad who owned Roy Filla Logging and Construction. He realized during this time that logging and construction were not his passion.

After high school, Mick attended Lower Columbia College and worked nights at Longview Shake Mill for a year. In the spring of 1963, he transferred to Western Washington University where he received his B.A. in Education in 1966. He later enrolled at Central Washington University and obtained his Masters Degree in 1971.

In the fall of 1963, Mick married his high school “sweetheart” Linda Drew who worked as a beautician at the Bon Marche’ in Bellingham, Washington to help pay for college expenses. Linda passed away from cancer in 1993.

Mick has two daughters, Christy and Cheryl and a son Kyle. Mick’s desire was to become a teacher and coach where he could have a positive influence on kids’ lives. His wish was granted in the fall of 1966, as he was hired by the Toledo School District, to teach seventh and eighth grade science, math and physical education and coach at the Toledo Elementary School.

In 1975 Mick was named Principal at Toledo Middle School where he worked for the next twenty-two years. He retired from education in 1997. During his retirement years, Mick enjoys hunting, fishing, hiking and watching sporting events.

Photo by Mike Morgan. Pictured Right: Mick Filla
Meet 2019’s

**BIG CHEESES**

**Denny Clark**

Denny has lived in Toledo for fifty-one years. He was born and raised on Whidbey Island and graduated from Coupeville High School in 1964. Denny loved basketball and baseball and played two years in college. After attending Skagit Valley College, he attended Central Washington University where he received his bachelor's degree in 1968 and masters degree in 1972.

In 1968, George Murdock hired Denny to be Toledo High School’s biology teacher. Denny planned to teach one year and then join the U.S. Air Force where he had qualified to be a pilot. He enjoyed working with the Toledo students and staff and stayed at Toledo High School teaching biology for six years.

In 1974, Denny was selected to be the Toledo High School principal where he served the Toledo School District for twenty-seven years. He has said that living and working in Toledo was so rewarding and loved going to work everyday.

Denny was, and continues to be, proud of the Toledo students and their many accomplishments in academics, athletics and activities. He believed that “Hard work makes dreams come true,” and our Toledo students believed that too. He always gave credit to great students and a great teaching staff for making his years in Toledo so wonderful and rewarding.

Denny continues to assist students at the Cowlitz Prairie Academy, Toledo School District’s alternative educational program. He has said many times that he will forever “bleed Toledo red and black.”

Denny has always believed that “small communities are a stabilizing anchor of our society and Toledo is a great example of that.”

Along with Tom Lahmann, he (and other Toledo faculty) kept the Cheese Days Frog Jump supplied with many “good jumpers” for over thirty years.

He is very proud of his three children. Kara, Courtney and Kael and his eight grandchildren.

Denny’s original plan to teach and live one year in Toledo has morphed into fifty-one and counting.

Toledo......RAH!!!!
Meet 2019’s

**Big Cheeses**

**Tom Lahmann**

The middle of three sons, Tom was born in 1946 to Frank and Nellie Lahmann in Centralia. He attended grades one through three in the old Grand Mound Elementary School before moving with his family to Carson, Washington. There he completed 8th grade and then attended Stevenson High School, graduating in 1965. He was awarded an athletic scholarship to BYU in Provo, Utah, where he played strong safety on the football team until his graduation in 1969.

During his elementary school through college years, Tom worked a variety of summer jobs including wheat harvest, survey crew, plywood plant worker, logging choker setter, and truck driver.

From 1970 to ’74 Tom served as an instructor at the US Coast Guard training center in Alameda, California. While in the service he married Kathy, another Washingtonian, and they’ve been happily married for 47 years. He has two sons, Ben and Andy, and a daughter, Michelle. When the boys were very young, Tom started the Cheese Days Frog Jumping Contest and still manages to catch a few of the croakers for kids to participate in the event.

In the fall of 1974, Tom was hired as a teacher and coach by the Toledo School District. In ’79 he left education to make his fortune in home construction. Oops! As interest rates skyrocketed and home building died, Tom returned to education as a teacher and football coach in Winlock. In ’84 he returned to Toledo School District and, upon completion of a Masters degree from University of Puget Sound, became the elementary school principal, then middle school principal, and then the district superintendent. He retired from education in 2005.

In retirement Tom enjoys woodworking, hunting, fishing, and helping friends and family with small building projects.

Photo by Mike Morgan. Pictured Right: Tom Lahmann
In Memoriam...

Pauline Pierce 1924 - 2019

Pauline Pierce, a longtime member of the Toledo Community, passed away this year. She was a beloved member of a proud and loving family.

She, along with several others over the last fifty years, was responsible making the post-parade cheese sandwiches that we all came to love. Ever since she was approached by George Murdock himself to take on the task, Pauline dedicated herself to feeding hundreds of people the cheese sandwiches that became a staple of every Cheese Days.

Pauline was a proud Cowlitz Prairie Grange Member, who volunteered at the Toledo School District, as well! She truly embodied the hardworking, kind, and caring nature that should be an example for all in our community.

So, from all of us who have benefitted from her hard work each year, and all who knew and loved her...

We will miss you Pauline.

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TOLEDO LIONS CLUB

SUNDAY BBQ!

Come join the Toledo Lions Club and get a heapin’ helpin’ of the best beef BBQ, this side of the Cascades, along with all the trimmings like Coleslaw, beans, watermelon, and more! Be sure to bring your own folding chairs, because the seats fill up fast!

Sunday, July 14th: 12:00pm-3:00pm

Location:
Kemp Olson Community Park

Prices:
$7.00 Adults; $6.00 Senior Citizens and Children
A Brief History of Toledo Cheese Day

By: Julie McDonald Zander

A century ago, a group of milk producers put the finishing touches on a new cheese factory that opened at the end of Second Street in Toledo in May 1919.

That launched the Cowlitz Valley Cheese Association, which, by mid-May, turned out 800 pounds of cheese a day. It produced excellent American cheddar and pimento cheese, kept cool by an ice machine purchased in 1920.

The farmer milk shippers and directors of the new cooperative planned a celebration June 15, 1919, to mark the formal opening, according to a May 10, 1919, piece in the Oregon Daily Journal. That's also the day a hundred or more farmers gathered to collect their first checks. In preparation for the event, the wives of the shippers and directors used product from the new plant to make cheese sandwiches, which they distributed to the people who gathered. They also served coffee.

Everyone had such a grand time they decided to make Cheese Day an annual event. But it wasn't Toledo's first big celebration. In 1853, speakers and pioneers gathered at Cowlitz Landing for the Fourth of July celebration in the newly created Washington Territory.
Later, on July 4, 1884, the town hosted a grand Independence Day celebration featuring a procession in the public square and a march to the grove (behind the presentday Toledo Middle School). The program featured music by a glee club, a chaplain’s prayer by the Rev. Thomas Brouillette, reading of the Declaration of Independence by T.B. Mitchell, music, an oration by M. Yoder, and a basket picnic dinner, according to the original program found in the attic of one of the community’s oldest homes and reprinted in the 1978 Cheese Day program, provided by Michelle Whitten, Toledo’s city clerk/treasurer. After-dinner amusements included a “race by the two fattest men,” a sack race, and a grand ball in the evening.

But Cheese Day began with the opening of the Cowlitz Valley Cheese Association’s plant in 1919, as noted in The Oregon Daily Journal May 10, 1919. In 1920, farmers, residents, and others arrived in Toledo for the second Cheese Day in buggies, buckboards, boats, on horseback and even in the newfangled automobiles. At the Day’s Grove picnic area, workers erected a dance platform. The event featured speakers, a baseball game and, of course, cheese sandwiches and coffee. The association even arranged for an airplane to take passengers for a ride at a cost of five dollars each.

The Oregon Daily Journal reported in April 1921 that the cheese factory’s directors “decided to make the third annual celebration of that industry the biggest carnival ever held in Toledo.”

In June 1922, the Cheese Day celebration conflicted with the Holstein picnic, but showing a fraternal spirit, the Cowlitz Valley Cheese Association sent over a big chunk of cheese for their lunch, according to the June 30, 1922, edition of the Chehalis BeeNugget. Despite the scheduling conflict, Cheese Day proved to be a grand party—some might say a bit too much.

When the Cowlitz Valley Cheese Association met in early 1923, the board decided to hold the fifth annual Cheese Day carnival but with a few changes.
“This year gambling games and games of chance will be eliminated and the committee promises nothing but clean amusements and drastic measures to prevent drunkenness,” the newspaper reported.

The association elected board members and discussed issues at the factory, such as “why some members started selling cream instead of patronizing the cheese factory,” according to a February 23, 1923, article in the Chehalis Bee-Nugget. During 1922, the association paid $26,144 for milk (an amount equal to nearly $400,000 in today’s dollars).

By May 1923, the cheese factory had installed a new 30-horsepower boiler and received about 7,000 pounds of milk daily.

Early Cheese Day celebrations featured speeches, sports, music, and dancing at what they described as a large farmers’ picnic. At every event, organizers gave away free cheese sandwiches and coffee, although sometimes they asked people to bring their own cups.

In 1923, a merry-go-round ran during the day. The afternoon baseball game pitting the Toledo Cheesemakers against the State Training School in Chehalis went into eleven innings, with Toledo winning eleven to nine. People danced at an outdoor ball that evening.

The cheese produced in Toledo was described as excellent. It was so good, in fact, buyers offered to purchase the cheese factory. In April 1926, the Bee-Nugget reported the association’s directors were considering an offer from J. Arthur Karlen, the plant manager whose family owned the Valley Creamery Company of Oakville. The directors preferred his offer over other propositions because it would ensure steady operation of the plant.

After he bought the Cowlitz Valley Cheese Association factory at the end of Second Street in 1927, Art Karlen continued to operate it and installed a butter churn that year, according to The Toledo Community Story. The first churning produced 540 pounds of butter.

Toledo’s Commercial Club sponsored Cheese Day in the mid-1920s and early 1930s as it continued to draw thousands of people to Toledo. The afternoon baseball game became a tradition, and sports competitions grew to include wrestling and tennis matches. Stores closed at 11:30 a.m. for the day. People danced in the evenings to oldtime and modern music. And everybody enjoyed cheese sandwiches for lunch.

During the mid-1930s, Cheese Day boosters began visiting nearby communities with a street program to tout the big all-day event in South Lewis County. They generated publicity with their caravans to Centralia, Chehalis, Loringview, Kelso, Winlock, Vader, Ryderwood, Salkum and Mossyrock. The 1935 event featured a hillbilly band, novelty costumes, old-time dances, yodeling, a merry-go-round and a Ferris wheel. Volunteers slapped together sandwiches with butter, mayonnaise and 210 pounds of cheese for lunch.

The 1936 Cheese Day featured a performance by the award-winning 45-piece Carbon Glacier VFW boys and girls drum and bugle corps in addition to the cheese sandwiches, baseball game, wrestling matches, tennis tournament and dancing.
Then, in June 1937, Cheese Day expanded to a three-day celebration running Friday through Sunday under the sponsorship of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post, which took over from the Toledo Commercial Club, according to an April 2, 1937, Chehalis Bee-Nugget article.

The governors of Oregon and Washington were the scheduled speakers at that Cheese Day, according to the June 18, 1937, Chehalis Bee-Nugget. At the time, the two states both had Democratic governors with the surname of Martin—Washington Gov. Clarence D. Martin (1933 to 1941) and Oregon Gov. Charles H. Martin (1935 to 1939). Schmitt’s big carnival concessions set up for the weekend, with entertainment, sports events including the traditional Cheesemakers baseball game, and dancing.

Cheese Day was suspended during World War II, even though the cheese factory continued operating. However, it quit producing cheese and focused instead on selling butter and powdered milk. After a fire destroyed the factory, Karlen operated a locker and cold storage plant, according to The Toledo Community Story.

In 1945, Karlen closed the plant, in part because of competition from larger coops and lack of marketing capabilities, The Toledo Community Story states.

In April 1948, the newly organized Toledo Lions Club decided to resurrect Cheese Day, which had last taken place in June 1941. The club scrambled to organize the event in two months, but it proved a success. It remained a one-day event until the club added a logging show and expanded it to three days in the early 1950s. At its peak, about 4,000 or more people attended the Cheese Day Loggers Jamboree and Cheese Day Ball.

The 1952 Cheese Day event featured a big thaw-guessing contest. Organizers hoisted a 300-pound block of ice on the scales on top of Ted Ziegler’s service station, with a clock set to stop when the ice melted to a weight of fifty pounds. The person who guessed closest to the minute when the clock stopped won one hundred collars, according to the Daily Chronicle’s June 4, 1952, edition. Other events were fireworks at the Cowlitz River, boat races, a carnival, free airplane rides, two dances and crowning of Mr. Big Cheese. As the Big Cheese, Clyde Calvin mounted a white stallion, shouted “Hi-Ho Silver,” and led the parade through the city to the school grounds.

In 1953, when the theme focused on the Washington Territorial Centennial, the Lions Club added a logging jamboree to the planned entertainment. Loggers competed in contests of speed and skill such as high climbing, log bucking bulldozing, cable splicing, falling, and trailer backing. Candidates for 1953 Mr. Big Cheese were Kenny Ray, Elmer Hayaranen, Toad Washburn, and Bill Walrod.

Sam Woody won the Big Cheese honor in 1954. But the following year, instead of a Big Cheese, organizers started crowning a Cheese Day queen, described by the Daily Chronicle as Miss Cheesecake contenders. First to hold that honor was Carol Kaiser. The queen’s Cheese Day cup remained displayed at Toledo’s National Bank of Washington branch during the summer but was moved in September to the school Kaiser attended, St. Mary’s Academy near the Cowlitz Mission.

Events added to three-day Cheese Day celebration in the 1950s were a farm show with bale breaking, sack sewing, wild pig catching, wagon backing and the mayor’s milking contest. A logging show took place in the afternoon.
A Scottish pipe band played in 1957, but by then organizers had dropped the logging show. Always people enjoyed free cheese sandwiches, but in 1959, the Lions Club decided against holding a parade—perhaps a hint of what was to come.

In 1961, the Lions Club had pared back the event to two days, but included the parade, a dunk tank, and wrestling exhibitions. But afterward the club voted to quit sponsoring Cheese Day and focus instead on fixing up the community park and other projects.

They waited in vain for another group to step forward as sponsor. Instead, the community planned to skip the festival in 1962 … but nobody notified the carnival and some of the concessionaires who started setting up for a Cheese Day event not yet planned.

“Cheese Day leaders jumped and staged the celebration, and, remarkably enough, it turned out to be quite a success,” the Daily Chronicle reported October 10, 1966.

Then Cheese Day truly died.

That is, until the Toledo Jaycees decided to bring it back in 1975. With the theme “Old Days Are Not Forgotten,” the Jaycees revived the traditional three-day celebration, but in July rather than in June. It featured a parade, children’s games, a logging show at the high school football field, an old-time fiddlers’ jamboree, baseball game and dance. Candidates for Big Cheese were Myrtle Ferrier, a longtime resident active in the community; Leonard Enger, retired grocer; George Murdock, acting Toledo school superintendent; and Raleigh Stone, who operated the hardware store. Ferrier, who won the title, rode in a fire truck in the parade. She crowned the Cheese Day queen in 1976, the year Mike Morgan, Jim Berry, and Denny Clark designed and built a float depicting a replica of the steamboat Toledo.

The Toledo Lions Club soon resumed organizing Cheese Days and continue to do so today.

As Cheese Days evolved over four decades, reports of the event’s beginnings changed so that by the mid-1960s, organizers and the newspapers reported the first public Cheese Day took place in 1920, rather than June 15, 1919.

Eighty years after that first Cheese Day, a photograph snapped by a reporter spread news about Toledo’s historic celebration across the nation via the Associated Press. The photo showed seven-year-old Derek Comstock biting into his cheese sandwich, one of more than 1,000 made that year, and appeared July 13, 1999, in both the Times-News of Twin Falls, Idaho, and the Arizona Daily Star in Tucson.

The Big Cheese didn’t become an official and consistent part of the event until 1985. Since then, the Cheese Day program has featured biographies of the Big Cheeses, described in early programs as senior citizens seventy-five or older who have lived in the area most of their lives and dedicated many hours to community service. In later years, the focus has been less on age and more on service to the community. The Big Cheeses serve as grand marshals of the Cheese Day parade.

The Toledo Historical Society and Chapters of Life have assembled thirty-four years of Toledo’s big cheese biographies into their new book “The Big Cheeses of Toledo 1985-2019.” The Big Cheeses of Toledo and the newly updated Toledo Community Story books are available to purchase from the Toledo Historical Society and other local retailers.