The one who Shook up City Beach

By Hannah Combs and Chris Corpus

for his town's cool waters. He cobbled together monetary donations and marshaled volunteer labor to create the first city bathing beach.

Young Vernon Shook didn’t let anything stand in the way of his ambitions to become an engineer or doctor — not even bathing beach in the Inland Northwest, complete with a swimming hole and a vision to make it a part of the money for college. One was Northern Pacific Railroad land for a bath house. It evolved to become known to have the best the Great Depression. Upon graduating from fine bath house. It evolved back to his childhood swim-Periodic improvements took place over the next few years, that would change Sandpoint but in 1939, a major renovation that took place thanks to financial assistance and labor through the Works Progress Administration. The entire beach area was dredged to fend off the soil and danced around submerged logs that had escaped during log drives. Drownings occurred at the south end of the sandy area where the river houseboats were removed and started because of the swift currents. In addition to the bath the annual summer Salish gatherings, Shook’s vision for City and prompted the building of Beach included a safe swim-Cabinet Gorge and Albeni Falls swimming lessons for children was rerouted for the safety of the beachgoers, and more dredging dents to enjoy. His exuberance for an improved boat marina also included a 12-foot tower to provide some of the fill needed so lifeguards could see all the ed to raise the land area even swimmers, and — of course — higher. take a periodic high dive into After Shook’s impassioned the deep waters.efforts to create the first public and the club’s Fourth of July events centered on the beach. Today, thank goodness, the lifeguards continue their fine work. As for Shook, he went on to have a long career in social work, and was assigned by the United Nations as chief of the Displaced Persons Program in Rome following World War II. Even off the beach, he was still helping struggling people find their way safely home.

Top: An old map of Sandpoint City Beach.
Right: Vernon Shook was beach manager at Sandpoint City Beach in July 1932 when this photo was taken during a water safety program. Shook is kneeling at left of circle. Photos courtesy Bonner County History Museum.

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