



History On The Hill

The Newsletter of the South Hill Historical Society

Volume 10 Issue 4 Fall 2012

HERITAGE CORRIDOR

The Mountain Girl

By Jerry Bates

For this issue of History On The Hill, we focus on South Hill Historical Society members, Art and Lorraine Larson. Lorraine addressed last September's General Meeting, where she described her dream childhood growing up at Longmire and Sunrise in Mt. Rainier National Park. Following this article, we will take a look Art's career and accomplishments.

Lorraine began her presentation by mentioning that Paul Hackett had been inviting her for several years "to share her story with the Society." So it finally came to pass. Lorraine entertained, humored and educated us with a fascinating talk—aided by her picture handling helper-husband, Art. Here are some highlights of her talk. Society members may borrow our DVD of the meeting to enjoy all her stories, best told by her rather than me.

—Editor

Lorraine Akehurst Larson lived a kid's dream in a unique setting—by growing up in a national park! Lorraine, a long-time elementary school teacher, had no trouble keeping our attention with her fascinating story, accompanied by at least 70 pages of family photographs which she shared after commenting on many of them.

Lorraine gave us a quick historical overview of Longmire Park—interesting to us as locals and history buffs. The Longmire family settled in Yelm in 1853. We should all recognize that fam-

ily name as in the "Longmire-Biles wagon train" that followed the Naches Trail over the Cascades, crossing South Hill in October of 1853.

In 1883, the Longmires started acting as Mount

Rainier climbing guides. They went up the south side of the Nisqually River, made camp across from where the Longmire Inn is today; hiking from there to the base of the mountain. The Longmire horses broke loose one night and crossed the river, and were later found at a hot spring. By finding the horses, they also discovered the

springs. This gave James Longmire the idea of developing a park where tourists could bathe in the warm water in a beautiful area. Lorraine gave us a tip—when at Longmire, take the 'Trail of the Shadow' that goes around the meadows. The trail isn't well-known, but the Longmire cabin is on this trail, a "must see."

Len Longmire—"Len was probably short for Leonard," said Lorraine—was one of the first guides to take people to the top of the mountain.



Art and Lorraine Larson. This edition features Lorraine, *The Mountain Girl* and Art, *Mr. Larson*.

When six-year-old Lorraine met Len Longmire, a part-time guide at the time, he was elderly and toothless, yet he gave her occasional hugs of encouragement while watching her practice her roller-skating.

Lorraine's father, Richard Akehurst, first worked at Longmire in 1917. The park, created in 1899, was still in the early stages of its development. He worked off and on until 1929, when a house at Longmire was found for the family to live in. They moved into the house in November 1929—just a couple of weeks after the New York Stock Market Crash. The Great Depression followed, but the family was fortunate in that her dad had a secure job with a steady paycheck which covered their household expenses of \$12 a month, utilities included.

In 1930 a decision was made to open Yakima Park (now Sunrise). Her dad established his headquarters at the White River campgrounds and rode his horse to Sunrise. He was head of park construction, building trails, establishing a water system to Paradise and roads, with as many as 350 men working under him. "Yakima Park" opened in 1930. Lorraine and her mother lived at Sunrise with her dad during the summer—at first in a tent, then in one of the cabins, all gone now. Lorraine described "how beautiful the Park was in those days with many more wild flowers than today" because of the huge volume of tourists.

One of Lorraine's stories was about a drunken truck driver whose truck became stranded on a rickety bridge at the White River entrance to the park. The truck had to be backed off the bridge by a courageous (and sober!) truck driver friend. He stood on the running boards steering because it would be "easier to jump free if the bridge collapsed," and backed the truck off the bridge, guided by her dad, while his terrified wife and Lorraine's mother looked on. Another story: Mrs. Harold Ickes, wife of the Secretary of the Interior, visited the site and was upset seeing the shirtless CCC boys hard at work. She demanded that they be fully clothed!

Lorraine attended school at Ashford. The school, which is now a restaurant, has some of Lor-

raine's old pictures displayed inside. She brought her 1932 Ashford High School Annual for all to look at. School activities continued throughout the year and "everybody was a close-knit wonderful family," says Lorraine. By the way, the entire senior class of 1932 consisted of five young men who chose as their class flower "Bachelor's Buttons" related Lorraine with a laugh.

Lorraine had many more stories including one about Fay Fuller, first known woman to climb Mt Rainier; the windstorm of April 1931; the August snowstorm of 1932; hiking adventures; talking to the lookout guys all night while she was a park switchboard operator; a disappointing early romance; how she met Art; and more.

Lorraine closed by saying, "I had a wonderful childhood and thank God every day for my parents, and the place I grew up...truly paradise."

After the meeting, when Lorraine learned that she had been videotaped for the Society's archives, she was thrilled. She received a copy of her talk, and plans to use them as gifts for both Christmas and birthdays to family and friends. She said, "I'm glad the stories are on record now. I have left a legacy for my family."

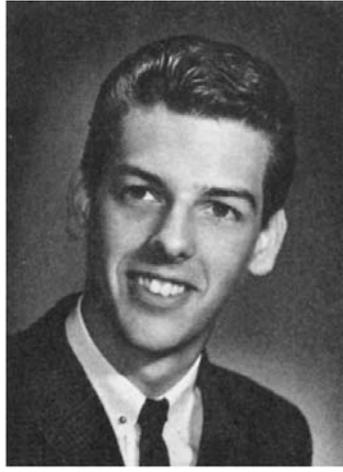
Mr. Larson

By Jerry Bates

When I attended Puyallup High School in the mid 60s, Art Larson, "Mr. Larson" to me then, was our vice principal. I never imagined that our lives would cross again some forty-three years later. In 2008, Paul Hackett invited Art to one of our South Hill Historical Society meetings. I recognized him immediately and introduced myself, "Jerry Bates, Puyallup High School class of '65," knowing there was no chance he remembered me—just one of the thousands of kids who passed through Puyallup or Rogers High Schools during the years he was in charge. I never put him on the spot. However, Art made a comment to the effect "you have a lot less hair now." Well, that would narrow things down for his former male students now in their sixties. I can imagine he meets former students wherever he goes, all thinking he should remember them. Besides



**Vice Principal Art
Larson Puyallup High
School 1965**



Guess who?

being an authority figure in our young lives, I know now how lucky we were to have Art influencing our educational environment, directly or indirectly.

Memories of him must live on in many thousands of former students' minds. He touched not only countless lives as the kids went through Puyallup or Rogers High School, but people in both the Puyallup and South Hill communities.

What follows is a brief history of E. Arthur Larson Jr.—snippets of his career and long life, gleaned from video interviews conducted by Paul Hackett, the Society's Public Relations Officer.

Art was born in Astoria, Oregon, August 17, 1923. He was the second of five children and his father was a Lutheran pastor. His father, Ernest Arthur Sr., was very intelligent and multilingual, delivering services in Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish. Later Mr. Larson Sr. taught Swedish at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU). The family moved to Tacoma in 1928. His dad was a "traveling minister," between churches in Tacoma, South Tacoma, and Auburn, "one of the few that had a car," said Art.

Art graduated high school in 1940, and went to work in a Linotype (trademark name for typesetting) shop. He started PLU in 1941. Two years later, in the Fall of 1942 at age 19, he enlisted in a Navy officer training program. He completed his sophomore year at PLU and then on to ac-

tive duty. He was commissioned in August 1944 as an Ensign.

Art served in the Pacific during World War II. Just prior to the Okinawa invasion, he took part in establishing a seaplane base on a little island just east of Okinawa. Art's duties included sonar officer, assistant communications officer, and Combat Information Center (CIC) officer.

Although war in the Pacific ended in August 1945, Art wasn't released from active duty until the Fall of 1946. After returning home, he continued his studies and graduated at PLU in 1948.

Art's future wife, Lorraine, met him before he met her. In 1944, Art—a young uniformed officer—was visiting the college and spoke at the chapel. She was impressed, saying he was "just what I was looking for." When Art returned to college in 1946, they took classes together. "She kept chasing me," says Art. They were married June 12, 1948. They have three children—Curtis, Susan, and the youngest, Darold.

Art began teaching at Puyallup High School in 1948, after taking a fifth year of college at UPS (University of Puget Sound), for accreditation to teach at the high school level. He would eventually get his Master's degree at UPS. Art's career began on the junior high school level. At that time, Puyallup High School was split north and south—dividing junior high and senior high school. "They were poor," explained Art. For extra money, he joined the Naval Reserve and drove school buses to athletic events. Because he was in the Reserves, he was recalled into active duty during the Korean War.

Art eventually taught Health, PE, Science, Social Studies, U.S. History, Math, and Drivers' Training. He coached wrestling, was an assistant coach for football and assistant track coach. He worked his way up the ladder, becoming Puyallup High School's Vice Principal. In 1966, the decision was made for a second high school. Art was selected to be the principal. Meanwhile, Puyallup High School was so overcrowded that double sessions were considered.

Art was handed a new school, with a new cur-

riculum to be designed, new district lines to be drawn, plus new teachers to recruit and hire. Today a new principal would take a year off his regular duties for all the necessary planning but back then, Art was expected to carry on his Vice Principal duties as usual along with the huge workload for the new school. It was a daunting task. For example, consider the logistics. Some kids would not be graduating from the school they and their parents had planned on. Many parents were upset about breaking a tradition. Some had four generations graduating from Puyallup High School. Yet, some kids in the Puyallup school district wanted to attend the new school instead of the old Puyallup High School. Principal Don Hartung of PHS and Art “kind of horse traded,” he recalled.

Art and his team designed a new curriculum for Rogers High School. It would include multiple tracks for college bound and vocational careers. This curriculum was called the “Comprehensive High School”—offering academics, remedial instruction, and vocational education, usually in one or more of the sciences—an innovation in education during the 1960s.

Art had sympathy for kids having a hard time in their academic classes. He wanted a school not just for athletes and the “intelligentsia.” They created shop classes, auto shop, metal shop, woodshop, mechanical drawing, Home Economics classes, AG classes—even classes on how to be waiters, waitresses, and cooks. The goal was to offer a wide variety of subjects that kids were interested in and match with his or her talents and skills.” Art was aware of the students who loved art, so the school would have classes in sculpture, painting, and theater. A principal ahead of his time, arrangements were made to bus students between the old and new campuses to share facilities which offered classes not available at one’s home campus to all area students.

Art was very proud of the quality of teachers at the school. He described his position as Principal as “very fortunate” for he had really great teachers in all departments. He considered his math department one of the best. Such excellent faculty, no doubt, was due to Art’s hiring philosophy. “Just being smart didn’t make a good

teacher; a teacher had to be highly competent in the field s/he would teach,” and Art looked for good disciplinarians—the ability to get along with students yet control a classroom.

Moving day for the partially completed Rogers High School was in the Fall of 1968. Classrooms were full of hanging wires and workmen. The cafeteria and gym were yet to be completed. The first year started with seventh through tenth grades. The second year, Rogers offered seventh to eleventh grades. When Ballou Junior High was finished, Rogers became tenth grade to twelfth with 1970-71 as the first graduating class. Some of the early students attended Rogers for five years.

Art was Principal at Rogers High School for eleven years, retiring at an early age, in 1979, still in his fifties. At a conference Art attended he was informed that, on average, high school principals lived only six years after retiring. This convinced Art to go ahead and retire—and that was over three decades ago! In the meantime, Art has had no trouble filling his golden years with activity.

Some of Art’s retirement ‘careers’ included continuing his work at the Rotary, where he was president and continues to be house piano player; working at the Puyallup Fair for twenty years; teaching student teachers at PLU for eleven years; and working for the state employment office. Art is currently volunteering at the County City Building, orienting potential jurors and guiding students through the Superior Court system.

Always active in his church, Art served as chairman of the church board; organist; choir director; Sunday school superintendent; stewardship committee chairman; and as treasurer.

Paul Hackett has summed up Art’s life best, “Speaking as a former pastor, Art has been a shepherd to the whole community, not just as the high school principal, but in working and caring for others, and in making life meaningful.”

Growing up on a changing South Hill

By Jerry Bates

Outside it was a dark, rainy, and windy Tuesday, but that didn't prevent the South Hill Historical Society from having a large turnout for November's General Meeting. Our speaker was Karl Zeiger, South Hill attorney, who has lived on the Hill almost his entire life.



Karl Zeiger

When asked to speak at one of our meetings by Paul Hackett, Karl was "horrified" being considered an "old-timer" or a "pioneer" asked to speak to an historical society! He's actually young—compared to most of our membership—growing up in the 50s, 60s, and 70s on South Hill. However, the era he lived through probably had more change occurring than any other period of our Hill's history.

Karl's life has spanned a time when there were no stop signs on Meridian as it crossed the Hill, to the current day and night congestion, big box stores and malls. Phones that used party lines, to phones people carry in their pockets. Karl witnessed a lot of change. He grew up part of the large Ed and Wilma Zeiger family, one of seven children. He was raised in a house his father

bought for \$5,000 on five acres in the Rabbit Farms area. His dad recalls his yearly taxes are more than that sum today. Although the time of "rabbit farming" in the Rabbit Farms was long gone, Karl in his youth decided to become a rabbit farmer. He made money at it, selling the meat and fur, making "good income for a kid." He was also a berry picker, recalling when kids did that before the current child labor laws were in force. He progressed to working the bulb farms in the valley for ninety cents an hour.

Karl shared many stories, such as dealing with garbage before the time of garbage services, his family burned all they could and after filling five cans with the remaining garbage went to the dump out on 160th. As a long distance runner in school, he ran all the logging trails that covered the Hill then, noticing the huge stumps with spring board slots still visible, from the time when huge virgin trees were cut by axes and saws at the turn of the 19th century. Karl was in the first class of the yet to be completed Rogers High School (1968). He recalled school assemblies held in the school's gravel parking lot and the baseball team using the field at the Fruitland Grange. Karl's talk continued, covering the evolution, uniqueness and frustrations of living on South Hill in regard to the economy, environment, politics, housing development, wildlife, social mores, and geography. He made all these topics especially interesting with his stories and personal experiences.

The Society thanks Karl for his service to SHHS by helping us create our release form—signed by those we videotape during interviews and general meeting presentations. These tapes and DVDs are the gems within our archives. Thanks, Karl, for adding one more to our collection!

**Newsletter helpers, contributors,
proofreaders needed**

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

Puyallup City Library, serious about local history

Joining our November general meeting was the new Director of the Puyallup Library, Tim Wadham. Tim is very focused on developing his library's "history room."



Tim Wadham, Director of the Puyallup Library

But Tim isn't stopping there. His vision is to create an on-line digital archive of area history. Tim is eager to sit down with all the local historical societies, such as the Meeker Society; the Karshner Museum; the South Hill Historical Society; and Puyallup Fair representatives to pool efforts and build a website that catalogs and documents local history.

The site would be accessible to the public—one source for digitized photos, documents and historical content under the auspices of the Puyallup Library. Tim thinks his library's local history collection is "a treasure." He understands that regional libraries, as they expand, "divorce themselves from any context of the community they serve." But, the Puyallup Library is a traditional resource for the valley and Hill people going back over a hundred years.

This is a great opportunity for our Society. Our

work over the last decade should be made accessible to the larger community, not only residents of South Hill. With the technology available today, this is possible. We have our website on the Internet; our monthly column in the *Herald*; and we publish our newsletter for our membership. Let's not pass by other opportunities, as they emerge, to preserve and disseminate the years of hard work, research, and writing we've done focusing on South Hill history.

Tim needs support not only from local history societies but the community in general. Next spring the Puyallup Library is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the old 1913 opening of the Carnegie library building in Puyallup. He's hoping to attract more people and businesses to share his passion and support local history. Tim wants feedback, and invites us stop by and talk with him when we visit the library.

Phone: 253-841-5454

Email: twadham@ci.puyallup.wa.us

Write: Puyallup Library

324 South Meridian

Puyallup, WA 98371

The South Hill Neighborhood Plan Uncovered

by Debbie Burtnett

Late last June, Research Historian for the Society, Carl Vest, was TV channel surfing and happened upon a Puyallup City Council meeting from June 19. The topic was a City of Puyallup South Hill Neighborhood Plan—about which he, even as a member of several community organizations including the South Hill Community Council, knew nothing. Carl immediately made contact with the Puyallup City Council and eventually received a copy of the "Plan" and contacted Puyallup City Associate Planner Lindsey Schmel, a descendant of the South Hill Zimmerman family.

It was learned that Puyallup's proposed South

Hill Neighborhood Plan had “been in process for several years.” Officers of the Society were also unaware of the Plan. A number of questions were sent to Ms. Sehmel who had picked up the project from a previous planner. Then, Carl met with her in July to discuss the Plan. Other meetings followed in the Fall, and this article reflects information as of October 24, 2012.

Of concern to the Society is historical preservation or heritage designation which Carl describes as “recognition of historical significance through monuments or signage or some sort of visual identification...and some...actually preserved.” There is no mention of this in the Puyallup Plan. Carl pointed out to the planner that the Pierce County Community Plan for South Hill encompasses historical preservation; but as of publication time, the Puyallup Plan does not directly address the need for historical preservation on South Hill. However, Ms. Sehmel said she would “list you [Carl] on the interested parties for all Planning Commission” meetings. Of equal concern to our Society is historical accuracy in signage. One example, now no longer an issue, was a proposed transit station on the site of the old Kupfer farm, also known in various ways as the Willows. The Plan proposed a transit station at that site named EZRA---which Carl termed “inappropriate” even though the planners said it stood for Easy Rider Access. It is clearly a pun on the iconic Ezra Meeker, who clearly ‘belongs’ to Puyallup rather than South Hill. However, “There was no interest from transit providers in this station,” said Ms. Sehmel, and as of October, the “project is dead.”

Backstory

The Puyallup Plan was first drafted in 2004, but not adopted until 2009 after additional work was done. The planners declared they had posted advertisements in the local paper for interested parties on the Hill to attend meetings and sent information to homes, yet no one has seen them or attended the “combination of City Council, Planning Commission Public Hearings, and multiple open houses at the [Pierce] College.” Records of these meetings are recorded digitally but are not accessible via the Internet. A current copy of the Puyallup Plan is filed at the Puyallup Library—not the South Hill Library.

The area affected by the Plan includes the top of the “Hill”—i.e., up to 128th Street out to 160th. Carl indicated to the planner that 128th would be more appropriate, so why the extension? The planner wasn’t sure, but felt it had something to do with the transportation element of the Plan as “required by state law.” When Carl pointed out that Pierce County has a plan in place—a South Hill Community Plan—which covers part of South Hill, he asked if there was a “geographical interface” between these two plans and stated that there should be “some effort to make requirements at the border compatible.” The response was that the “County’s plan abuts the City but it has no oversight to the development of the city portion of South Hill...these two plans will work together but neither will cross boundaries.”

The South Hill Historical Society, a recognized entity by Pierce County as published in the County’s Community Plan and validated in our Tenth Anniversary Resolution issued by them, is concerned about this planning. Since the initial findings by Carl Vest from late Summer, there is no real difference in the documents published at that time and the one released in October. Even the map including the EZRA station has not changed in the second publication.

“It concerns me that they are not cooperating or communicating with the people on the other side of the issue...plowing ahead on their own without working with the community of South Hill.” So far, only Carl and Betsy Stubbs, current president of the South Hill Community Council, have been “kept informed.” Our representation in the legislature, Hans Zeiger, has read the plan. He affirmed that “planning is needed, but South Hill residents need to be in charge of their own destiny.”

For More Information

Stay in touch with the South Hill Historical Society officers—especially Carl Vest at cvest0055@aol.com and with Betsy Stubbs at w.stuff@att.net. You may also access the Society’s website at southhillhistory.com, to leave questions and comments with newsletter Editor and Webmaster Jerry Bates.

From the Treasurer

by Ben Peters

Please call, e-mail or write any change of address to me, Ben Peters, 253-845-7028, *poppa-ben2002@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

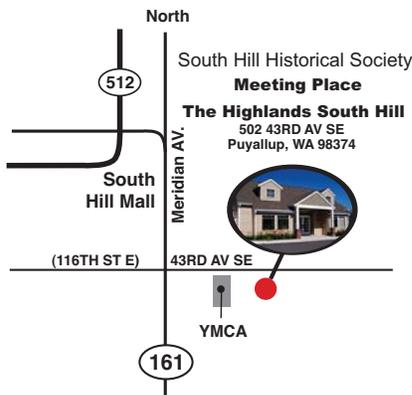
A printed roster including members' home and e-mail addresses, plus phone numbers is available upon request (*restricted to members only*). Call me—Ben Peters—at 253-845-7028.

Dues Reminder

I will attach a sticky note to the Society newsletter mailed closest to your renewal date.

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

Where to Find Us



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

Our Current Members

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Andy G. Anderson | Kaye Murrell |
| Andy & Ruth Anderson | Carolyn Nelson |
| Elizabeth Anema | Dorothy Nelson |
| Bob Ballou | Juanita Nordin |
| Teresa Best | Mark & Dorothy Norris |
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| Jim Kastama | W. Louise Walsworth |
| John Knierim | W. Lynn Williams |
| Mike Kupfer | Lenore Nicolet Winton |
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South Hill Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

Name _____

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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, 14602 106th Avenue Court E.
South Hill, WA 98374-4905**



14602 106th Avenue Court E.
South Hill, WA 98374-4905

To: