“A Fare Thee Well” (250 words)

By Thomas Bauschke

Front and center sits 83-year-old Elaine Lindstrom. She sports a fresh hair-do which makes her look like George Washington on a one-dollar bill. Students wave bills and snicker, testing fate. Elaine’s arthritic right index finger holds legendary powers of devastation. Men lose wives and even careers to the social wrath of accusations from that crooked, merciless finger. The town of Friday Harbor stays on her good side.

“We will now accept public comment,” announces the mayor.

“I need parking for my new bed and breakfast,” someone says.

“Ferry landing upgrades require more space,” says another newcomer.

From heavy construction to law enforcement, native island women do everything men do. The monument issue, however, is clearly women’s work—specifically war widows.

Elaine stands slowly and wields her finger. “You will move that memorial over my dead body.”

“Motion the War Memorial stay where it is,” bellows alderman Herb Getz.

“Second!” shrieks alderman Betty Parker.

“Motion to leave the memorial where it is,” the mayor calls. “All in favor?”

“AYE!” the board exclaims.

“Motion carries,” pronounces the mayor, to sparse applause. “The San Juan County War Memorial shall remain at the waterfront on Spring Street.”

“Eleven seconds this time,” Herb whispers to Betty.

Gathering her cane, Elaine limps one block down to the waterfront and touches the monument.

“They tried to move you again,” she sighs, “but I didn’t let them.”

A tarnished plaque on the memorial has nine names inscribed. At the bottom reads Duane E. Lindstrom MIA May 7, 1945.