

Fred the Barber

By Debbie Burtnett

For almost 48 years, Fred Gendreau has been “Fred the Barber” to South Hill residents. To his daughter, Leah, he was a celebrity while she was growing up. “It was hilarious to go anywhere with Dad in town ... EVERYBODY knew him! When I was growing up, kids would always say ‘wow, your Dad is Fred the Barber?’ ” Fred did not foresee a career in the service industry at age 13 when he was a shoeshine boy at Floyd’s Barber Shop in Puyallup.

Born and raised in Puyallup, Fred lived near the current site of Good Samaritan Hospital on five acres and raised his family of four children with wife, Sandra, for 59 years on the same piece of property. Today, he still works three days on the Hill styling hair and owns a ranch in Roy, where he raises horses and sheep and gives back to his community through volunteer work.

Fred had no ‘ambition’ for becoming a barber. He happened to be reading a poster at a vocational school one day and ended up in the barber’s program. An instructor approached him. “You can start in that class tomorrow if you want.” Sandi Gendreau said, “Fred came from a family of eight, lived in a tiny little house on 7th street by Good Sam, and he was second to the youngest...his mom was saying ‘you’ve got to do

something!’ ” He ended up going to Bates Vocational School, looking at the barber poster. Thus, Fred began his training commenting, “Funny when life takes you that way ...”

Fred used his training while serving in the Navy

Reserves from 1964-66. Although he asked for a more exotic posting, Fred ended up stationed in the tideflats in Tacoma and was able to barber both aboard ship and in the area. While at sea, he was always seasick, so the home base was a blessing. “I had a lot of good friends who went to Viet Nam and never came back,” Fred recalled. Once out of the service, Fred returned to Kenny Day’s old-time barber shop in Puyallup full-time. He



Fred Gendreau, now in semi-retirement, seen here on his farm in Roy.

married the former Sandra Inman and they became parents of four children—Stacey, Fred, Sarah, and Leah. Kenny Day’s shop was first located on Meridian next to the railroad tracks, but the shop moved to a location behind the Puyallup Safeway Grocery Store. It was there that Fred heard from his customers. “As I talked to my customers, they kept saying how much they hated to come all the way down the Hill to get services,” explained Fred. “I heard more and more of that so I thought that I’d go there and meet them and be in their neighborhood ... that’s how I decided to start the first shop.”



A young "Fred the Barber" early in his career worked in Puyallup at Kenny Day's barber shop.



Fred started his own shop on the Hill with some nudging by his customers tired of driving to Puyallup for their haircuts.

Fred's first shop

Fred borrowed \$500 from his parents to start his own business. To repay that money, he had to earn \$20 per day barbering to cover the mortgage for the house and the business. There were lots of days when he didn't make his personal 'quota.' While starting a business was a "scary thing to do," it grew profitably, and Fred bought more property to build a larger shop and a suite of offices. Sandi Gendreau commented, "It's rare for a free-standing business to last as long as Fred's has for over forty years."

Developing the Hill

"When I came up the road to start the business, Moreland Tree Farms occupied the place where the mall is today ... to the South was Willows Corner where a tavern and a couple of little stores were located. I set up shop on 128th in a small room adjacent to a little gas station plus feed store," stated Fred. "Everything that was in between and farther out was trees, although Firgrove School was there. There were no stores of any kind until you came to the Willows," continued Fred. He recalled how quickly the Hill began to develop. Citing the locations of Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pep Boys, and Schucks, Fred said a friend of his father's owned the land and offered to sell it for \$23,000, but "I couldn't do it, even though I knew development was go-

ing to happen. Over a period of fifteen years, the property escalated in value until it was sold for \$480,000."

The original 500 sq. ft. shop—for which Fred purchased land and built—remains on the Hill near Good Sam as a remodeled home for Sandy's mother. Once it was moved from the 12303 123rd address to 5th Street near the hospital, "Then I had the empty lot," said Fred, "and built a 10,000 sq. ft. office building on that same location—12303 Meridian East—while living in a white house where Big Foot Java is now located. It took about a year—then we got the building going."



Things have certainly changed along Meridian since Fred Gendreau built this 10,000 sq. ft. office building (Evergreen Business Park). The northwest corner featured his barber shop *Fred & Company*.



The scene today at 12303 Meridian. Fred still maintains ownership of the building, but the barber shop today is called Studio C Salon & Spa, the site also houses Allstate, MetLife and Woodmen of America offices.

However, Fred credits his customers for his success. “Every single thing I did, I learned from talking to my customers.” For example, a United Airlines pilot told him about property in Graham. This time, he was able to act, purchasing five acres at \$20 down and \$20 per month. “I didn’t have the money,” he said, but explained how he earned it. “I bought a chain saw (on time) and went with my wife every single weekend and [we] cut wood and sold it by the cord and paid for the saw immediately, and did that every weekend until most of the land was paid for ... at that time, inflation was happening, so that land became very valuable really quick and I sold it; made a good profit, and that’s how I got the money to put down on the property where our buildings are now. We built those buildings out of necessity ... we had four children, and we needed more income,” added Fred. Fred maintains ownership of that property at 12303 Meridian East, known for years as **Fred & Company** (but officially, **Studio C Salon & Spa**); he works three days per week (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 8 AM until 1 PM); and gives back to the community by making house calls for homebound customers (for no charge), taking homemade soup in Tupperware to his elderly clients.

Fred and family have contributed much to the Hill in terms of their volunteering. For almost ten years, they fostered eight children, “knowing they’d be adopted” and sponsored two Vietnamese families (who went to school and started an orthodontic clinic in Puyallup). Fred has been a Big Brother—to help young boys without dads—and supported Rogers High through his business with basketball calendars, donations to cheerleading squad, yearbook ads, and free haircuts for students. His shop has provided gift baskets for auctions and offered other free services. He has sponsored **Fred & Company** baseball little league teams and one for the “big guys” through the recreation division of the ‘Y’. Lately, he and Sandi have been fostering pets until the dogs find “forever homes.” They have provided ‘therapy horses’ to a teacher friend whose daughter works with Jessie, the horse, and some general use for 4-H.

Of his client base, Fred says, “I still have clients I first cut in 1965 and have served several gener-

ations of the same family ... children, grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren, as well as older customers like ‘Glenn’, who graduated PHS in 1930—I still cut his hair, but at his home.” Other notable customers include Dr. Hilliard and wife Connie—who built NorthWest Trek. Fred takes great pride in his shop and its management over the decades, having employed as many as eight barbers over the years, two of whom worked for 25 years and two who remain working, now in their 28th year ... really great people.”

Fred turned the business over to Chantel Waterbury about six years ago—which ensured both tenancy and consistency in **Fred & Company** service. “She took over the entire shop, quite a few employees, and she’s doing fine,” bragged Fred.

These days, Fred is starting it all over again in Roy, the way he did on the Hill. “Once again, I go out and meet the people where they need me,” he said. Fred maintains a small shop in his barn so “the people don’t have to go all the way to the Hill for services.”

A Swedish Family

Our speaker for the March General Meeting was long-time South Hill Historical Society member, Dorothy Swalander Norris. Society co-founder and current Public Relations Coordinator, Paul Hackett, introduced Dorothy. “We’re hearing today about a Swedish family that came to the United States,” said Paul. Dorothy’s roots on the Hill go back to 1897 when her grandfather, Reinhold Swalander, bought property and settled on South Hill.

Dorothy’s grandfather and his brother, Carl, left Sweden in March of 1883, arriving in New York in April, 1883. They traveled to Kansas, stayed a couple of years, and then moved on to Washington state. Her grandfather rented property in Fife on the Puyallup Indian reservation. He and his young wife, who also traveled from Sweden,

had three daughters and one son, the oldest, who died in the winter of 1890. The valley was flooded; there was no way for the doctor to get to the house to treat the sick child. Thanks to the friendly Puyallup Indians, they managed to bring the doctor by canoe, but it was too late. The boy had already died of appendicitis. The generous Indians even furnished clothes for the girls to wear for the funeral.

In 1897, Rheinhold purchased property on South Hill—no longer wanting to live in the valley with its floods. The land was located east of the Summit area, straddling today’s Pipeline Road. Only one acre of it is left today of the original eighty acres bought by Rheinhold. The old farmhouse



Dorothy Swalandar Norris

still stands on the remaining acre, which continues to be in the possession of the family. A member of the fifth generation of Swalanders is in the process of buying the house.

Dorothy

went on to tell about her colorful great uncle, Carl, who came from Sweden with her grandfather. He lived in a shack built of shakes and insulated with newspaper. He grew vegetables, had chickens, and sold his produce, as Dorothy remembers, on Vashon Island. Amazingly, he eventually earned enough to buy a house in Puyallup, which he rented. Dorothy told an amusing story about him and his rental home. His renters were not paying the rent, so in order to get rid of them; he moved in upstairs and made enough noise to force them out.

Carl Swalander worked very hard, even with only one leg, having lost the other in a sawmill accident. “He was a real survivor,” said Dorothy. One interesting feature of the old Swalander

farmhouse on South Hill is the huge oxel tree planted from a seed mailed in an envelope from Sweden in 1897. The old tree still stands, “but is starting to lean a bit,” said Dorothy. For more on this tree and the Swalanders, see our June 2004 edition of History On the Hill. All Society newsletters can be downloaded from our website, southhillhistory.com.



Pictured here are items Dorothy Swalander Norris brought for her talk. The book is titled *Our Swedish Roots, The Family History of the Widen, O'Brian,*

***Swalander and Anderssan Families*. It's written by Dorothy's sister's granddaughter. Also shown are historic pictures of the old house. Dorothy's uncle, Frank Swalander, using hazel shoots, wove the basket. Dorothy said, "He sold them everywhere."**

Scientist, Activist, Environmentalist

Our April meeting guest speaker was member Allen Zulauf. Allen has a long history of community involvement and activism on South Hill. As a soil scientist, Allen also has a great interest and concern for regional environmental issues. His connection to soil started as a child listening to his teacher, Mrs. Brown, talk about the Dust Bowl of the Great Depression and how tough life was in the 1930s. It made quite an impression on a kid growing up in the highly urbanized area of metropolitan New York and New Jersey (Allen could see the Empire State building from his bedroom). Allen said he always wanted to work in agriculture and save the soil. He admired the work of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). “We need such an organization

today, with parks being closed.”

He remembered during World War II, his mother worked the night shift producing plastic for airplane canopies and gun turrets. There was much pollution from the plant’s emissions, mak-



Allen Zulauf

ing it difficult to breathe in the summer. The factory was only a mile from his house. His mother “was happy for having a job, but came home with clothes reeking of organic chemicals.”

Allen cited the air quality of Pierce County as stated in its recent 2012 Environmental Health Trends report as “not meeting federal health-based standards.” And, it’s worse in winter when residents are burning wood. The South Hill area is one of the major areas in the county with unhealthy air quality. Residents should be aware of wood smoke reduction programs.

Allen continued with his early years. In 1950, he was drafted into the Korean War but rather than sail to Korea as did many of his friends, he sailed to France. Allen found himself stationed in a small town north of Bordeaux in the heart of wine-making country. At that stage of his life, “I had no appreciation for wine. We always drank beer. But I like wine now!”

When he returned home, he and his brother developed a small package delivery business

serving metropolitan New York and upper New Jersey. Encouraged by his other brother, a University of Oregon graduate, he moved to Oregon and entered Portland State College. Allen became very attached to the Northwest because “it’s the greatest part of the country to live in.”

He used the Korean War G.I. Bill to pay college expenses, graduating from Oregon State in 1954 with a degree in soils. The Soil Conservation Service in Washington State later employed him. He eventually transferred to Puyallup to complete the Soil Survey of Pierce County and lead a state and federal group to provide watershed resource information to Puget Sound governments.

In 1968, Allen and his wife, Ellen, along with their three children, moved here from Omak, Washington. Their first house on the Hill was on 107th ST, right off 86th Avenue. The backyard of the house bordered a raspberry field where Allen could picture his kids picking berries in the summer. “Those thoughts were swept away with the field being in the path of 512,” he stated.

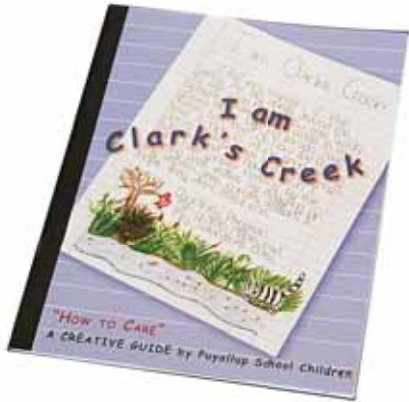
Besides his professional career, Allen involved himself in our community. He took on traffic congestion. Strip malls were beginning to line Meridian. Meridian was “being choked” by cars, making it difficult to enter and leave these businesses. The South Hill Community Council focused on one development and pushed for access by side streets to and from the stores, with the streets connecting to intersections on Meridian.

In the 1960s and 1970s, land use plans on South Hill weren’t adequate. There was little effort by the county commissioners to do anything about it.

In Allen’s opinion, a very dramatic change for the better came with the formation of a charter government. The Pierce County Council replaced three men who made all the decisions that affected the county.

Allen, a strong environmentalist, was chair of the Puyallup River Watershed (earning the Citizen Watershed Steward Award in 2008) and

former board member of Citizens for a Healthy Bay. Allen believes that the next generation of voters will be more sensitive to the environment than the current generation.



Working with the Washington State Fisheries Plant at Clark's Creek, area grade school students displayed their knowledge and skills in art and science, resulting in the creation of this booklet about Clark's Creek's environment. The project "worked out wonderfully" says Allen Zulauf.

The booklet was the culmination of efforts by many groups and agencies working together: The National Park Service, Puyallup School District Resource Center, Maplewood, Fruitland and Spinning schools' principals and teachers; plus the Washington State University Watershed Council. The National Department of Ecology donated the printing.

Good Sam Earns Recognition

By Debbie Burtnett

Good Samaritan Hospital has earned a Superstar rating with its Hospital Safety Score, announced Leah Binder, president and CEO of the Leapfrog Group, a D.C.-based non-profit that assesses hospitals on national standards of safety, quality, and efficiency.

The April/May edition of AARP features the "Top Hospitals for Safety" on pp. 54-55, as well as an informative article on hospitals around the country with new, proven measures that have greatly increased safety, and reduced infections and medication errors which ensure better outcomes.

The article begins relating a tragedy that occurred at Virginia Mason, and cites specific measures taken at that facility which enabled it to earn the same Superstar rating as Good Sam. Leapfrog states that all hospitals should be improving patient safety as Virginia Mason and many others across the U.S. have done.

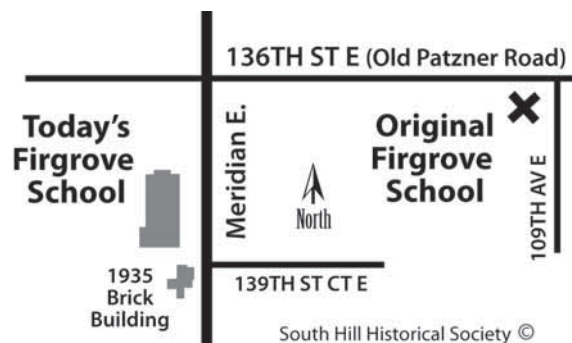
(Other MultiCare facilities received 'A' ratings; but only Good Sam earned Superstar status). To find out what each of the Superstar hospitals have done to enhance patient safety, go online to aarp.org/safehospitals.

Patzner School—we need a picture!

We have yet to find a picture of the old Patzner School. We do have old class pictures taken in front of it, with a window or wall of the school in the background, but nothing showing the entire structure.

This was an all wood school building used before the Firgrove "brick school" on Meridian was built in 1935. The old school consisted of one building, and was officially called the Firgrove School. It was built in 1895. It was not on the same site as the present-day school (see map). Old timers called it the Patzner School, due to it

being built by member Don Glaser's great-grandfather John Patzner, and located on Patzner Road.



From the Treasurer

by Ben Peters

Welcome to our new member

Robin Reich

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

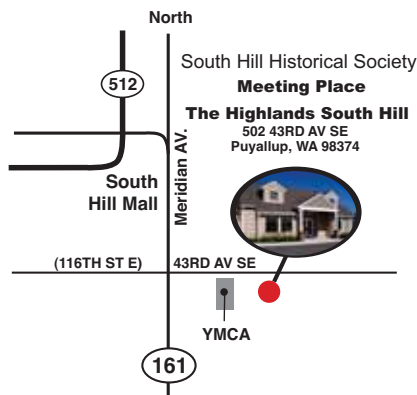
A printed roster including members' home and e-mail addresses, plus phone numbers is available upon request (*restricted to members only*). Call me—Ben Peters—at 253-845-7028.

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 | Laurienne Stewart Minnich |
| Andy & Ruth Anderson | Kaye Murrell |
| Elizabeth Anema | Carolyn Nelson |
| Marion Armstrong | Dorothy Nelson |
| Bob Ballou | Juanita Nordin |
| Teresa Best | Mark & Dorothy Norris |
| Jerry Bates | Gloria O'Kelly |
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| Marilyn Burnett | Wes & Suzy Perkinson |
| Debbie Burtnett | Ben Peters |
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| Dave & Patti Curtiss | Roy and Sheila Rinker |
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| James H. Dixon | Helen Rohlman |
| Pat Drake | Earl Root |
| Joan Ellis | Jean Ross |
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| Ira Gabrielson | Bonnie Starkel |
| Don & Mary Glaser | Lori Stock |
| Calvin & Amy Goings | Bill Stover |
| Paul Hackett | Marge (Crosson) Swain |
| Cecil & Doris Herbert | Ralph & Yvonne Thorpe |
| Evelyn Swalander Hess | Margo L. & Joe Tucci |
| Wilma Walsworth Hinshaw | Lee Van Pevenage |
| Maybelle Hoenhaus | Carl Vest |
| Matt Holm | Neil & Celia Vincent |
| Leslie & Velma Huff | Joan Vosler |
| Jim Kastama | W. Louise Walsworth |
| John Knierim | W. Lynn Williams |
| Mike Kupfer | Lenore Nicolet Winton |
| Art Larson | Ed Zeiger |
| Terry Maves | Hans Zeiger |
| Olive McDonough | Allan S. & Ellen M. Zulauf |

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South Hill Historical Society Membership/Renewal Form

Name _____

Address _____

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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: