



HERITAGE CORRIDOR

# History On The Hill

The Newsletter of the South Hill Historical Society

Volume 2 Issue 1 March 2004

## My Early Life on South Hill

by Bill Goelzer

**M**y folks both came from the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area. My dad, Lester Goelzer, was born in 1901 and came to Puyallup in 1906. My mom, Faye C. Kehr, was born in 1903 and arrived in Puyallup in 1909. They were married in 1923.

When I was born in 1937, a ten-day stay in the hospital cost \$35.00. Dr. Aylen brought us kids into the world at the old Puyallup Hospital.

We lived to the west of the Willows grocery store in a house my folks had built on 10 acres in 1927. The address was Airport Road, Rt 2 Box 340. Airport Road (now known as 112th Street/39th Ave. SW) had narrow lanes and a water run-off dip on both sides. Drivers were always catching a tire in this groove and throwing the car every which way.

We had a trail through the woods, over a creek, and coming out next to the Willows grocery store. The store was owned by George & Georgia Miller. They had a son, Art, and two daughters, Margaret and Nancy. The girls would sit me on the meat counter and teach me how to tie my shoelaces as they sang, "Billy Boy, Billy Boy, Charming Billy." My older sister, Barbara, and brother, Bob, went to the Puyallup Heights School with Miss Burns as their teacher. Past the 6th grade, they went to the Puyallup High School. When my younger sister, Georgina, and I started school, we attended Meeker in the Valley. We walked over to the Willows corner to catch the bus. Across the street where Howard Annis had the gas station there were lots of willow bushes (Willows Corner). As we all had pocket knives in those days, we would whittle whistles to blow on the bus. The teachers usually took them away when we blew them at school, but we could always make another the next day.

In the 40's, my sister, brother, and Nancy Miller and myself went to the McMillan reservoir on 128th St. (Old Military Rd) to have a picnic lunch. At that time there were picnic tables and lots of lawns. Our dog, Tippy, decided to take a swim in the reservoir, which got us kicked out of there. Some time after that, they put up fencing and



*Bill Goelzer stands on the property where once stood the Goelzer home his father had built and where Bill spent his childhood, now partially occupied by Wells Fargo Mortgage across the street from the bank on 39th Av SE (112th ST). In the background stands a row of California Coastal Redwoods his father planted along the property edge in 1948-50.*

wouldn't let people in the area anymore. I think it was because of the war, and not just because of our dog.

When we needed milk, we walked over to the Crabb's (who lived on the east side of Meridian) with a couple empty gallon jugs and brought them back full of milk. Bob Crabb had a basketball hoop in the barn, and we enjoyed playing "horse."

In the winter, when we had really cold weather, we could ice skate on the frozen creeks. We'd have to stop and crawl through barbed-wire fences so we could skate into the next field.

My dad was a farmer and grew strawberries, daffodils, and Christmas trees. We kids always had a lot of work to do, helping our folks. We had over 100 pickers to harvest the 26 acres of strawberries on the farm on 9th Street, now covered with SR 512, on/off ramps, and mini-storage sheds. On hot days, my dad would buy 4 or 5 cases of soft drinks for a bonus to the pickers. He also would take a pick-up load of us up to 5 Mile Lake for a swim after work.

My growing-up buddies were Martin Crabtree and Willard Bill. They lived where the South Hill Mall is today. The Felbell family along 5th Street had a large barn, and in the summer they let us sleep in the hayloft. Sometimes Mr. Heinz, who lived across Meridian from McKays stables, would have us boys stomp down his hay so he could get more in to the barn. Then he'd take us to the Roxie in Puyallup

to see Gene Autrey movies. In those days we had two theatres, the Roxie and the Liberty. The Roxie always showed westerns.

We also hunted with bows and arrows. We would cross Meridian and go east, behind Thackery's and McKay's property. There weren't any roads but there were trails and a peat bog and lots of swampy areas. We shot a grouse once, built a fire, and roasted it. It was kind of raw, but we frontier men ate it anyway. There were trails from Dr. McKay's to the Meridian Riding Club and we would travel these and explore.

Millers ran the Willows store in the 30's and early 40's, the Crabtrees, then the Spencers, and during my high school days in the 50's, the Letourneaus. Their son, Dick, and I would cashier, stock shelves, and handle the business on Sundays by ourselves. My dad passed away in 1975, my older sister and brother in 1994, and my mom in 1995. I am lucky that I had wonderful, loving, and hard-working parents. My folks' home on 112th Street is gone but I still live on the back part of the old farm in the home I built in 1961. Huge changes have come to our hill with the mall, lots of grocery stores, restaurants, and traffic. I still like to call the South Hill area my home, and my post office box has a South Hill address. I am glad we have a South Hill Historical Society, and am proud to be a member of it.



The Goelzer Strawberry farm in 1954 looking East. The 512 freeway now goes down the middle of this view along with the north/south exits to 9th Av E. (see map). The trees in the distance is where the South Hill Mall and Park Plaza, (Best Western Hotel etc.) now stand. The row of cars is parked on 9th Av E. In 1958 Bill's father, Lester Goelzer, made this field into a Christmas tree farm.

## From The Treasurer

Would you believe that almost a year has passed since the South Hill Historical Society went to membership status (April 2003). So, now is the time to start thinking of renewing your membership in the Society. We are, at present, 49 members strong for which we are truly thankful.

Ben Peters

### April Renewal

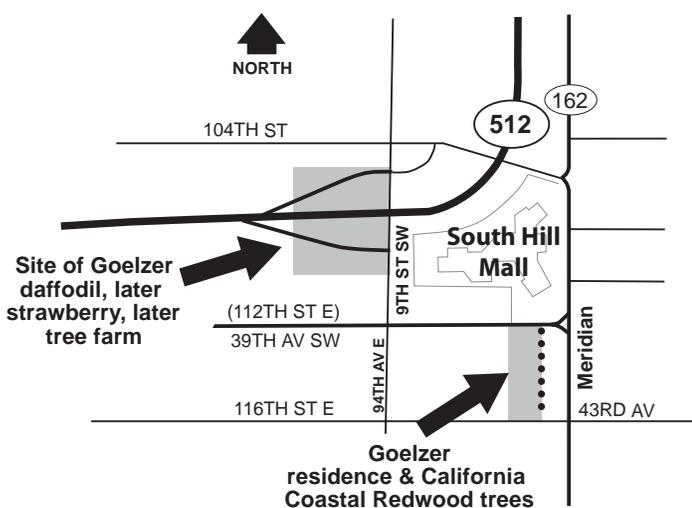
John and Ruth Anderson  
Jim and Elizabeth Anema  
Ward F. Bradley  
Mildred A. Dobbs  
Cecil and Doris Herbert  
Charles and Maybelle Hoenhous  
Art S. and Marvella Massie  
Laurienne Stewart Minnich  
John A. Mosolf  
Dorothy Nelson  
Juanita Nordin  
Mark and Dorothy Norris  
Ella M. Reese  
Bill Riley  
Bernice Fisher Rinehart  
David and Bonnie Starkel  
Vivian Wepfer  
Pam and Don Williams  
Kevin Wimsett  
Marilyn Larson Winterton

### May Renewal

Don and Mary Glaser  
Art S. and Marvella Massie  
Laurienne Stewart Minnich

### June Renewal

William (Bill) Goelzer  
Calvin and Amy Goings  
Richard and Joan Vosler



This map shows where the Goelzer property was located on South Hill.

Do you have a story to tell about past events on South Hill? Please let us know. Personal experiences and past events are of interest to all the members, and it makes for a better newsletter too! We are glad to assist, if you wish, with writing or editing your article.

The Editor

# Elva Mae Sehmel Smith

December 30, 1920–January 15, 2004

guchi, Traci Mizoguchi, and Marissa Dogeagle Smith. Elva is also survived by many cousins, nieces and nephews.

Elva was born in Puyallup, Washington and grew up in Rosedale and Gig Harbor. Following a period of years away from her beloved Northwest, Elva and her three children moved to South Hill, where she became a teacher in the Puyallup School District.

Elva was generous and kind and had a special gift for making others feel welcome. She loved and supported her family unconditionally and was a friend to many. She is greatly missed.

After her retirement, Elva spent many happy years at her “summer cabin” in Rosedale. Elva, or Grammy, was never happier than when she could spend time with her granddaughters, including telling stories when they were young, picking berries in the woods around her cabin, combing the Sound

waterfront for treasures, and playing cards.

During family and relative get-togethers, Elva was often the first to get folks interested in playing a game—even hilarious rounds of “20 questions.” But, her favorite game around a table remained bridge, where



*Elva Mae Sehmel Smith*

she never shied away from bidding optimistically! Other favorite pastimes included sports, especially baseball—and especially the Mariners. She loved talking about the games, trades, and finer points with her granddaughters, who shared her love of the game.

During her retirement, Elva joined both the Gig Harbor and South Hill Historical Societies, where she proudly shared her Sehmel and Zimmerman heritage.

Elva was preceded in death by her sister, Doris Stahl. She is survived by her brother, Don Sehmel (Mary Ellen); three children, Ronalee Mizoguchi (Allan), Robert Smith, and Verna Dogeagle (Warren); and her three granddaughters, Allyson Mizo-

## Meeting Reviews

*by Carolyn Nelson*

Things have gotten off to a good start this year, and we have added a few new members. Since some of our readers may have missed one of our 2004 meetings, we are including an update on the programs so far.

In January we celebrated the birthday of our oldest member. Can you guess who that is? It is John Mosolf who was born on South Hill and lived much of his life here. Our president, Paul Hackett, interviewed John for our program. He showed his remarkable memory by answering questions about his past 95 years.

In February our special guest was Robert Ballou. His family came to South Hill in the 1940s and purchased a 10-acre stump ranch. Bob told us about his father Frank who contributed much to the development of this area and started the Pierce County Fair in 1947-48. Many people do not realize that the first county fair was held at the Fruitland Grange. Ballou Junior High School was named for his father. Bob operated the Grange Insurance business for many years. His office was located at Willows Corner until Puget Sound National Bank bought that property. Much history was covered during this interview.

On March 16 John Paris, administrator at McMillan Reservoir, was our guest speaker. How many of our readers have a story to tell about a childhood experience at the old reservoir? We will report more on this topic at a later date.

### South Hill Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal, check here

**Annual Dues: Society membership \$25.00**

*Note Please do not send cash.*

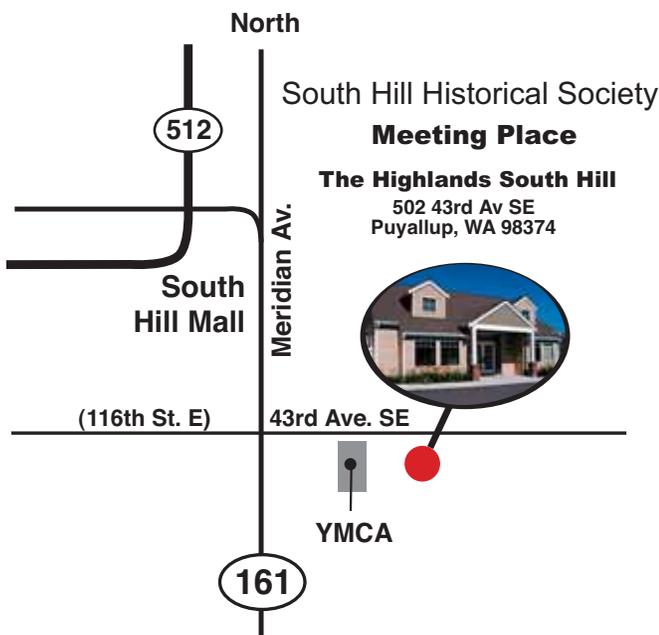
Make check or M.O. payable to South Hill Historical Society and mail with this application to:

**SHHS Membership, 11711 92nd AV E, Puyallup, WA 98373**

## Where to find us

The South Hill Historical Society meets regularly on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of the month 11:15 AM at the Highlands in the Community Center (no meetings July and August). This complex is located at 502 43rd AVE SE, adjacent to and east of the Mel Korum YMCA.

We welcome you to our monthly meetings. For more information contact our president, Paul Hackett, at (253) 845-7691.



### South Hill Historical Society Officers

President, Paul Hackett  
Vice-President, Carl Vest  
Secretary, Carolyn Nelson  
Treasurer, Ben Peters  
Newsletter Editor, Jerry Bates



11711 92nd AV E  
Puyallup WA 98373

## Our Current Members

John and Ruth Anderson  
Jim and Elizabeth Anema  
Bob Ballou  
Jerry Bates  
Ward F. Bradley  
James H. Dixon  
Mildred A. Dobbs  
Lloyd Freudenstein  
Don and Mary Glaser  
William (Bill) Goelzer  
Hazel Whitford Miller Goheen  
Calvin and Amy Goings  
Paul Hackett  
James Hawley  
Cecil and Doris Herbert  
Charles and Maybelle Hoenhous  
Ernest & Irene Hopp  
Art Larson  
Art S. and Marvella Massie  
Laurienne Stewart Minnich  
John A. Mosolf  
Carolyn Nelson  
Dorothy Nelson  
Jean S. Nelson  
Juanita Nordin  
Mark and Dorothy Norris  
Christopher O'Kelly  
Don and Helen Otto  
Ben Peters  
Ella M. Reese  
Bill Riley  
Bernice Fisher Rinehart  
Roy and Sheila Rinker  
Vern Rockstad  
Helen Rohlman  
Frank Ryser  
David and Bonnie Starkel  
Lori Stock  
Betsy and Bill Stubbs  
Margo L & Joe Tucci  
Carl Vest  
Neil and Celia Vincent  
Richard and Joan Vosler  
Vivian Wepfer  
Pam and Don Williams  
Christine Wilson  
Kevin Wimsett  
Marilyn Larson Winterton  
Allen and Ellen Zulauf

To: