



Lewiston ▲ Moscow

**We Protect Your American Dream!**



## OUR STORY: 100 years in the making

**We are launching our 100th Anniversary with a special 2022 Historic Calendar!**

On every page you will find historic pictures (some even embarrassing - eek!) and surprising stories. Read about the people who helped shape American Insurance and our communities, plus fun facts from history as we share our story. Also, each month throughout 2022 you will find important dates and invitations to customer appreciation events and celebrations with classic cars, office tours, lots of historic pictures, food, gifts and prizes. We are mailing one calendar to you but have extras available at your request.

Just give us a call at (208) 746-9646 or (208) 882-8544 or (800) 735-6355 and we will hold one for you at your nearest American Insurance office.

### Telling Our Story in 2022

Our historic calendar is just the beginning and provides only a brief history in pictures and captions that tell the tale from our Founder in 1922 through four generations of Sullivan ownership into our present day. Throughout 2022 we will expand each story featuring each generation that moved the insurance business ahead, each adding their own unique and different contributions. We call them the "Pioneers," the "Planter," the "Builders" and the "Growers" of the agency. These stories will be told in three more printed historic newsletters and online posts along with hundreds of historic pictures on our special website page [www.Am-Ins.com/100years](http://www.Am-Ins.com/100years). Each story will be announced by email, on Facebook, as well as through fun historic tidbits featured in the *Tribune*, KLEW-TV and on local radio stations.



**1ST GEN - PIONEERS**  
Harry & Blanche (Sullivan)  
Christy 1928 (pics) to 1960



**2ND GEN - PLANTER**  
Frank W Sullivan  
1946 (pic) to 1990



**3RD GEN - BUILDERS**  
Harry C. Sullivan & John B Sullivan  
1972 (pic) to 1996 / 1977 (pic) to 2022



**4TH GEN - GROWERS**  
Shawn D Sullivan & Philip J Sullivan  
1994 (pic) 2004 (pic)

### What does it take to last 100 years?

Perhaps a bit of luck! But for sure, it takes two things.....

- The time, talents, and hard work of excellent employees. We have featured pictures of office staff throughout our history. Each one was indispensable and added to any success we achieved, and
- The goodwill and loyalty of wonderful customers like you! "Thank you" for sharing your life with us and for your continued trust and support.

We count it a privilege to have touched the lives of thousands of our neighbors - as customers and employees, as claimants who receive needed insurance benefits, or as civic support and leadership to make our communities stronger. So, with a deep sense of gratitude we share our history with you.

**We wish you a Merry Christmas 2021 and Happy New Year 2022!**

John, Shawn and Philip Sullivan

### History Mysteries Quiz #1

Be in the first 100 people to answer these 4 questions correctly to receive a prize! (Hint: All answers can be found inside this newsletter.)

1. Who is the Founder of what was to become American Insurance?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What year was the founding of the Mackey-Thiessen Investment Co?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Harry and Blanche Christy purchased American Insurance in what year?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What phone number would you call to reach American Insurance in 1946?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**QUIZ SUBMITTED BY:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, ST ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail or drop off your completed quiz to:** American Insurance, 55 Southway Ave, Lewiston, ID 83501, or American Insurance, 604 E Washington St, Moscow, ID 83843 or text a picture of your completed quiz to 208-518-0823 or online at [www.Am-Ins.com/100years](http://www.Am-Ins.com/100years)

Prizes awarded to the first 100 correctly completed Quiz forms received. Must be 18 years old or older. Limit for Quiz 1 is one prize per person or household address. Notified winners must pick up their prize at an American Insurance office before March 31, 2022. Actual cash value of a prize will not exceed \$5.00 US. All entries entered for premium prize drawings at Anniversary BBQ events.

# FOUNDER: OM Mackey - How It All Began!



**This is a story we have not told before now.** It was told in detail in the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, The Elders / Oliver M. Mackey (published on Dec. 25, 1977), by Thomas W. Campbell. Tom interviewed OM Mackey in 1977 when he was 93 years old about his life and business ventures. In the article, Mackey is pictured at his home at 724 9th Ave in Lewiston as he sits by a picture window with his cat. He chats with old friends who drop by. Excerpts from the article are provided here combined with other history and perspectives for today's readers....

The year was 1919, it was 3 o'clock in the morning and Oliver M. Mackey had just alighted from a train at the Camas Prairie Railroad Depot (now the Train Station on Main Street in Lewiston).



Downtown train station photo courtesy Lewiston Historical Society

OM Mackey's mission in Lewiston was to look the place over and consider whether it would be a logical spot for a new bank. It was not in his mind to undertake a walking tour of the city at that hour, but he was met at the depot by an enthusiastic resident of the city, the late James E. Babb, a Lewiston attorney.

"We walked up and down the street," Mackey said. "We looked at the Bollinger Hotel and then we looked at the De France Hotel." Even in the darkness, Mackey concluded that Lewiston appeared to have a bright future and that he wouldn't mind being a part of it. "There was a sawmill coming and they were getting ready to build the Lewis-Clark Hotel," Mackey said. "I could just feel it." Mackey returned to Westville, Ill., a suburb of Danville, to report his findings to A.L. Lyons, his father-in-law.

**OM Mackey and A.L. Lyons chose Lewiston as a community full of opportunity for new growth. Their entrepreneurial vision over the next 45 years would lead to founding of American National Bank in 1920, the Mackey-Thiessen Investment company in 1922 which became American Insurance and Loan Co, and the Great Western Mutual Association in 1935, a life insurance company. They invested in building up the community with brick and mortar as well as time, talent and money in civic affairs.**

## AMERICAN NATIONAL BANK (changed in 1925 to AMERICAN BANK & TRUST CO)

The Lewiston bank was a joint venture of O.M. Mackey and his father-in-law, A.L. Lyons, who was a banker at Danville. The new Lewiston bank was located at 624 Main St. They opened their new bank on Aug. 16, 1920 to great success, calling it the American National Bank. Lyons was president and Mackey the cashier. "When it opened for business at 9 in the morning there were already 15 persons waiting at the door to make the first deposits. An excellent volume of business was done during the day and deposits were over \$50,000," reported the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*.

By 1927 the bank had financed and built the Carsow building, named after Dr. O.C. Carsow, an original investor in the bank, at 9th & Main Street in Lewiston. This became the home for American Bank & Trust

**More online!**  
 Read the original  
 Tribune article  
 and more about  
 OM Mackey at  
[www.Am-Ins.com/100years](http://www.Am-Ins.com/100years)

Co, American Insurance and Loan Co and various retail, service and professional offices. The bank was one of the few independent banks in the state that survived the Great Depression. Mackey was bank cashier until 1943, when he became president after the death of his father-in-law, A.L. Lyons.

## AMERICAN INSURANCE AND LOAN CO (former MACKEY-THIESSEN INVESTMENT CO.)

The vision of business opportunity caused OM Mackey to create the Mackey-Thiessen Investment Co. on Oct. 9, 1922 to explore the emerging opportunities of insurance and consumer loans. Influenced by the bank name, on Oct. 10, 1926, the name was changed to AMERICAN INSURANCE & LOAN CO. Then, late in 1927, the bank and insurance operations were moved (*see next page*)



*The building design was influenced by the recent building of the Lewis Clark Hotel in 1922 and had Spanish tile fascia and arched windows. The bank was sold in 1955 to First Security Bank, who remodeled the building with marble siding and rectangular windows, as it looks to this day. First Security Bank sold the building to its present owner, Wells Fargo Bank, in 2000.*



## PIONEERS: Harry & Blanche (Sullivan) Christy



**1ST GEN - PIONEERS**  
**Harry & Blanche (Sullivan)**  
**Christy 1928 (pics) to 1960**

Our Agency was founded in 1922 as the Mackey-Thiessen Investment Co. and the name changed to American Insurance and Loan Co. in 1926. How the business came into the Sullivan family is the story of our agency "Pioneers," Harry and Blanche (Sullivan) Christy.

Harry W. Christy was born in 1890 on a farm near Arkansas City, Kan. The family later moved to Chandler, Okla., where he graduated from high school. He then received his teacher's certificate at the age of 18 and began his teaching career at Floris, Iowa. He served as principal of the Floris School before being appointed in 1915, at age 25, as president of Southern Iowa Normal School, the youngest college president in the nation at that time. He met Blanche Sullivan in Floris and they were married on March 15, 1917.

About a month later, America entered the Great War and

Harry resigned from his college position to volunteer for officer's training. He then served in active combat in the artillery during the WWI and earned the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 1919, after the war, he returned to the Stanwood Schools in Iowa and continued as Superintendent until 1926. But, the big guns of WWI had made him nearly deaf which made teaching and administration of a school difficult.

*At the urging of a friend, Harry decided to leave his education career in Iowa to pursue new opportunities in the great Northwest. So, in 1926 with his wife, Blanche (Sullivan) Christy and two children, Roger and Harriet Ruth, they headed out west for a business opportunity. With courage, hope and a pioneering spirit, they first came to Lewiston.*

Soon after arriving in Lewiston, Harry took a job opportunity in banking as a cashier, in a then thriving Starbuck, Wash. (Think Jimmy Stewart in the film classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*). Although successful, Harry still hadn't found what he really wanted until he heard through his banking connections two years later that American Bank & Trust Co. was selling their

insurance and personal loan operation. Harry left the Bank of Starbuck and moved back to Lewiston to buy an interest in American Insurance & Loan Co. from O.M. Mackey on Aug. 15, 1928. Here, Harry and Blanche Christy staked their claim and worked side by side, building a successful insurance business and making personal loans. Harry did the sales and Blanche did the clerical work. Harry was also busy with civic activities. His favorite endeavor was supporting the Boy Scouts of America which he began doing in 1917 and continued until 1968 when he was recognized for 50 years of service. Harry was also very active (see next page)

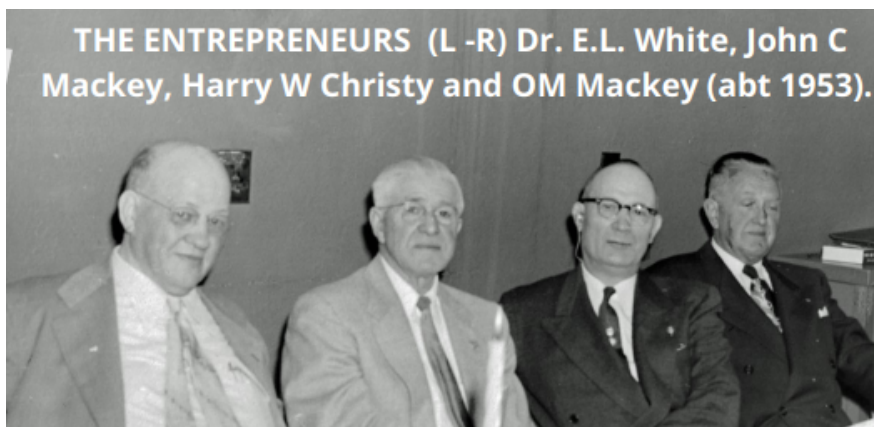


Shown at left: An ad found in the Tribune from 1/20/1946

### ... More on OM Mackey (from page 2)

into the new Carssow Building at 9th and Main Streets (current home of Wells Fargo Bank) where the two businesses operated side by side. A year later, on Aug. 15, 1928 an interest in AMERICAN INSURANCE was sold to an Iowa transplant, Harry Christy and his wife, Blanche Sullivan Christy (Frank "Sully" Sullivan's aunt). So began the first generation of Sullivans to own and operate the agency.

OM Mackey died three years after his 1977 Tribune interview at the age of 96. As a resident of Lewiston, Mackey was deeply involved in the city's business and civic life. He was the past president of the Lewiston Chamber of Commerce, President of the Idaho Banking Assoc, Idaho representative to the National Banking Association, a charter member of the Lewiston-Clarkston Kiwanis Club, and past Exalted Ruler of the Lewiston Elks Lodge.



# BETTY REIMLER KNOPES: Memories of working for the Christys



**Betty Reimler Knopes found herself in a photo advertisement framed at the American Insurance office and told us her story.**

She started working at American Insurance in 1948 at the age of 16, just after she had graduated high school.

Harry Christy taught her how to collect past due loans and premium payments due to the Agency. "He taught me to do a lot of things," she said. By opening a window to listen to her phone calls, he helped her learn her position. She said that by learning about collections, she learned how to talk to people about paying their bills.

***She demonstrated a mock phone call with a wry smile, "Yes, I'm sorry that your house burned down, your son broke his leg and your wife left you, but I still need to talk with you about making your payment."***



**Betty shown in an ad found in the Tribune from August 1948**

She shared that people didn't make excuses, but some even came in to meet her in person. "I had people come by and thank me for being so nice to them." Betty also took letter dictations from Mr. Christy.

"He sent about 40 to 50 letters a day and they were typed on a manual typewriter," she said. Because each letter had to be PERFECT, to the letter, with no erasures back then, she very quickly learned how to not make any mistakes. "I got a good background on stuff like that and I had an excellent learning position for my first office job. Mr. Christy taught me there's more than one way to do things. He was a former teacher and would explain things. He was a good guy."

Betty said, "Blanche (Christy) was a doll, we used to exchange recipes and she reminded me of my mom – she was built just the same way as my mom was."

While at American Insurance she also worked with Thelma Jean Clay and Barbara McCowan Campbell, who was her mentor in PE in high school. She worked beside Frank "Sully" Sullivan as well. He brought in his little boy, Harry, who was not yet elementary school age. She only worked for Harry and Blanche Christy for about 18 months. "I planned to quit in a year after I was married. But they called me to come back. Later, when I was expecting my baby, then I was done to raise my family," she said.

**Betty Reimler Knopes turned 90 years old this past September. When asked, how has American Insurance protected her American dream, she said that there was a fire in her early childhood home at the age of 11. The fire caused her to be cautious about her electrical plugins even today. She knows the importance of protecting her home in the event of such a fire. Betty insures her home at American Insurance and has been a customer for more than 50 years.**

Find more history and photos online at [www.Am-Ins.com/100years](http://www.Am-Ins.com/100years) all through the year.

## Harry & Blanche Christy (from page 3)



**1939 Office Staff (L to R): Harry W. Christy, Helen Pavel, Isabella Robertson, Margarette Hoffman, Mary Bell, Jo Gabby, and Harriet Ruth Christy (daughter).**

in the Lewis-Clark Post of the American Legion, serving as Post Commander in 1937 and 1938. He was Idaho State Commander of the Idaho Disabled Veterans in 1939 and was state commander of the American Legion in 1940-42. Harry was also active in the Lewiston-Clarkston Kiwanis Club, the Lewiston Elks Lodge, the Masonic Lodge and the Greater Lewiston Chamber of Commerce.

The business grew, even during the Depression 30s, and they added staff and agents. They hired Blanche's nephew, Frank W. Sullivan, in 1946 following his return from service in WWII. Other agents hired were Dan Emery and Von Prideaux. Harry and Blanche retired in 1957 and sold an interest in the business to Frank "Sully" Sullivan, representing the second generation of Sullivan ownership.

When asked about his successes, Harry said that he turned his hearing loss into an asset as an insurance salesman because... "I couldn't hear the word 'no!'"