



# History On The Hill

The Newsletter of the South Hill Historical Society

Volume 10 Issue 3 Summer 2012

HERITAGE CORRIDOR

## He Didn't Know a Two-by-Four From a Two-by-Six

By Jerry Bates

My history living on South Hill goes back to the late 1960s when our family moved to the Hill from Puyallup into a new development “way out” on 128th Street. I know, I am a newcomer compared to most of the membership reading this newsletter, but my early years on the Hill—1968 through about 1985—were filled with great memories of a different South Hill. I think of this period as ‘suburbia, stage one.’ Existing businesses and new ones popping up along Meridian were still family-owned, small operations—restaurants, service stations, video stores, taverns, dentists, barber shops, beauty salons, shoe repair, etc. Most would all give way, in short order, to large corporate-owned chains and franchises.

Those years when locally owned businesses dominated the Hill are gone forever. When I think back, I recall the frustration of having to drive to Tacoma or Puyallup to do serious shopping at a “big” store such as Sears, Penney’s, Bon Marche (remember the Bon), etc. But for weekend carpenters, “closeness” was more important than “bigness.” I was like many others on the Hill back in the 70s and 80s who were either building or remodeling their homes. If you needed lumber, or ran out of nails, the choice was between the new place called South Hill Lumber or the well-established

Willows Lumber...that was it. Not a weekend would go by that you wouldn’t find me at one or the other, but most of the time it was Willows Lumber.

### Willow’s Lumber was special

I hear over and over again from our members the fond memories of Willows Lumber—the homemade peanut brittle, the friendly store employees. It was the hub of social activity, a place where neighbors ran into each other and a friendly chat would follow, a laid-back environment missing in today’s “big box” stores where you’re lucky to see a familiar face along the endless aisles.

Society member, Maybelle Hoenhaus and her late husband, Chuck, ran Willows Lumber for 45 years.

After serving in World War II, Chuck became an insurance salesman and later worked for St. Regis. In 1950, Arnold Christianson, President of C & E Lumber in Randle, Washington, offered Chuck a job running their new lumber outlet on South Hill, a facility owned by Al Delano—also owner of Willow’s Tavern. Chuck took the offer. He said he “didn’t know a 2x4 from a 2x6, but liked meeting new people.” Fortunately, Maybelle’s father was a carpenter and Chuck was a fast learner.



**Chuck and Maybelle Hoenhaus ran Willows Lumber for 45 years. Picture taken in 2008 on their 67th wedding anniversary.**



**This is the original Willows Lumber, 10014, 112th St. This photo taken in the 1960s. Its location was between today's Mexican Restaurant & the Wells Fargo Home Mortgage office.**



**Willows Lumber expanded, moving across the street from the original site in 1974. They made the old facility into a nursery and craft store.**



**To make way for the new South Hill Mall, Willows Lumber moved to the former O'Leary Construction site, on 98th St. in 1987.**

Willows Lumber started as a small operation—in the beginning just Chuck, a truck driver, and Maybelle who would do the books at night. Chuck worked the lumberyard himself without the aid of a forklift. Business grew when local mink farmers and homebuilders became good customers. The business continued to grow and they became the sole distributor for treated lumber used for pole built barns. They delivered the treated lumber all over Washington state, sometimes into Idaho and Oregon. In the 60s, they purchased land across the street and started a U-Card Cement business. Customers could haul home various size loads of cement in specially designed trailers attached to their vehicle. In 1970, Chuck and May became part owners in the Willows Lumber Company and Charles Jr. (Joe) became involved in the growing business.

In 1974, Willows Lumber Company bought the Reynolds' Grocery store across the street and adjacent to the U-Card operation. The former grocery store site allowed for expansion. The old bulk-ing became a nursery and craft store managed by Chuck and May's son, Alan; his wife, Linda, and Joe's wife, Rhoda. They all worked there until they began their families and in 1979, the property was leased to various businesses until 1993 when they sold the property to US Bank. The business continued to grow and the number of employees, full and part-time, grew to thirty.

In 1980, Chuck retired and Maybelle and her sons took over running the businesses.



### **On the Move**

From 1985 to 1987, agents were buying up land for the future South Hill Mall. The property needed for the Mall included the Willows Lumber store on the north side of 112th. The Hoenhouses sold the property in 1987 and Willow's Lumber had to find a new home. Maybelle says, in hindsight, that "this would have been the time to quit the business," but they wanted to continue for the sake of their sons and loyal employees.

That same year, they leased and moved to the O'Leary property on 98th Street (this section of 98th no longer exists), just north of what was then Norm's Auto Wrecking, corner of 98th and 112th.

In 1991, Willows Lumber had to move again. The Mall expanded, buying the O'Leary land, to make room for a new Sears store. Fortunately, at this time a new opportunity became available on Canyon Road—the former Custom Kraft store and land were for sale. Willows Lumber moved operations to this new site, but problems arose.

The Hoenhouses encountered continual frustrations with changing Pierce County codes and permit requirements in addition to banking issues. Also, a competing McLendon's Hardware store was built nearby. Add to this the emergence of the "big box" home centers such as Home Depot and Lowes. Times were changing for small, family-run businesses. Faced with all these obstacles, it was time to call it quits. In 1995, an auction was held and Maybelle closed the doors of Willows Lumber for the last time.

### **Community Minded**

Chuck Hoenhaus gave much of his time to civic activities and improving his community. He was president of the Puyallup High School PTA and served on the Puyallup School Board for twelve years, from 1954 to 1966, presenting all three of his children their high school diplomas. In addition, Chuck was the first president of the South Hill Kiwanis Club and served on the Puyallup Meeker Society board.

In later years, Chuck was known for his "Dad's Peanut Brittle" sold at local Farmers' Markets.

The Hoenhouses definitely left their mark on South Hill, and in the memories of those of us who fondly recall Willows Lumber and the days of a more home-grown business environment on the Hill.

Chuck passed away June 9th, 2012, at age 93. He is survived by his wife, Maybelle; two sons, Charles Jr. and Alan; and daughter Pat Smith of Belfair, WA.

## **May General Meeting**

*By Debbie Burtnett*

Paul Hackett introduced May's General Meeting speaker, Chris Barth Nimick. Paul noted that he and Chris both worked at Contact Corporation (real estate) on South Hill and "was delighted to talk [with her] during our travels over the years." Her family emigrated to WA state via Kaua'i, Hawai'i, from Germany.



**May speaker Chris Nimick shows family documents.**

### **Documents found**

Chris began her talk. "I was raised a farm girl and learned the holler," she said. "My mom used to tell history stories all the time...As a kid,

I thought 'here we go again'...After my mom died, I found a number of documents; one dating back to 1881." Chris found a manifest of the ship where her ancestors landed in Kaua'i. "It was a family named Muller\* and all the right first names who landed June 18, 1881, one hundred years before Grandma gave me the hand pin." Chris's grandmother always wore the hand pin, and today Chris has it framed in a shadow box which she shared with the membership.

Another document was an agreement between her ancestor, Fritz Müller\*, and Paul Isenberg of the Lihue Plantation, for work at a rate of pay of \$8.50 per month. Because Hawai'ian law forbade non-Hawai'ians from owning island land, the German family sought to fulfill their dreams on the Mainland. A family member's letters encouraged them to visit Orting in WA Territory. Fred Jr., Chris's grandfather, arrived to explore the area in 1888-89, just as statehood was conferred on the territory, and he stayed, working as a carpenter. A year later, Fred Sr. and Margaretha along with Fred Jr.'s siblings, Henry, William, and Mary, arrived to live and farm in Orting.

### **Dairy farm**

"My grandmother Mary worked at the phone office in the early 1900s," said Chris. "In the Ma Bell office on West Meeker downtown." She learned this by reading her engagement letters to Fred, Jr. Her name was Magnaline Marie Kistenmacher (also known as Minnie), daughter of Hans Henry Kistenmacher and Christine Deriss, who had emigrated to American in 1874 via Ellis Island and Davenport, Iowa. Chris also found their marriage vows, the marriage licenses—"so curled that I pressed it in a book for over two years." They lived near a Catholic Church and bought a house in the Bradley Park area from 'Old Mrs. Mosolf', as the lady was known. Upon the death of Mrs. Mosolf, the family moved to the Hill--where Chris and her sister were photographed on a tractor, a photo she cherishes. The family farm included the dairy herd. "We played music to the cows...you didn't disturb the cows, but I got to go in and milk them...my job was to get the grain down, close the stanchion, hook up the vacuum system with teacups on the cow." These were "wonderful times for me."

Her grandfather raised Holstein cows whose milk was lower in fat. Chris recalls her grandfather stating, "You can't tell me all that butterfat is good for you..." Chris herself remembers the taste of "cold, fresh milk" as an "amazingly wonderful thing."

### **"Number Please?"**

Chris's mother, Eunice Barth Gilliam, was the "number please" Operator #9. She talked about changing from the four-party line to the "dial system" as if it was "the end" and it was to some extent—"she remembered listening in on conversations." Chris said "she worked there for five years, she got married, then the phone company 'went dial.' It was like a death sentence."

### **The hill cut down**

Chris's grandmother lived where the area was cut down to become South Hill Mall. "We had a twenty acre piece; the Van Pevenages were neighbors."

Another memory of the coming of South Hill Mall was when, in 1987, "the hills were cut down" but Chris remembers the sounds of "heavy equipment on 512" and before that, the "panoramic view of Mt. Rainier...you could see the Olympics clearly and all the way to Tacoma...my grandfather watched the mountain and could 'predict' when rain and floods were coming." Of the cutting of the hill, her grandfather said, "they've found us, it's all over now." He died in 1970. The area was cleared for the mall in 1986-87 and "my grandmother died in 1987."

Chris shared a few more memories of life on the Hill. "I never remember the back door being locked." She also found among the documents left behind a receipt for a "Maytag washer, used until 1969...but Grandma air-dried her clothes and bought a dryer only in her later years." Of her parents and grandparents, Chris stated, "it was a good place to come from." Eunice Gilliam, Chris's mother, died in 2007; Bud, the eldest son, two years ago; "Chuck and Ray are still with me."

Chris's address to the May general meeting included artifacts and stories from the mater-

nal side of her family. Paul Hackett reminded the members of the Society that we have Chris's mother's oral history in our video archives.

\* Müller is the German version of Chris's ancestors' name with the punctuation over the second letter; Anglicized, the name is spelled Mueller, as in the newspaper article by Lori Price.

## June General Meeting

*By Jerry Bates*

The June meeting, our last before the summer break of July and August, is traditionally a luncheon for Society members. Thanks to Ben Peters, Treasurer, and other contributors who hosted a nice gathering again this year.



**Ready for lunch! Our June meetings include a luncheon along with election of next year's Society officers. We were entertained by a talk from member Joan Ellis.**

June also means voting for Society officers for the coming year after May's nominations. Outside of the Society Secretary, all existing officers agreed to continue holding their positions. Bob Ballou, President; Hans Zeiger, Vice President; Carl Vest, Historical Research; Ben Peters,

Treasurer; Jerry Bates, Newsletter Editor/ Webmaster; and Paul Hackett, Public Relations Coordinator. Katie Bennett has volunteered to fill the secretarial position left vacant by Debbie Burtnett. All nominees were re-elected by the attending membership.

### **Joan Ellis recalls war years on the Hill**

A bonus for this year's June meeting was a talk given by member Joan Ellis, a member well-known for her excellent memory and detailed stories. Joan was born in Tacoma in 1933 but grew up on the Hill. She talked about her life on the Hill, starting when she was a little girl living in the Clover Creek area—at the end of 152nd Street off Canyon Road, then known as Evergreen Street. Her mother died when Joan was six years old. Her father built up a thriving chicken egg production business on their five-acre farm. Joan attended Clover Creek School during the time of World War II. She described air raid practices and that each child had a “nearby home to evacuate to.” Her house was that of a single, older man. Joan commented, “that wouldn't be acceptable today.”



**Joan Ellis shares her story growing up on South Hill.**

### **Polio epidemic**

Joan contracted polio during America's polio epidemic; she was eleven years old. It was 1944.



# Our Scholarship Fund

One school morning, she suffered a severe headache followed by back symptoms that no longer allowed her to move her upper torso. "It was so bad that I could hardly board the school bus home," she said. The next morning, "I found myself in the Pierce County Hospital where I was diagnosed with polio." Joan spent the next two months in the polio ward on the second floor of the hospital. The ward contained six beds and "one iron lung in constant use." Joan's treatment consisted of "wool blankets cut into pieces, pulled from boiling water, cooled a bit and then applied to my back and thighs, then covered with a rubber sheet to hold in the heat. Another blanket was over that—four times a day." No visitors were allowed to the ward, "hard for an eleven-year-old."

Joan talked about her teenage years at Puyallup High School in the 1950s, and the kids' favorite hangouts such as The Creamery for "milk shakes poured into a tall glass from a metal blender container." Another hangout was Martin's Confectionary, for cherry cokes and green rivers. Joan worked on the high school newspaper, *The Viking*. A journalism major, she graduated in 1951 and married her high school sweetheart six months later.

## **Reminiscing with fellow members**

Joan described her early homes on the Hill and shared a funny story about her oldest son, then a 13-year-old amateur radio enthusiast, who worked on MARS (Military Air Relay System).

Joan finished by looking at the audience and naming fellow members who were part of her life when they were young women, raising children together, and others she grew up with. Fascinating stories that we'd like to hear more of in the future!

**Newsletter helpers, contributors,  
proofreaders needed**

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

The South Hill Historical Society has established a scholarship fund for college-bound Rogers and Emerald Ridge high school students. Thanks to a generous donation by one of our members, we have a sizable fund for this annual gift. The fund is earmarked for a worthy student's financial support as s/he prepares for higher education.

This year marks our inaugural award to a young lady at Rogers High School. Not only is she interested in History, one of the Society's criterion, but found the grant "timely for my family" as many students and families face tremendous expenses in these hard economic times. Congratulations to Sarah Anne Inglin on receiving the first ever Historical Society grant of \$500 for her use in furthering her education.

Sarah Anne wrote a heartfelt thank-you to the group. "I cannot thank you enough for selecting me for the South Hill Historical Society scholarship. I was absolutely shocked when I found out! Receiving this scholarship was the highlight of my final days at Rogers High School. History is something I've always loved and enjoyed; I am so happy I was able to receive a historical scholarship. Your generosity and kindness has helped more than I could ever...fully put into words. I am extremely excited to further my education and create a fulfilling future. Again, thank you so much. You have no idea how much you have helped me; I feel incredibly blessed." Sarah Anne will attend Pierce College this Fall.

If you are interested in adding to our scholarship fund, contact President Bob Ballou at 243-845-6071 or stonebluebob@comcast.com.

***Celebrate Museum Day on September 29.***  
*Hundreds of museums across the country will open their doors for free. Go to the website [smithsonianmag.com/museumday](http://smithsonianmag.com/museumday) to print free entry tickets—two per household—or participating museums in the area.*

# Early women's craft club on South Hill leaves precious artifact

By Debbie Burtnett

Donations and discoveries of important documents tell the story of a community like South Hill. They are also the lifeblood of an historical society. Eventually, a Society such as the South Hill organization wants to have a permanent home for the collection and preservation of its history. Occasionally, our officers retrieve a special item from the storage facility to remind the membership of our treasures.

Last May, the embroidery completed in the 1940s by the Home Craft Club, made the rounds at the Woodland School Reunion and the general meeting. The Home Craft Club was a group of ladies who lived in the Woodland School area before and during World War II. They created a number of projects including clothing items out of flour sacks and lap robes for servicemen at Madigan Hospital on the grounds of Fort Lewis.

The embroidery created by the ladies as a testimony to their organization reads: *Friendship is an endless chain; there's always room for one more name.*

The donation to the Society was made by Mr. W. Lynn Williams and Robert H. Williams. The stitchery was given to Nellie Williams by Mable Litton who designed and completed the work.

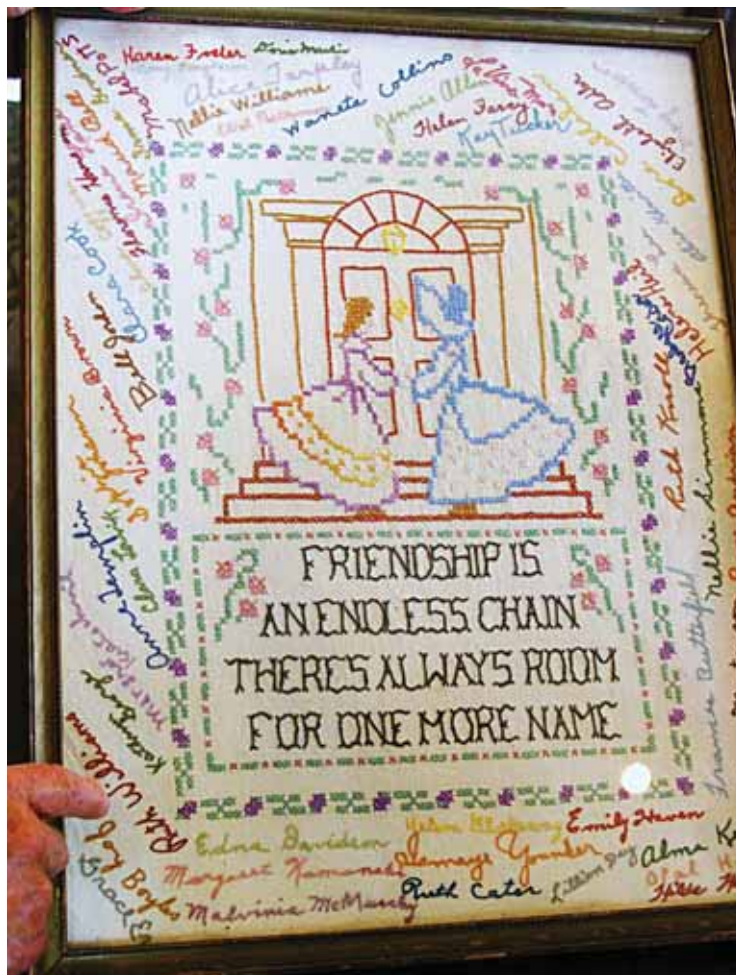
## Memories of the signatories

As time goes on, we learn more about the members of the craft club. President Bob Ballou's

mother, Helen C. Ballou, left an envelope with the following memories of other craft club members. "Ruth Knoll, a very pretty lady" and "Theresa Lee came to the Fruitland Grange on dance nights with a basket on her arm. She served the lunch at dance breaks--frying hamburgers, etc." Of Nellie Williams, Helen Ballou wrote, "[she] collected antique glass, was very active in the Democratic Party;" and "Alma Keil always had a cheery smile on her face" while "Anne Tempelin worked with the Grange Youth Department."

If readers have any information about this group or any other historical memory or artifact involving South Hill, please share with the South Hill Historical Society or contact us at [mail@southhillhistory.com](mailto:mail@southhillhistory.com).

*Our first story on the Home Craft Club was in the September, 2005, edition of History on the Hill. The story was by Helen Heil Rohlman, whose mother was a member. Back issues available on our website, [southhillhistory.com](http://southhillhistory.com), click on "Newsletters" in the left column of the home page.*



**The women's Home Craft Club of South Hill, created this embroidery, donated to our Society.**

# 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

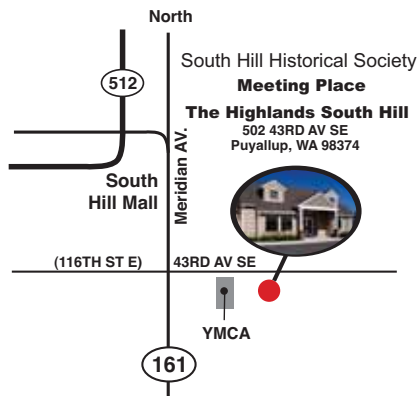
A printed roster including members' home and e-mail addresses, plus phone numbers is available upon request (*restricted to members only*). Call me—Ben Peters—at 253-845-7028.

## 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             | Olive McDonough           |
| Andy & Ruth Anderson         | Laurienne Stewart Minnich |
| Elizabeth Anema              | Carolyn Nelson            |
| Bob Ballou                   | Dorothy Nelson            |
| Teresa Best                  | Juanita Nordin            |
| Jerry Bates                  | Mark & Dorothy Norris     |
| Susan Beals                  | Gloria O'Kelly            |
| Katherine Bennett            | Ron & Lois Pearson        |
| Marilyn Burnett              | Wes & Suzy Perkinson      |
| Debbie Burtnett              | Lee Van Pevenage          |
| Vernon Cox                   | Ben Peters                |
| Jeff Cunningham              | Bill Riley                |
| Dave & Patti Curtiss         | Bernice Fisher Rinehart   |
| Bob Crabb                    | Roy and Sheila Rinker     |
| Karen Day                    | Vern Rockstad             |
| James H. Dixon               | Helen Rohlman             |
| Pat Drake                    | Earl Root                 |
| Joan Ellis                   | Jean Ross                 |
| Arthur & Luverne Foxford     | Stan & Margery Salmon     |
| Ira Gabrielson               | Bonnie Starkel            |
| Don & Mary Glaser            | Lori Stock                |
| Hazel Whitford Miller Goheen | Bill Stover               |
| Calvin & Amy Goings          | Marge (Crosson) Swain     |
| Paul Hackett                 | Ralph & Yvonne Thorpe     |
| Cecil & Doris Herbert        | Margo L & Joe Tucci       |
| Evelyn Swalander Hess        | Lee Van Pevenage          |
| Wilma Walsworth Hinshaw      | Carl Vest                 |
| Maybelle Hoenhaus            | Neil & Celia Vincent      |
| Matt Holm                    | Joan Vosler               |
| Leslie & Velma Huff          | W. Louise Walsworth       |
| Jim Kastama                  | W. Lynn Williams          |
| John Knierim                 | Lenore Nicolet Winton     |
| Art Larson                   | Ed Zeiger                 |
| Terry Maves                  | Hans Zeiger               |

## South Hill Historical Society Officers

President, **Bob Ballou**  
Vice-President, **Hans Zeiger**  
Secretary, **Katie Bennett**  
Research Coordinator, **Carl Vest**  
Treasurer, **Ben Peters**  
Newsletter Editor, **Jerry Bates**  
Public Relations Coordinator, **Paul Hackett**

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



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

**To:**