

A Nursery & A Pioneer Neighbor

by Jerry Bates

PETE Ziemke spoke to our group at the November General Meeting. He is a man of many talents and interesting life adventures. His talk focused on two subjects: founding his nursery on South Hill and his pioneer neighbor Frank Shaw. We'll start with the nursery story.



The Garden of Eden Nursery & the late Frank Shaw

The Garden of Eden Nursery—1977-2001

“When I came here from Wisconsin I had \$100 in my pocket, the clothes on my back, and two suitcases.” Shortly after arriving he threw away his round trip ticket. Pete Ziemke decided to stay. He flew here to visit his mother and brothers who had moved from Wisconsin years earlier.

He would marry a South Hill girl and fulfill his dream—to find a place to live with space for an attached retail nursery. He met his future wife, Linda, through his brother’s church. A romance blossomed, culminating in a trip to Reno where they were married. “She gambled and I won,” said Pete.

Pete had a background in landscaping. “I loved working with nature and playing in the dirt.” So, after they married, he and Linda started looking

for a home with adjacent land for a nursery site. After a long, frustrating search, they discovered a house for sale on two and one-half acres along Shaw Road. His wife thought it was too far out and without streetlights—but Pete saw



Image from *Legendary Locals of the Puyallup Valley* by Ruth Anderson

the surrounding area as prime land for future housing developments—just what a new nursery business would need! They made offer on the house

an with only one concern—they needed more land. The owner offered six more acres and a deal was made. Shortly after that in 1977, The Garden of Eden Nursery opened. They started on a shoe-string while Linda worked at Good Sam hospital; and the nursery was only open on weekends. “We tried everything to make a buck,” said Pete, “including selling Rhododendrons out of the back of the pickup truck parked along Meridian and locations downtown Puyallup.” After building up nursery stock, he worked at his business seven days a week. “105 hours a week was typical for me, not rare—typical!” My grandkids now say, “Grandpa, there’s no such thing as a 105 hour work week. But, I never felt it was work because I loved what I did and we met so many wonderful

people along the journey.” He added, “With new developments going in all around us one after another, such as Manor Wood and Crystal Ridge, business was good.”

Pete started stringing Christmas lights at the nursery. First, he put a few strings up that his father-in-law had given him, adding more each year. It grew into quite a light show. As Pete stated, “It attracted people from miles around, years before the Zoo Lights at Point Defiance or the Spanaway Park drive-through came along.” The display got so big; he needed an extra power service installed to handle it. “I hated to turn them off late at night—leaving them on for just one more car to pass.”

The Garden of Eden Nursery Christmas lights attracted a very famous visitor one Christmas Eve, the Reverend Billy Graham. Pete had done work for Mr. Graham’s youngest son who lived on Lake Tapps when a windstorm and falling cedar tree had caused severe damage to Ned Graham’s home. Ned, a grateful customer, became a friend and told Pete if he could ever do him a favor in the future to let him know. On hearing this, Pete extended an invitation to Ned Graham’s famous father to someday visit “another” Garden of Eden at Christmas time.

Billy Graham, his wife Ruth and their grandchildren came calling. Pete is proud of his Viking heritage and most of his friends call him “The Viking.” Upon being introduced to his famous visitor, he asked Mr. Graham if he should call him Reverend, Doctor or Pastor Billy Graham.

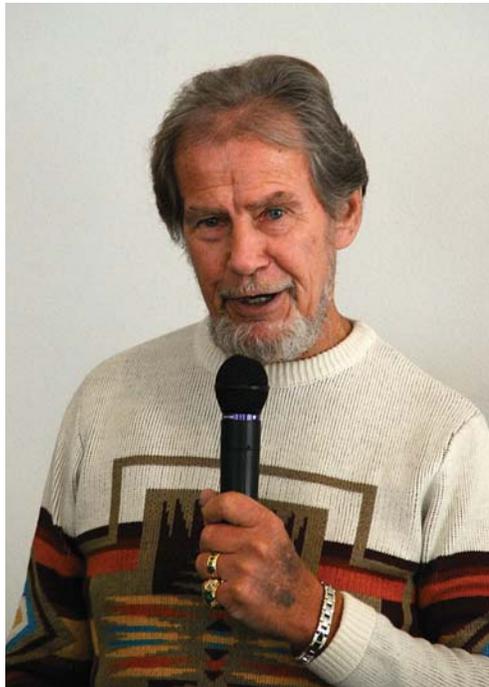
Mr. Graham asked, “Can I call you Viking?”

“Yes,” said Pete.

“You can call me Billy.”

During the picture taking that followed, Billy Graham said, “I’ve been photographed with many people—world leaders, movie stars, sports stars but never a Viking!” Pete said, “He was a truly humble man.”

Pete Ziemke has many talents. When young he had an excellent high tenor voice and in the early 1960s performed around the country with a gospel-singing group from Portland, Oregon, called The King’s Couriers. He designed their album, named the group, gave the album a title and wrote the cover story for the back. Later, he joined a group in Milwaukee called The Northernheirs, which he also named and created the album graphics. They performed throughout the South on the same stages as Blackwood Brothers, The Statesmen, The Oak Ridge Boys, Alabama, and many others. “Yes, Alabama started out singing gospel and country music,” Pete said.



Pete Ziemke
November 2016 Guest Speaker

Pete entertained us by singing a rendition of a birthday song. This song was a favorite of his friend Joe Stortini (former Pierce County Executive). When he sang the song at Mr. Stortini’s restaurant, Joesepi’s Italian Ristorante in Tacoma, the owner loved it. Says Pete, “Joe would make up a birthday, if need be, to hear the song.” Our group enjoyed it as well!

Neighbor Frank Shaw

Editor’s note: Frank Shaw was the son of Chris Shaw who settled in Puyallup in 1906 with his wife and six children

and became a very successful farmer. Chris Shaw and his son, Frank, along with neighbor Guy Clifford, engineered and developed a route connecting South Hill to Pioneer Avenue, the route later named Shaw Road.

It wasn’t long after Pete and Linda moved into their new home/nursery when neighbor Frank Shaw, bent with age, came walking up the driveway, knocked on the door and introduced himself. Many such visits would follow. Pete said he was “shrewd,” careful to visit when he saw Linda’s car at the house. “He loved Linda’s coffee—and we loved the old man and talking to him.” Pete, reminding us he was taught by his mother to respect his elders, enjoyed listening to Frank’s

stories and would 'pick his brain.' Frank once owned all the land along Shaw road including Pete's property. Shaw Road's "nasty curves," as Frank explained, were due to "the county screwing up my original survey."

When Old Frank learned Pete used to sing in gospel quartets and his brother was a preacher (Pastor Gene Ziemke), Frank loudly announced, "I used to know Aimee Semple McPherson!" (Evangelist and media celebrity of the 1920s & 30s.) He wanted to attend Pete's brother's church. "We took him to church and to the choir loft and sang—he loved it!"

Frank invited Pete to his home. "He was very eclectic and crafty," said Pete. For example, a salvaged grand piano from a Puyallup High School fire with legs burned off was mounted on the wall—made into a China cabinet! Out in his barn was the horse-drawn wagon used by his father to travel west—its current status unknown. Pete recalled for us many of Frank's stories, including one about Ezra Meeker. While bouncing up the hill in his new Model-T Ford, Meeker spooked Frank's draft horses, Maude and Millie, hard at work pulling a huge log. Infuriated, Frank confronted Meeker, "He was a bigger man, but I was younger," said old Frank. The young man slugged him under the chin putting the historic figure on his back. Pete continued, "Frank could quote scripture almost as good as my Pentecostal preaching brother! Afterwards he would grin and follow with a little 'smut' joke."

One day an ambulance was in front of Frank's house. Pete ran over— Frank had passed away. Pete ran inside and there was Frank lying in his bed, fully dressed in his 'Sunday-go-to-meeting'

suit. The bed he was conceived in was the bed in which he died.

Pete and Linda sold the nursery in 2001, and "sadly," said Pete, "the property today has become very rundown and nature has taken over—no sign a nursery was ever there." But, he added, "Everything has worked out well for us, including many precious memories!"



The Reverend Billy Graham visits the Garden of Eden Nursery and owner Pete Ziemke "The Viking"

The Family & The Road—Early History

*by Jerry Bates
with inserts thanks to Carl Vest*

Let's go back a hundred and sixteen years, when travel in Puyallup meant riding or being pulled by a horse. If you were lucky, perhaps a train or trolley would get you where you were going. The only commercial transit between Seattle and Tacoma was by the water of Puget Sound.

The year is 1901 and a 45 year-old carpenter, Chris Shaw, his wife Mary and six children were settling in the Puyallup Valley. They had made a long hard journey from Colorado through Wyoming, Idaho and Oregon. Shaw a clever carpenter, modified his large wagon to resemble a modern day camper and built a small wagon/buggy Mary could handle while caring for her baby.

Chris Shaw was a Danish immigrant with talent and ingenuity that would benefit any community he was part of. Among his many talents, he was known for his mechanical skills.

Before coming to the Puyallup Valley, he attended college to become a minister. His life here was spent as a farmer, preacher and carpenter. He became one of the most respected men in Puyallup.

The spot where he built his home, across from where today's 25th St SE and Pioneer Avenue meet, had to be cleared by him and his two elder sons, Emery and Frank. Remember, the entire valley was originally heavily wooded. After four years of clearing his 15-acre property and building a house and barn, he had what was called then a "model home and farm." It was featured in the January 7, 1911 *Puyallup Valley Tribune*.



The article stated: "The fruit on this place consists of one and one-half acres of Evergreen blackberries, three-fourths of an acre of red raspberries and two acres of orchard, principally apples, pears and cherries... ten acres of the farm are in pasturage and the remainder is devoted to kale, beets and other forage root crops." His crops held production records for kale and beets.

Shaw's seventh child was born in 1904, giving him and his wife three sons and four daughters. Lightning killed the oldest son Emery when he was 25 in 1912.

Their farm was considered the "oasis." The Shaws would take in homeless people. After a good meal, Chris Shaw the preacher, would try to convert them, telling them of the gospel.

Shaw's Road

In 1916 what is now Shaw Road was a mere trail along which some families with small children lived. Wild animals often stalked those that traveled this path.

Since Chris Shaw's son Frank Shaw and Guy Clifford now owned property along the route, they

felt compelled to convert the existing path into a road. Building the road became a Shaw family project. Frank Shaw was a born engineer; he and Guy Clifford combined their efforts (Guy Clifford would marry Frank Shaw's sister Laura).

Like most roads on South Hill, Shaw Road was not completed as part of one big construction job. Rather, it was developed in phases, or as small sections, one after the other, over a period of time. It now appears that the first section, about a mile in length, has its roots in the year 1914.

Sometime in 1914 Petitions to establish Shaw Road were submitted to the Pierce County Commissioners. One must say "sometime" because

in the County records there are two different Petitions and both are undated. As a result of these requests, however, the County Engineer undertook

a survey of the proposed road and filed a report dated December 15, 1914. The Engineer also filed a document titled Field Notes, which show that his survey was undertaken between October 3 and 21, 1914. So, while the solicitations show no date it must be concluded they were filed before and initiated the Engineer's work.

Sixteen property owners signed one Petition, which appears to be the initial request to establish the Road. It carries the appeal that "... said road be known as the Shaw County Road." One member of the Shaw family is among the signers: Mrs. CB Shaw. Eleven property owners signed the other application. There is some endorsement overlap, however, as several property owners approved both requests. But from the language, the eleven-signature document appears to be the second submission. A Mr. CB Shaw signed this appeal. It also suggested that the road be one mile in length.

After considering the requests made by citizens, and approving the work done by the County Engineer, Pierce County Commissioners on November 5, 1915 approved a road of 3,943 feet

(three-quarters of a mile), crossing Section 35 of Township 20. Naming it Shaw County Road was approved at the same time.

The road was completed in 1920. The state road commissioner at the time was highly impressed, calling it remarkable. The commissioner insisted that it be named Shaw Road, for it was the Shaw family and spouses that donated the equipment, time and money to make it possible.

The original road did not connect in a straight north-south line to Pioneer Avenue as it now does. At the bottom of South Hill the original constructors routed it westward on what is now 12th Avenue, S.E. The road was then built along the bottom edge of the Hill until it reached a point that is now 25th Street S.E. Here it was again directed north and was terminated at Pioneer Avenue across from the Shaw family farmhouse.

Editor's Note:

For a more detailed account of the Shaw family, ask our archivist, Wes Perkinson, for a copy of the family history written by Laura Shaw Clifford. The request can be sent to email@southhillhistory.com

The first road to connect the Hill to the Valley

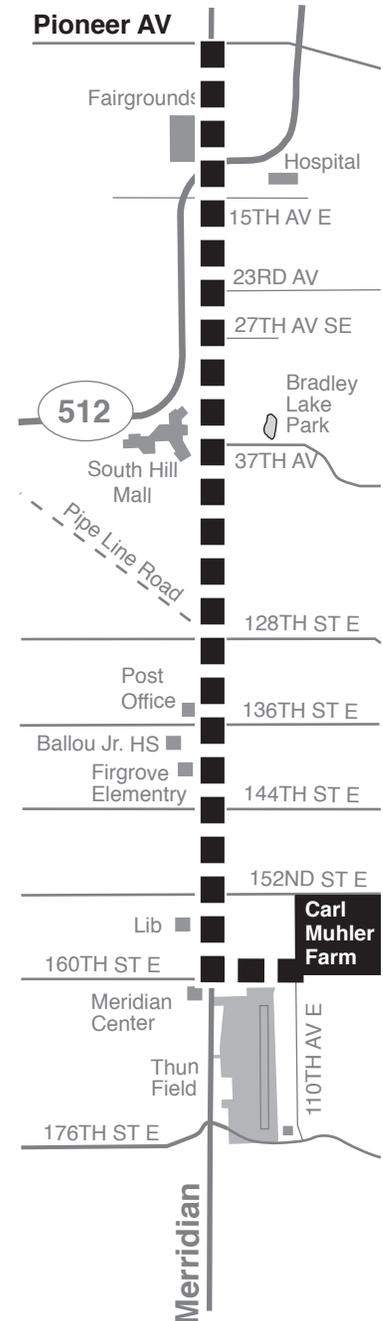
by Carl Vest

Meridian Avenue on South Hill is often the subject of negative reviews. Motorists who use it regularly vilify its congestion and the time consumed as they try to move about. And while waiting at intersections, many have noticed that below the usual street marker there is a brown colored sign that declares Meridian was once known as Ball-Wood Road. Why is that?

Meridian Avenue is believed to be the oldest planned street on South Hill. Its genesis was in 1888 when a group of local people petitioned Pierce County to establish a road from the Puyallup City line to the farm of Carl Muhler, known as "Swamp Muhler," who owned a hop farm just to the east of what is now the Pierce County airport.

A survey (called viewing and locating) was started in April and completed in May 1889. The route selected went south along the centerline of Township 19, for a distance of five miles. That point is approximately at the present intersection of 160th Street East and Meridian Avenue. The surveyors then turned east and marked to the Muhler farm, about one additional mile. The present day terminus would be about 110th Avenue. Records show that the survey team members were paid \$102.30 for their work.

County Commissioners accepted the report of the survey team at its regular meeting in May 1889. The road was ordered built. It was reportedly 30 feet wide and constructed with regular county labor. There is no indication that a contractor was involved. That it was named Ball-Wood Road is derived from a petition to the Commissioners in January 1905, when 43 residents wrote asking for "... straightening, grading and graveling of one mile of Ball & Wood Road ..."



Historic Ball-Wood Road (Meridian) over today's map shown in gray.

There are no entries in the extant record that explain why the route was named the Ball-Wood Road. To get the initial road started, however,

the original petitioners were required to post a Bond (\$200), agreeing to "... pay all costs and expenses that may be incurred by reason of the view and survey of said road" Such a Bond was furnished and is dated February 4, 1889. Harvey M. Ball and George H. Wood signed it as principals. Thus, it is obvious that in recognition of this gesture the road was named for Ball and Wood. Both men were also signers of the original Petition.

About 1910 the road was extended to the Graham area, but not along the current route of Meridian Avenue. Rather it was built along present day 110th Avenue, and across what is now the closed county landfill. It connected with present day Meridian at about 188th Street, and is still visible in some spots.

Over the years Meridian Avenue has been known by a number of names: Ball-Wood Road, Puyallup-Graham Road, Meridian Street Extension, Farm-to-Market Road, and probably others. But Ball-Wood Road was the first and thus the historic name.



South Hill Historical Society President Wes Perkinson stands behind a gas light fixture dating from the 1800s. The light was salvaged from the entryway of the old Woodland Elementary School before its demolition. Dave & Elaine Holder of Tacoma donated the now electric light to the society. Wes says, "At this time no restoration will be done, as much research would be needed to determine how it looked before electrification. I will build a wood container to house the light so the glass is protected." Wes is also our society archivist. Wes is continuing to get more history on the light including plans to contact the school's former secretary who had it in her home for many years before moving to Arizona.

DVDs Available

We have a vast library of VCR tapes that have been individually converted to DVD discs. They can be viewed on televisions or home computers with CD/DVD players/drives. Most General Meetings are video recorded by Bob Ballou. Our speakers receive a free DVD of his or her presentation. Additional DVDs can be purchased for \$3.00 each.

Our DVD archives also includes many years of interviews with South Hill people of interest. All DVDs are available for borrowing by SHHS members.

For a list, contact Bob Ballou,
mail@southhillhistory.com
253-845-7691

Do you have something you would like to share relating to South Hill? For example: family history, a current event, an announcement, or old photographs?

Subjects from fellow members as well as the public makes for a better newsletter! We are glad to assist with writing or editing.

Contact Jerry Bates
mail@southhillhistory.com

From the Treasurer

by Ben Peters

Welcome to New Member

Paul Stonebridge

Please call, e-mail or write any change of address to me, Ben Peters, 253-845-7028, poppa-ben2002@yahoo.com, South Hill Historical Society, Box 73582, 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.

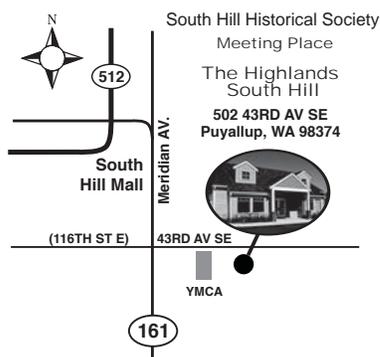
Dues Reminder

I will attach a sticky note to the Society newsletter mailed closest to your renewal date. **No need to fill out the membership form unless there is a change of some kind.**

The South Hill Historical Society meets regularly on the **THIRD TUESDAY** of the month, 10:45 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.

We welcome you to our monthly meetings. For more information, contact Wes Perkinson at (253) 241-5397.

Where to Find Us



In Memoriam

The South Hill Historical Society
regrets the passing of

Cecil Herbert

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South Hill Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

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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:

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