

# Robert Rasmussen

## Ebey Slough Bridge 2002

### Bridge named after first tender

MARYSVILLE -- The Ebey Slough Bridge is 75 years old, but that's not too old to get a new name.

In an unofficial ceremony on the afternoon of Sept. 28, Washington State Secretary of Transportation, Doug MacDonald named it The Robert Rasmussen Ebey Slough Bridge.

The bridge crosses Ebey Slough and leads into Marysville on State Route 529.

Robert Rasmussen, Sr., a Danish immigrant, served as bridge tender, of the Ebey Slough Bridge for 33 years, from June 1, 1927 to June 30, 1960. He also worked as a mason during the construction of the bridge from Sept. 1, 1925, until May 1, 1927. In his spare time he helped the local farmers as a veterinarian.

"Grandpa was a very kind man and he was dedicated to his job," said Lynda Stanton, the wife of Rasmussen's grandson, Leonard Stanton. "He was known as 'Uncle Bob' to most of the residents. If any one needed help they would talk to Rasmussen."

Rasmussen was a dairy farmer in the Kellogg Marsh area before working on the bridge. His children and grandchildren grew up in Marysville. His son, Lewis, even served as a Marysville volunteer firefighter for 25 years.

Gerry Rasmussen, Robert Sr.'s grandson and Washington State Department of Transportation's graphic design manager, asked MacDonald for a piece of the bridge when it is taken down. "I asked him why he wanted a piece of the bridge," MacDonald said, "and he said that his grandfather had been the bridge tender. He said that his family always called it 'grandfather's bridge.'"

MacDonald suggested that the bridge be named after his grandfather.

MacDonald researched the requirements and discovered that it was a complicated procedure to name something. He decided "Why should that matter? We'd be naming a bridge that we're going to tear down."

Robert Jr. carries many memories about his father and the bridge. One particularly foggy day a canoe came down the slough. The owner of the boat blew a foghorn to warn other boats of its presence. Rasmussen, thinking it was a tug, opened the bridge. When he realized it was only a canoe, he shouted at the boater, telling him how much money it costs the state to open the bridge.

Sometimes Robert Sr. let his grandsons and their cousins sleep in the bridge-house while he was on duty. They would hear a tugboat whistle and run to the bridge before it opened, so that they could ride while it turned.

There is no plan to name the replacement bridge, a high-rise concrete span, after Rasmussen.

*Story from the Marysville Globe, Wednesday, October 2, 2002, Front page*

### Before it's torn down, bridge renamed for operator

Ebey Slough span on Highway 529 now honors its first tender

MARYSVILLE -- In 1927, Robert Rasmussen became the first tender of the Ebey Slough Bridge, starting a 33-year career of opening and closing the span for boat traffic.

Recently, when his grandson Gerry Rasmussen learned the bridge where his grandfather had worked for so many years was scheduled to be torn down, he asked if he could get a piece of the bridge as a memento.

State Secretary of Transportation Doug MacDonald thought he could do better.

MacDonald decided to add Robert Rasmussen's name to the bridge, which forms part of Highway 529 between Marysville and Everett.

"I started looking into it and found there are all these complicated rules for naming things," MacDonald said. "But why should that matter? We're naming a bridge that we're going to tear down."

In a ceremony Saturday, the bridge was renamed in honor of Robert Rasmussen, a former Marysville resident who died in 1971.

MacDonald presented Rasmussen's family with a plaque and a sign for the bridge that said the "Robert Rasmussen Ebey Slough Bridge."

Even though the name isn't official and the bridge will be torn down, Robert Rasmussen's family said they're honored.

"This is really great for someone who was just an ordinary working man, not a congressman or anything" said Rasmussen's son, Robert Rasmussen Jr. of Granite Falls.

He recalled coming home from World War II in 1946 and seeing his father for the first time at the bridge.

About 40 family members and friends attended the dedication, but they had something else to celebrate, too. Saturday was the 56th wedding anniversary of Robert Rasmussen Jr. and his wife, Jean.

"We've had a great day," Jean Rasmussen said.

*Story from the Everett Herald, Sunday, September 29, 2002, page B1*

In September 2002, former Transportation Secretary Doug MacDonald unofficially renamed the Ebey Slough Bridge in honor of Robert Rasmussen. Rasmussen worked as a mason on the SR 529 bridges from 1925 to 1927 and then served as one of the original bridge tenders. He retired in 1960 after a 33-year career at WSDOT.

529 SR 529 Ebey Slough Bridge

**Celebrating history,  
investing in the future.**

