



(Staff photos by Gordon King)

Nonie Burns and her grandson, Cole Burns, visited the Gleed library Thursday afternoon to pick out more books for Cole. His favorite books are those about trains.

Storied tradition

After 40 years, Gleed's library is losing its home

By CRAIG TROIANELLO
Of the Herald-Republic

GLEED — The door to the Gleed library has been open only a few minutes and already a handful of patrons are browsing the stacks.

A slight, gray-haired woman arrives and is greeted with a hug from librarian Kathy Pilgrim. Nearby, a man in a mechanic's outfit is searching the biography section.

If Hollywood created a rural library where operations are run on a shoestring and an armload of community help, the Gleed library might well be the result.

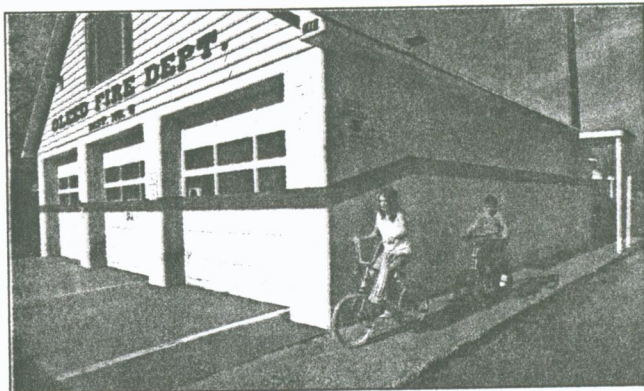
It's small. One room, in fact. There's nothing fancy, but the place is welcoming. Everything, from the chairs provided by the Lower Naches Women's Club to the tiny tot table built and donated by a local resident, speaks of hospitality and community support.

When patrons can't get to the library, Pilgrim sometimes will deliver books to their homes. She has run the library for 10 years. Before that her mother was librarian for 16 years.

But after 40 years in a room in the back of the Gleed fire station, the library faces an uncertain future. The library must find a new home by December, after the fire station moves into a new \$850,000 station a few blocks away now under construction.

So far the search has been discouraging.

Many residents believed the li-



Chelsea Blaine and Justin Bernhardt ride their bikes from the library after Blaine returned several books and picked up another Thursday afternoon. The Gleed library is housed toward the back end of the fire station.

brary would move with the fire station when voters approved the \$850,000 construction bond, said Nancy Richardson, library board member. But the library was not part of the ballot measure.

"It would have been nice to build a new library, but state auditors would have taken a real dim view," said Fire Chief Jim Kohl, whose mother was librarian in the 1950s.

Richardson said residents are ready and willing to undertake a fund-raising drive or otherwise help in a relocation effort. But any effort will remain in limbo until a new site can be found, she said.

One hope lies with the Yakima

County Sheriff's Office, which is searching for a location for an Upper Valley precinct.

If the building is acquired anything is possible, including allowing the library to remain, Sheriff Doug Blair said. But Blair warns that there's no assurances the building ever will be purchased by the county.

On Thursday, patrons filtered in and out of the library, seemingly oblivious to its problem. In one corner are cardboard books for the very young. Across the room are large-type books, often desired by older patrons. Elsewhere is a small selection of Spanish-language books. Basically the library contains everything a

larger one holds, but in fewer numbers.

Like its larger counterparts, the Gleed library holds a summer reading program for children. Patrons range from toddlers to senior citizens.

One man kept coming in to study the large-type texts, Pilgrim recalls.

"It took me a while to figure out what he was doing," she said. "Then I realized he was teaching himself to read."

More than 6,000 books are checked out of this tiny room each year, making it one of the busiest community libraries for its size in the Yakima Valley Regional Library system of 20 libraries, Pilgrim said.

The library is one of the system's six community libraries located in unincorporated areas. It is open just twice a week, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays.

Closure would hit some patrons harder than others. Some are physically unable to drive to other libraries, Richardson said.

"We would really hate to lose this," Richardson said. "It is so much a part of the community."

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People who know of a site in the Gleed area that could be used by the library may call librarian Kathy Pilgrim at 965-0928 during library hours (2 p.m. to 7 p.m., Mondays or Thursdays) or library board member Nancy Richardson at 966-5473.