

History On The Hill

The Newsletter of the South Hill Historical Society

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HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Modern immigrants benefit South Hill

By Debbie Burtnett

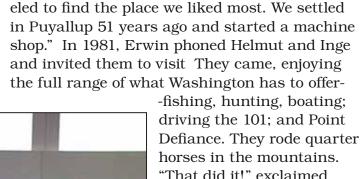
Immigration is again a hot-button election year issue. Arguably, the reason people want to come here to America is the reason we all stay [even when we complain about our problems]—opportunity. Immigrants in the late 19th and

early 20th centuries entered through either Ellis Island on the East Coast or Angel Island on the West Coast seeking their fortunes; fulfilling dreams; joining families; and living a better life through freedom. Usually, they had little or no money, education, but many had skills. However, one South Hill couple emigrated with all three of these 'blessings.' Helmut and Inge Rieder arrived via Sea-Tac International Airport.

All in the family

Many immigrants come to
North America for opportunity. Helmut's cousin,
Erwin Kettner, well-known in Puyallup and Tacoma, urged the couple to come to America and
start a business. Erwin and family emigrated
from Germany over fifty-one years ago.

Erwin Kettner was apprenticed to Siemens as a machinist after World War II in occupied Germany. He made contact with an American colonel who eventually became a close family friend. Erwin and his family decided "to come to America." Erwin first emigrated to Toronto, Canada, and after one year, "bought a motor home and trav-



horses in the mountains. "That did it!" exclaimed
Helmut. It took about a year
to convince Inge 's family that she should move
to America "breaking a
500-year-old tradition of
running the family hostel."

In 1982, the Rieders arrived in America on visas. Yet, it took over 15 years for them to earn the necessary "green cards." [A 'green card' bestows permanent U.S. residency status, allow-

ing the immigrant the freedom to live and work; leave the country and return; seek employment; matriculate, etc. It is valid for ten years and issued by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly the INS)—now the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)]. Their first business venture was a travel agency promoting "adventure vacations for Europeans"—*Golden West Coast*—closed during the 1983 recession. They returned to Germany in 1986, but came back for good in 1990 and "settled on South Hill." They created a business and employed not only family members but the



Helmut & Inge Rieder

people here. Inge noted that when they "put energy into property—building something—it was easier to get a green card."

Like most entrepreneurs, Helmut "started from zero" but founded a huge business in laundry. "I used my background and knowledge to go after the big laundry users such as hospitals and large hotel chains," said Rieder. "Then, the government noticed my work—its efficiency." One German newspaper wrote of Helmut in its headline: "Good Money with Dirty Laundry" describing his success. The article got him into talks with mayors of cities with large hospitals; generals in military hospitals, etc. Hence, the next connection to South Hill development—Rieder's enterprises near Good Samaritan Hospital, including the laboratory/physician building known as the Rieder Medical Building and the newly completed Meridian Rehabilitation Center.

Background

Unlike most immigrants, Helmut arrived with a degree in Chemical and Textile Engineering. Inge's education included her degree in Tourism and Hotel Management. Together, they ran a 500-year-old Bed 'n Breakfast in Austria. They took that business and created a hostel/ski resort, which they sold at a profit several years later, along with the sale of businesses owned by Helmut in Munich.

This was part of the seed money for the venture on South Hill. Helmut was also inventor of a process in dry-cleaning which recycled the cooling water for the dry-cleaning machine—saving money and the environment over 39 years ago. Next, he created a chain of dry cleaners, and after only six years, owned the largest franchise in Munich in Bavaria. His company, TEX Aktien Corporation, centralized the dry-cleaning process for large businesses such as hotels, hospitals, and the military. Although Helmut was recruited by major companies and the German government, he opted for the opportunity to come to the United States and try something new.

Arabella—their first project on the Hill, 1992

That 'something new' evolved into Rieder Construction whose Arabella development was on South Hill. Located at 139th

Street Court East and Meridian across from the old Firgrove School, *Arabella* was a twenty unit ("duplex-houses") community including the home in which he and Inge lived. As developer and general contractor, Rieder incorporated European quality and design into his buildings at *Arabella*. Amenities included a gated entry as well as brickwork; lighting, landscaping including a pond and waterfall; and a private executive golf course. "Golf is my hobby," explains Helmut.

And, as in European families, the Rieders taught their son the business. Florian Rieder "installed his first sprinkler system at age 16, an irrigation system that passed inspection!" Today, Florian does much of the general contracting of Rieder Construction.

Inge named their custom home development Arabella after Richard Strauss' main character from his opera of the same name. Inge also proudly points out that the "second vessel to land in America after the Mayflower was the Arabella." Together, the Rieders designed a coat of arms that represented their partnership in work and life—blue and white argyle checks with Helmut's insignia next to Inge's signature red on the other half of the shield; golf clubs behind the shield and Mt. Rainier and evergreens atop the logo for Arabella. The development set back on Meridian when it was only a two-lane road with trees right up to the pavement. Since then, the space between the housing development and Meridian was developed into a business park in 1995. Many of the original businesses—including their first medical building housed orthopedics, physical therapy, and a foot and ankle clinic.

A dream realized

Helmut wanted to build another medical building and drove Meridian up and down to find just the right property—at 1803 South Meridian. The building has served as a physical therapy office; an urgent care center; and houses Mary Bridge facilities today.

Following up this success, two more medical buildings are located on the Good Samaritan campus. The first, Rieder Medical Building, houses women's specialists; a neurology group; internists; a family practice; and a laboratory. The structure, totaling 30,000 sq. ft. with park-

ing, has served patients since 2006.

Under the supervision of Florian Rieder, an 8,000 sq. ft. facility totally leased by Meridian Rehabilitation Center—was formally dedicated June 1. Services offered in the European style facility include physical therapy; chiropractic; both a large and smaller pool for underwater therapy treatments; a massage therapist; examination rooms; and gym equipment. There is a spa on site. In 2008, the Rieders sold *Arabella* Business Park, but maintain close contacts with the owners of the businesses and friends living in the duplexes.

A love story and partnership

Helmut first saw "this beautiful girl on the sidewalk, approaching her car" upon leaving a business on the main street in an Austrian ski village. It was "love at first sight" and he knew that if he didn't get her name, they might not meet again. After refusing his offer of coffee, Inge drove in a snowstorm to her family's home in the Austrian Alps. Helmut followed, even cleaning her windshield of snow at one stop. He managed to attend her family's dinner and they "checked him out." It wasn't long before Inge was in love, too.

The Rieder's path to success was not easy. Helmut's father was threatened with Dachau for failing to salute Adolf Hitler, and forced to serve in the German Sixth Army. He was sent to the Russian Front in Moscow, and taken prisoner. He didn't know his father until he was five—after his father escaped the gulag and walked home from Siberia. It took one year for that 'walk.' Inge had to leave her family behind in Austria, breaking with hundreds of years of family tradition of inheriting property and running a hostel.

Sharing European culture

The Rieders are involved in both Tacoma and South Hill organizations that allow them to share their European culture. In the early 1990s, they served as hosts several years for the annual *Oktoberfest* Celebration. They hired authentic German musicians, the band "Happy Hans" and a dance ensemble, "Enzian Schuhplattler." Inge trained the Tacoma Yacht Club's chefs in cooking both German and Austrian dishes.

They wear their authentic Bavarian dress and enjoy Austrian music at cultural functions. The Corks & Crush Fundraiser for Good Samaritan Hospital charities feature these authentic dinners held in their home—key "live auction" items enjoyed several times over by bidders since the beginning of the fundraiser featuring Washington wines. Inge was recently named to the Board of the Northwest *Sinfonietta* (in Tacoma), a group known for "one of the premier music experiences in the Northwest." The Rieders are naturalized American citizens.



Father & son team, Florian & Helmut Rieder, at the Rieder Medical Building site on Good Samaritan Hospital campus.

Old riding stable's days numbered



The old Valley Riding Club/Stecker's Stable at 122nd AV & 128th ST is being sold by *Better Properties* Real Estate. The 5.98 acre site is zoned residential. During our ice storm last winter, about a third of the metal roof caved in, as seen to the left of the photo above. The barn's wood and sheet metal roofing are being sold prior to demolition. We have references going back to 1946 for the club, any further member info would be appreciated.

February General Meeting

By Debbie Burtnett

Lee Van Pevenage, member of a pioneer South Hill family whose ancestral roots are in Belgium, addressed the Society in February.

The Van Pevenages emigrate

Lee's great-grandfather was born in Everbeek, Belgium, in 1870. In 1903, he and wife Adele, Emile, and Albert emigrated to the United States, landing at Ellis Island September 14, 1903, after a nine-day voyage. Lee said he has a copy of the ship's manifest where immigrants were asked three questions:

Do you have \$50?

Do you have syphilis?

Do you have a sponsor

with whom you will be staying?

One needed to reply in the affirmative to two of the questions; and a "no" to the illness question to get into the country. The family settled in Rich Hill, Missouri, and is documented in a 1910 census. They remained there until sometime before 1914, at which time they "moved to Breezy Hill, Kansas, where my dad was born on March 25th, 1914." Lee's father sent a letter from Pleasanton, Kansas, to his grandparents and aunt and uncle living in the

Puyallup area, asking them for train fare so he could come out to Washington. The fare was \$7.50. Although Lee stated that "I don't know the exact date my great-grandparents moved to Washington, but it was sometime around 1928. My father traveled by himself via train in 1928 to Puyallup. A short time later, my grandmother and grandfather moved to Puyallup. The entire family settled as a group. Staying together meant the family remained "close knit."

Lee's grandparents purchased property at the top of Meridian, a tract of seven acres which was lost to Highway 512 when it came through. "An uncle, John, bought a home with seven acres

on the west side of Meridian, just four houses north of my grandparents. On the other side of Meridian, right across from my grandparents, my Uncle Albert Van Pevenage owned a home and 20 acres about where Home Depot is located today. When eminent domain took the grandparents' property, they moved next to 9th and 97th where my aunt lived on ten acres," explained Lee. "My grandparents' property is where Target is located today."

Lee commented that you didn't have to have a lot of money to buy farm land, and his parents purchased a seven acre farm in 1955 on Andrian Road, now 79th, where they remained until 1963. His father bid on property on 80th-and got the property for \$3,000. "The problem

was, my dad didn't have the money and banks wouldn't lend him money for 45 acres, so he went to his cousin, making a 'handshake deal'." It was unfortunate that the 'deal' was off with his cousin. which angered his father. Therefore, another deal was struck—his father got 25 acres (or 49 lots) which was known as Cedar Crest Estates and put in wiring and phone, etc., at a cost of \$7,000, or approximately \$138 per lot. He built homes there, including one for himself and a couple for other family members.

The lots in Van Estates sold for \$2,000-\$3,000, which fronted 80th Avenue East.

Lee Van Pevenage, member of a pioneer South Hill family whose roots are in Belgium.

Lee shared several lessons learned during these years. At age 11 in 1955, he recognized the unity that his family "had and still have...we'd gather at Christmas...and other times...we had a great family background." He also learned the value of ancestors. "Had I taken the time to know my grandfather better, I should have talked to him more...recorded more." And, after an absence spanning 1968-78, he returned to the Hill. "I couldn't believe the Hill when I came back. It still surprises me that we've put as much traffic as we have on Meridian, without

some foresight..."

Lee's comments about uncontrolled growth and the changes on the Hill generated discussion with several members who shared their experiences with him. The most important "take home" from Lee's memories and message is that we should talk to our parents, grandparents, and so on—record their memories and oral histories before they are gone. And, label those photos with names, dates, and locations for future generations..

March General Meeting

By Debbie Burtnett

South Hill Historical Society's oral interview



library increased by one more when Elizabeth (Hackett) Anema addressed the March General Meeting. Along with her were past speakers already recorded, Susan Beals and Deanna May.



Clockwise, Elizabeth (Hackett) Anema, Deanna May, Susan Beals

came to share their childhood experiences while growing up in the Woodland area. Elizabeth

Thev

spoke first. "I moved here in 1967 with my mom, dad, and brothers. I was in the fourth grade. I attended Firgrove Elementary for grades four, five and six; and the brand new Ballou Junior High for seventh, eighth, and ninth grades (1970-'73); and Rogers High School from 1974-'76."

"While in the same sixth-grade class with

Deanna, we watched the brand new junior high being built next door to Firgrove. Our class was the first group to go through Ballou Junior High [noting Bob Ballou is in this room!] and Art Larson was my principal (for 1974, '75 and '76) at Rogers. Mr. Larson is also in this room!"

"I recall it was the US Bicentennial the year my high school class graduated; and that event was referenced in our graduation activities." Recalling growing up on the Hill, Elizabeth stated that she and her friends "played hide-and-seek games in the neighborhood, picked berries along the Pipeline, rode bicycles, etc. The view of Mount Rainier, of course, was stunning from the Pipeline. We sometimes built forts in the woods near our houses. Back then, kids played outside more than they do today. (Children did not own video games, personal computers, hand-held MP3 players, etc.) My friends and I went for walks, learned to play musical instruments, and occasionally rode dirt bikes in 'the gravel pits' off of 94th Avenue."

Early businesses frequented by the girls and their families included the Wigwam Store, Safeway [downtown], Hi-Ho Shopping Center, and Sambo's Restaurant near the Fairgrounds. Elizabeth also recalled the Arctic Circle, a hamburger place, and the Brown Cow at 128th and Meridian. Best Buy's parking lot was the Big Scoop ice cream parlor. For school-clothes shopping, you had to get your parents to drive you to the Tacoma Mall, while others shopped at Elvin's or JC Penney's store in downtown Puyallup. The South Hill Mall had not been built." Elizabeth and other members remembered that the corner of 112th and Meridian had only the Mega Foods opposite the Big Scoop, the Piggly Wiggly, and a gas station. This corner now offers thirty-five businesses. "A lot of the old businesses are gone now. Tiffany's roller skating rink (downtown) is still here. The South Hill area, in 1976, was not built up yet. Meridian was not the commercialized, congested area that it has become since the 1980s," she added.

Elizabeth continued, "The Puyallup School District provided free tickets to the Fair on a school day, once each year [now it's only one-half day officially]. For elementary-aged kids it was a tradition to choose a special friend to ask to go

to the Fair; and was a big highlight of each Fall. In the summertime, we went on any family outings. We occasionally took picnic lunches out to Clear Lake in Eatonville. The swimming area had a 30' diving tower from which my brothers and I loved to jump into the cool lake water. South Hill was a wonderful place to explore."

Susan Beals was reticent about speaking to the group, but Principal Larson reminded her of the speech class requirement at Ballou. "Use the skills learned there!" Susan commented on the area's growth. "Having two grocery stores was pretty exciting." She also attended Ballou and Rogers and remembered that when Ballou was new, "There was no bell system yet for changing classes so someone used an air horn to let us know when to change classes... the lighting was terrible, and the choir room was one of the last rooms to be finished."

Susan recalled playing on ten acres of land. "In those days, we lived as in a park on 144th Street...trails went across the road up to the Massie place." Don Glaser called these girls his "second daughters" as they were friends with his daughter, Patti.

Deanna and Elizabeth met in the 1970s and feel they "have known each other our entire lives." All recalled activities outside of school such as "going to church in Tacoma and belonging to school groups such as Spanish Club and Pep Club," said Susan. Deanna recalled "riding bikes in Alderwood Estates and another development without houses that gave us new roads to skate on." Susan remembered ice skating on local ponds "where 144th dipped down" and took a graduation trip to Europe and met up with friends there.

Elizabeth Anema summed up the girls' experiences growing up on South Hill: "We have fond memories of our childhoods there."

Newsletter Proofreaders Needed!

Contact Jerry Bates 253-759-4601 jerrybates@mac.com

April General Meeting

By Jerry Bates

All about the Meeker Mansion

Our speaker for April was Andy Anderson of the Meeker Society. Andy is also a member of our Society. He and his wife Ruth live in Sunrise Terrace here on the Hill.



Andy Anderson

Andy has been a member of the Meeker Society for many years and has a detailed knowledge of the Meeker Mansion restoration effort. Andy is a noted local historian, along with his wife Ruth, (Ruth, co-authored the book *Puyallup A Pioneer Paradise*). Andy writes monthly articles for the *Puyallup Herald* focusing on Puyallup's history. He was recently appointed by the city of Puyallup to serve on the Committee for Historical Preservation and Design Review.

Andy gave us a multimedia presentation loaded with images of the Mansion's restoration, and rare early photos, along with his narrative of the early years of the mansion, and the restoration up to the present.

The Mansion

Ferrell and Darmer, Tacoma Architects, designed the Meeker Mansion; it took three years to build, completed in 1890. No known blueprints or plans for the original structure have survived, just an architect's sketch of the house. Ezra Meeker, our local hop king (among many other achievments) had the mansion built at his wife's urging.

Andy discovered the earliest picture yet to turn up of the mansion, taken in 1889. The image shows the mansion still under construction. This early panorama photo of the area around the Mansion shows among other buildings, the Park Hotel, never finished due to the panic of 1893.

The house was finished enough to move into about 1890. Except for the side entrance, pictures of the original interior of the house have yet to be found—not much help to the restoration effort. Answers would be found in other ways.

Meeker moved out of the house in 1912, after Mrs. Meeker died. The house had been for sale since 1903. It was built for her and he felt no desire to stay there. Just prior to this 1906-1908 at age 75 he had walked, with his covered wagon, from Puyallup to Independence, Missouri, then made his way to Washington D.C. by way of New York City—his individual effort to preserve and promote the rapidly disappearing Oregon Trail. The journey took him over two years. Meeker thought this was to be his last important act before he died, little knowing that he had many years left—he died at age 98.

The old house served as Puyallup's first hospital, later becoming a retirement home for widows and orphans of the Civil War, 1915 to 1948. Over the years additions to the house were added.

Nursing Home years

After 1948, about five different sets of doctors ran the house as a nursing home, over time, selling the land around it, even the land it sat on. The last owners gave the house away, cheaper than having it torn down, so there it stood. Efforts to move it were not feasible so its destruction was imminent.

The Meeker Society was formed to save the old house. At the time such an effort was unique, making the donation drive "easier" than it would be today "with many causes wanting our attention and money," said Andy. The house at that

time—1970—was an ugly eyesore. The original architectural details had been stripped from the exterior, and the outside walls covered with gray asbestos tiles, popular in the 1950s.

Original interior hidden from view

Andy showed the interior photographs taken before the restoration started. Ceilings had been lowered, walls covered in layers upon layers of paint, wallboard or plywood. Fortunately, the old house revealed its secrets. The original interior surfaces were hidden under the layers of remodeling efforts of years past, exposing original wainscoting, for example. Better covered over than stripped out. The original, hand-painted ceilings were under thirteen coats of paint that had to be tediously removed, using Q-tips and denatured alcohol. The original ceiling plaster had to be reinforced, using screws to strengthen the attachment to the old lath, then the ceiling refinished with new plaster. The original trellis vines were hand-painted on to decorate the ceiling as done originally. Some said these were hop vines.

Most of the restoration money is spent on things not visible, like roofing and a heating system that cost \$80,000. But improvements keep being made that are visible also, as Andy said, "to keep people coming back."

Andy explained how the cost of restoration has sky-rocketed in just the last two years, with new EPA regulations for lead paint removal. Such paint was used up to 1972. Removing the old lead paint has to be done by out-of-state contractors, who cover an entire structure in three layers of plastic—workers in moon-suits must be constantly monitored by an on-site inspector. Such a process would cost the Meeker Society \$150,000!

Ending his presentation, Andy urged us to split our loyalties and join the Meeker Society, as he and our Society's Vice President, Hans Zeiger, have done.

The Meeker Society's main events throughout the year, include their Mother's Day Tea, Fourth of July Ice Cream Social and the Cider Squeeze in early October.

South Hill Historical Society at Karshner Museum Family Days

By Debbie Burtnett



Ellie and Natalie Anderson, great-grand-daughters of Clint Williams, an early homesteader on South Hill, enjoyed learning about pioneer history at Karshner Museum's Family Day recently. Kids get a chance to dress as pioneers and board the Karshner covered wagon. The Williams family has served on the Board of Firgrove Mutual Water since the 1970s and still live on part of their 100 acres owned since the 1950s.

Friends of Karshner Museum and Manager Beth Bestrom hosted students on Saturday, May 5, for "Preservation Day—Historical Inventions." Family Days correlate with the school year—beginning in October, ending in early June. Students from twenty elementary schools and one junior high attended Saturday's free event, the next to last for the year. "This was the biggest crowd we've had all year...when I arrived, they were lined up at the door," stated Beth. The visitors enjoyed freshly churned butter served on homemade bread; homemade ice cream; popcorn; and real lemonade while touring the exhibits, trying on pioneer clothing, and creating works of art with docents. The computer lab was

also available to students. The General Store sold pioneer children's toys and other museum items to support future programs.

Later, Beth was able to confirm that attendance was indeed the "largest turnout ever in the history of the Museum. Our next family day is June 2, and the theme is "Air, Space and Things That Fly," she added. Friends of Karshner Museum (founded 1988) and student volunteers helped with the program, at which the South Hill Historical Society displayed the North Fork of the Oregon Trail artwork and maps.

The museum serves as a memorial to young Paul Karshner, son of Dr. and Mrs. Warner Karshner, who died during his senior year at Puyallup High School. Paul had planned to become a physician like his father. After his tragic death from polio, his parents traveled the world, gathering artifacts for the exhibits which encourage students to interact and put "hands-on" the materials.

Woodland School Reunion

By Debbie Burtnett

Graduates of Woodland Elementary School met at Johnnie's in Fife on May 5 for their 23rd annual gathering to reconnect with friends and greet some new ones. Fifty-two people attended—up from last year's 35. This year, the oldest graduate attending was Bernice Fisher Rinehart.

How did the Woodland Elementary School reunion tradition begin? Dorothy Norris stated, "A group of women that graduated in 1935 met once a month [for years] and it took off from there...we decided to try a reunion. Early reunions might have as many as 100 guests, but that number began going down as people passed away and because the reunion rules limited classes through 1956. At that point, the Committee discussed disbanding, but Ruby P. Wilke wouldn't hear of it."

When Ruby passed away this past year, a committee comprised of Dorothy Swalander Norris, Karen Parks Day, Joan Parks Vosler, and W. Lynn Williams organized the event. "When we opened up the reunion to all Wood-

land Alumni, it made a big difference for increasing attendance," stated Dorothy. "This year alone, we lost six members—Terry Rhule, Ruby P. Wilke, Jean Parks Passmore, two former teachers, and Ernie Hayworth. Hopefully, younger graduates will keep the tradition going."

Joan Vosler enjoyed reminiscing with Patricia Goelzer. "We used to walk that 2 ½ miles to school on Pipeline Road together, up to Airport Road, and arrive at school…on gravel," recalled Joan. Joan thinks that the reunions "are successful because this was a closely knit group of parents, kids, and teachers…and it was really nice to see people again, hear the laughter, and feel the camaraderie." She also recalled the commitment of the community to the school. "Parents used to walk to PTA meetings by flashlight--how many parents would do that today?" she asked.

Currently, the group is reorganizing. For information on the future gatherings, contact any of the SHHS members mentioned above.

From the Treasurer

by Ben Peters

Welcome to our new member

Jean Ross

Please call, e-mail or write any change of address to me, Ben Peters, 253-845-7028, poppaben2002@yahoo.com, 14602 106th Avenue Court E., South Hill, WA 98374.

Also, don't forget that we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Dues, donations, etc., are fully deductible from your income taxes if you are able to do so. If you need a receipt for tax purposes, contact Ben.

Updated Roster Available

A printed roster including members' home and e-mail addresses, plus phone numbers is available upon request (*restricted to members only*). Call me—Ben Peters—at 253-845-7028.

Dues Reminder

I will attach a sticky note to the Society newsletter mailed closest to your renewal date. We welcome you to our monthly meetings. For more information, contact Paul Hackett at **(253) 845-7691**.

Our Current Members

Andy G. Anderson Olive McDonough Laurienne Stewart Minnich Andy & Ruth Anderson Elizabeth Anema Carolyn Nelson Bob Ballou Dorothy Nelson Juanita Nordin Teresa Best Jerry Bates Mark & Dorothy Norris Susan Beals Gloria O'Kelly Ron & Lois Pearson Katherine Bennett Wes & Suzy Perkinson Marilvn Burnett **Debbie Burtnett** Lee Van Pevenage Ben Peters Vernon Cox Jeff Cunningham Bill Riley Dave & Patti Curtiss Bernice Fisher Rinehart

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