

Guy Wetzel



On a cold January night in 1950, Guy Wetzel, 66, stood before the Kiwanis Club at Mhyre's Café on Bay Street. The building, which today is in renovation from a fire, was alive

that night with Wetzel reading from his own manuscript, a detailed history of Port Orchard to those lucky attendees. He spoke of 1912 when electricity and water were available for the first time and how Harrison Street was named after Benjamin Harrison who was the President when the city was incorporated. A kindly man who fascinated everyone he knew and took the finances of Port Orchard seriously, never retired and devoted his entire life to public service.

Wetzel was the City Clerk for 16 years as well as serving a term as the County Clerk in his younger years. Three decades earlier, Wetzel married Florence Olsen, the County Treasurer and the first female elected official in Kitsap County. He and his daughter, Jimmie, shared precious times roaming the streets of Port Orchard nearly every night in his later years. This humble man could never have foretold that fifty years after his passing that one of those sleepy waterfront streets would actually bear his name.







TOWN OF PORT ORCHARD
Port Orchard, Washington

November 10, 1958

Mrs. Guy L. Wetzel
P. O. Box 591
Port Orchard, Washington

Dear Mrs. Wetzel:

We enclose herewith a duplicate original copy of a Resolution which was passed by the Council of the Town of Port Orchard meeting in regular session on Monday, November 10, 1958, and at the same time, we also wish to express to you, perhaps a little more personally, our sense of loss at Guy's passing.

We think you know already that all of us feel that the sound condition that the Town is now in is due largely to Guy's conscientious and continuous management and supervision of the Town's fiscal affairs over the last sixteen or seventeen years. For that reason alone, we all appreciate what he did and feel a keen sense of loss. It is not only, however, because of the direct services he rendered the Town that we miss him and will continue to miss him. Guy was a friend to all of us, ever ready to give us friendly advice and assistance whenever needed, not only as town officials, but as friends and neighbors. We all knew him as a friendly, kindly man who always had in the forefront of his mind, the welfare of his townfolk, his neighbors, and his community.

Words can offer little comfort to you for the loss of Guy, but we thought perhaps you would like to know that we feel we share your loss with you, as do all of the people of the Town, and if in any way we can be of service or assistance to you at this time, please feel free to request our services, either as individuals or as a group.

Very truly yours,

Dudley Penn
O. L. Wymore
George J. Givens
Len M. Sprague

[Signature]
Harold S. Boyer
Quay C. Hinckley
Ward W. Nichols
O. B. Caldwell
Nick J. Repanich
Lorraine Casaway

Wetzel Brothers Recall Landing Of The 'Ark'—Just 62 Years Ago



GUY WETZEL
today . . . and 1921



It was a morning much like yesterday's — 62 years ago—that a little scow, laden with everything from chickens and cows to household belongings, and even an alligator, was pushed to the beach across the bay, near where Beacon Appliance now is located in Port Orchard.

From the tiny tug which brought the little "Ark" across wind-swept waters from Seattle bulged the three Wetzel brothers, their parents and grandparents, an aunt and uncle and two cousins.

The sun was peeking through the clouds, and it was ever so reassuring to the Nebraska farm families once again to set foot on solid ground. Their first experience on water "too big to throw a rock across" had been rough and wet.

Nevertheless, it was new and exciting—especially to the Wetzel boys.

"IT REALLY was quite a town," Guy, who was 7 at the time, recalled. "The population of Sidney was five or six hundred. Of course, there wasn't much else on the bay. Where Bremerton is today we could see only one house. We had passed a couple of brickyards down near where Waterman is, and there was a big logging camp at the head of the bay. But Sidney was buzzing. There were two sawmills, a couple of shingle mills, a terracotta works — and nine saloons . . .

"Things were getting too crowded around Madison, Neb., for dad, and he loaded up the family, livestock and all, and decided to come out here. Another uncle, S. J. Bridenstine, was a doctor here and had purchased some property around Sidney.

"I'll never forget. It was Washington's birthday, 1891, and we got off a train in Seattle about 1 o'clock in the morning. Dad spent all that day lining up a little tug and scow and moving the cows, chickens and plants and furniture aboard from a box car . . . And early the next morning we set out across the Sound.

"When we finally got to Sidney," Guy continued, "a house had been rented for us up on Mitchell hill, but we had to cross Blackjack creek, and there was no bridge. So we had to rent another scow to get our stuff

(Continued on Page 5, Col. 1)



SCOTT WETZEL
today . . . and 1914



'The World Has Been Good To Me'

(Sometime prior to his passing away at his home Tuesday morning, Guy L. Wetzel sat down at his typewriter and turned out the following account of his life. It was "scrapped" together, as he puts it, at the request of a relative interested in compiling a history of the Wetzel family. Each paragraph mirrors the personality of the man himself, gentle and kind, courteous and a gentleman, alert and responsible, lighthearted yet the finest of good citizens, a country newspaperman who faced up to his responsibilities. This is his story as he saw it. We are indebted to his wife, Mrs. Florence G. Wetzel, for permission to print it here. The Editor.)

BY GUY WETZEL

The Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock from the Mayflower, and I landed on the Beach in Port Orchard from a scow. There is a big difference in time between the two landings, and also a big difference in importance of the two experiences, the only similarity being that both landings brought a feeling of relief to the participants.

Having been born in Madison, Nebraska on January 4, 1884, I had never seen a body of water bigger than a mill pond, until I set eyes on Puget Sound in Seattle Harbor on February 22, 1891.

We left the prairie plains of Nebraska in December, 1890, and stopped for a couple of months in eastern Oregon. I never have been able to figure out just what the adults in the party had in mind when they left Nebraska. They brought with them an heterogeneous conglomeration of stuff that wouldn't have been necessary if they had been going to a completely unsettled country.

Among the stuff assembled for the great Northwest were the household goods of three families; house plants; singing birds, chickens; a cow; grub to feed the gang between meals on the train, and one of the youngsters in the party had a pet alligator, which was brought along in a shoe box, and created a lot of interest when he was taken out of his box and watered up at the water cooler in the corner of the sleeping car.

We had tourist accommodations on the train, the families not being affluent enough to afford first-class passage, and we were not too different from the other passengers on the train, except that I think we were the only ones with house plants, singing birds, and a pet alligator among the other luggage.

The mass of stuff assembled for the trip was piled in the baggage car, and it was necessary to get a box car to ship it west.

My dad came with the box car, milking the cow, feeding the chickens and trading milk and eggs to the other crew, and special favors on the way out. The freight train was about three days longer on the trip than the passenger, so dad was later getting to Oregon than the main party.

In the group were the Wetzel family, consisting of dad and mother, Selton M. and Edith M., the three Wetzel boys, Myron H., Guy L. and Ellsworth Scott; an uncle and aunt, Dr. and Mrs. S. J. Bridenstine, and their two boys, Manfred J. and Kenneth C.; and my maternal grandparents, Menira C. and Laura A. Scott.

We got to Pendleton, Oregon about noon on a mild December day, and from there entrained for Weston, Oregon, about twenty miles away.

This part of the journey was on a local train, and among the passengers were a couple of wild west cowboys. They played with us kids for a while, and being slightly enervated, they started to pick on a Chinaman sitting across the aisle from them.

The Chinaman took their hanting and abuse for a while, and then drew a knife and started an attack on the cowboys.

Pandemonium cut loose in the car, and I remember my uncle, who always carried a gun, grabbed his baby son Kenneth and ran to the end of the car, and drew his gun. The rest of us were too scared to move, and I can still see my uncle standing in the end of the car, with his baby in his right arm and his gun in his left hand, ready for action if it became necessary.

About this time a brakeman came in, pulled the emergency cord, and was going to throw the cowboys off the train, when the conductor entered the picture, cleared the car of all the passengers except the cowboys and an Irish woman who refused to leave, saying that she had as much right as the cowboys, and we proceeded on our way.

Then we hit the beach at

consisting of two saw mills, two shingle mills and a five story terra cotta plant.

The terra cotta plant was located at the foot of Pottery Hill (from whence that section of the town derives its name); one saw mill and one shingle mill were located on Bay Street between Harrison and Seattle streets; one shingle mill was on Black Jack Creek, operated by water power; and one saw mill was located on the beach at about the foot of Grant Street.

In addition to the existing industries, the people were all greatly excited and enthused about the establishment of the navy yard on the north shore of the bay.

When the box car with all the family possessions arrived in Seattle, a check of transportation facilities revealed that there wasn't a regular carrier running to Port Orchard by capable of handling the load, and Capt. W. H. Ellis, owner and master of the steamer Mountaineer, recommended that a scow and tug be secured to transport our belongings to Sidney. And that is what was done.

The freight was loaded on the scow, and the tug Hornet, a little steamer about thirty feet long, hooked onto the scow, and started for Sidney between 3 and 4 o'clock on the morning of February 23, 1891.

And believe it or not, the eleven people in our party crammed aboard that tug for their first taste of salt water. There being no accommoda-

tions, it was sure a crowded mess. The scowmen were huddled in the pilot house and stayed put, but there not being room for everybody in the pilot house, the kids spent the time running along the narrow deck between the pilot house and the galley trying to find a place to keep warm.

The early start from Seattle was made so that the tug could come in with the tide and land the scow on the beach at high water, and a heavy wind during the trip across the sound stirred up a sea that sent the waves over the tug, and salt water was slopping around all over the decks.

Being green to navigable water, the kids didn't have sense enough to be afraid of what might happen and continued their treks between the two warm spots on the boat regardless of seas and water. A like experience now would scare me stiff.

We arrived in Seattle from Oregon at about midnight on February 21, 1891. It was but a few months after the big Seattle fire, and the streets and sidewalks were mostly unoccupied, stuff at that time.

I remember we got off the train on Railroad Avenue between Madison and Marion streets and started to walk to a walk-up hotel, not too far away. Cousin Manfred had been in Seattle before, and he led the way, with the rest of us kids following.

Each youngster had his assignment of luggage to carry, and Manfred's quota was a bird cage with a couple of canaries in it, and the shoe box with his pet alligator. Wooden sidewalks were the means of foot traffic, and at each block there was a big step down to the unimproved streets. We came to the end of a block, and Manfred was so intent on showing us the town with its scattering of electric lights that he didn't see the step and took a tumble.

The bottom came out of the bird cage; the cover came off the alligator box, and us kids were busy for several minutes retrieving the birds and the alligator.

The next morning our granddad took us kids down to the waterfront to see the



lying at the docks were decorated up for the holiday, and I can well remember the thrill that I got from the sight.

I thought it was the most beautiful vista I had ever seen, and I doubt if anything I have seen or will see, will make so lasting an impression as that Seattle waterfront scene on February 22, 1891.

With the landing of the scow on the beach at Sidney, the first order of business was unloading. Dr. Bridenstine had previously purchased a house between Seattle and Rockwell streets, and the scow was landed directly in front of this house, so unloading and assembling articles in this house was not too difficult.

My folks rented a house on Mitchell Hill. At that time there was no road beyond Rockwell street, and no bridge across Black Jack. However, there was a road running from Mitchell Point and up Mitchell Hill and on to the Bethel district.

So it was necessary to secure another small scow, load the Wetzel possessions on this scow and pole the scow across the mudflats to the foot of Mitchell Hill.

About the time the scow with the Wetzel family beached at the foot of Mitchell Hill, a farmer from the Long

store at Mitchell Point for his weekly supply of provisions, came along with his lumber wagon, drawn by a yoke of oxen. My dad made a deal with him, and the last part of the journey the first Wetzel abode in Sidney, was made by ox team.

We kids started to school almost at once. School facilities consisted of a two-room school on the present Central playground. The school was crowded with about fifty kids in each room, there was little system to the curriculum, everything from kindergarten to higher mathematics being taught by the two teachers, and each kid was placed in a class that best suited his ability. He might be reading in the first reader and taking algebra at the same time, depending on his previous training.

Crowded conditions in the school made it necessary for some of the younger kids to move to the Christian Church next door, for part of the term, and later we attended school in the home of one of the teachers, Mrs. Jennie Fuller, on lower Division street.

The second year we were in Sidney the roof was raised on the school house, and a large class room, and recitation room were provided on the second floor.

This relieved the situation somewhat, and then came the panic of the '90's, and the school system (such as it was) suffered. Terms were cut down to three months and later extended to six months, and facilities for education were very meagre for some time.

This condition existed until the Legislature passed Governor John R. Rogers' "barefoot school boys" law, which was the first enactment to place part of the responsibility for education at the state level.

When I finished grade school the system had been much improved, and schools were graded according to accepted standards.

I got my 8th grade diploma, and immediately got a catalog and an invitation from the president of the University of Washington to enroll in that institution.

Combing the Beach

By Jack Rogers

Port Orchard and our county have suffered a great loss in the passing of Guy Wetzel, long-time public official and former publisher of this newspaper.

Guy Wetzel was perhaps the kindest and gentlest person we have ever known. We here at The Independent will never forget his visits and his presence. He was one of those rare persons who spread good will and cheer wherever he went.

Of course, we need only to leaf back through the issues of The Independent which Guy produced to recapture that warm feeling of friendship and community service which this man's efforts radiated for so many years. His life was in those pages, and we treasure them in this office.

And what will our community do without him? Who could possibly take his place, particularly when someone has need

go for higher education, but that invitation and catalog from the U was another big thrill in my life, and I treasure those two documents for a long time.

About the time I got my 8th grade diploma, I entered the office of the Port Orchard Independent as a printer's devil, working for W. L. Wheeler. The occupation got in my blood, and I followed it for many years, working in different parts of the state.

In 1915 I went into the county clerk's office and served two terms as county clerk. Even after eight years away from the trade, the newspaper bug was still active, and I purchased the Port Orchard Independent, and conducted that newspaper for twenty years.

My efforts were not aided by a formal education, but I had picked up a lot of information from various shops where I had worked, and without appearing too conceited, I believe that the Port Orchard Independent, during the Wetzel management, was a fairly successful enterprise, and that its efforts toward community

were fruitful.

Before acquiring the Independent, I married Florence G. Olsen whom I thought then, and whom I still think, is the most wonderful woman in the world. That was in May, 1921, while I was still county clerk, and she was county treasurer, incidentally, she being the first woman to hold county office in Kitsap County. I have an adorable daughter, and a grandson (the most wonderful in the world) Thomas Scott Turner.

During the operation of the Independent, I fell heir to a lot of assignments, some of them not too pleasant, but all of which were public necessities.

For instance, I was a member of the Kitsap County Welfare board for several years during the depression era, and until the program was finally taken over entirely by the State and Federal governments.

I served on the Kitsap County draft board when it was first organized in 1940. I served on the Port Orchard Housing Authority for several months, and later was a member of the ration board.

None of these jobs paid any money or had many soft spots in their anatomies, but they were essential jobs, and someone had to do them.

In 1943, after twenty years trying to mould public opinion and settle affairs of the world through the medium of a country newspaper, I sold the Independent and I entered the town government as town clerk.

Later the office of clerk and treasurer of the town were combined, and as of this date I hold the combined positions.

This world has always been mighty good to me, and I have had an undeserved happy existence.

Music was always very attractive to me, and I have got a lot of enjoyment out of playing in bands and orchestras (some of them excellent organizations), and for the past nine years I have been horsing around as choir director of the Port Orchard Methodist Church choir.

I have mentioned a couple of thrills which are fresh in my memory, but probably the

of the historical knowledge that he carried about in his fine mind?

All of us have lost a dear friend.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

We would say there was something for everyone in Tuesday's election. The Democrats gained this county's new third seat in the legislature with the election of Mrs. Frances Haddon Morgan, and this choice that we had recommended was most pleasing to us. The Republicans can take particular pride in the fact that many of their candidates did well in the county court-house races here, and also in retaining six GOP congressional seats in this state. Again we say Hurrah.

Those who give an occasional thought to economy in government can smile that the state's voters dinged most of the measures which would mean higher taxes and greater immediate costs. And the forces of organized labor are happy that union shop contracts have not been banned by law.

We believe that Tuesday's voting on spending and taxing measures is but a forerunner of things to come. More and more in the future you can expect the voters to be passing upon these spending and taxing programs. There are people in this state who are going to insist on voting on higher taxes, and when the people speak on this subject they are not always as open-handed as the politicians who use your money to buy your votes.

In the end in this state, the people themselves are going to have the last word on the level of taxes and spending. This election was but a prelude to the mighty struggle that is coming in future years as the people clash with the pressure groups in a life-and-death battle.

ever bestowed, was when the South Kitsap Chamber of Commerce, at its annual meet-

the outstanding citizen and presented a handsome watch, appropriately engraved in commemoration of this honor.

So there were at least three big thrills in my life, the last one being the greatest of all. This desecration is purely personal and is primarily about Guy L. Wetzel. It was scraped together, as my youngest nephew, Frank Wetzel, a newspaper man, has had in mind getting up a sort of Wetzel history.

It's up to Brother Scott Wetzel to get together his "memoirs" and perhaps among us we can enroll the achievements, disappointments and other factors in the lives of Brother Myron, and our Dad and mother, both of whom had interesting experiences in covered wagon travel, and with a horse and cart trek from Pennsylvania to Nebraska along about 1876.



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THE INDEPENDENT

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11-4-58

Guy Wetzel, Pioneer Of Port Orchard, Dies

A heart attack this morning ended the life of one of Kitsap county's best known and most beloved residents, Guy Wetzel, Port Orchard city clerk, long-time owner of the Port Orchard Independent and outstanding citizen.



GUY WETZEL
Community Figure Passes

He had suffered from a heart condition for about two years but continued his public service, leaving his job for only a few days when an attack occurred.

"Even though he was ill, he had to go on working and keep busy. That was just Guy," a friend said.

He grew with his community and played an essential part in its prosperity and its civic life for more than 65 years.

In 1954, he was chosen by the South Kitsap Chamber of Commerce as the community's outstanding citizen. As owner and publisher of the Independent for 20 years he strove toward community betterment through his newspaper's leadership. He became city clerk in 1943 and devoted his full time as clerk and treasurer from that year until his death.

During the depression years and during World War II, Mr. Wetzel was a member of many of the town welfare and emergency boards. For the past nine years he directed the choir at Port Orchard Methodist church.

His family came to the town of Sidney (now Port Orchard), Feb. 23, 1891, landing on the beach in a little scow which had brought them across Puget Sound from Seattle. Bringing with them what he termed a "heterogeneous conglomeration" of household possessions, the Wetzel clan landed in Sidney to take up permanent residence.

They had crossed the plains by train from Madison, Neb., where Guy Wetzel was born, Jan. 4, 1884. The town of Sidney in 1891, he liked to tell, was about 500 people, a couple of sawmills and a terracotta

two teacher's home.

When he received his eighth-grade diploma he was offered a chance to go to the University of Washington but instead began "sticking type" as a printer's devil in the office of the Independent. A few years later he went to work on The Bremerton News-Searchlight and then to newspapers in eastern Washington for a few years.

Returning to Bremerton, Mr. Wetzel again worked on the News-Searchlight, becoming composing room foreman. In 1915, he took his first public office, becoming deputy county clerk, and when the clerk resigned, he was appointed and served two terms.

There he met Miss Florence G. Olsen, then county treasurer and first woman to hold county office. They were married in Seattle, May 21, 1921.

In 1923, he purchased the Independent, running it for 20 years until he sold out and took office as city clerk.

During the depression years he was a member of the Kitsap county welfare board until it was taken over by the federal government. When the Kitsap county draft board was organized, he was one of its first members. During World War II, he served the Port Orchard housing authority for several months as a director and then on the ration board.

Mr. Wetzel always enjoyed music and during his life played string base and drums in many local bands and orchestras.

"He always said the Chambers' award to him in 1954 was the outstanding point in his life," his wife said, "but then he'd reconsider and decide there were too many to count any one as most outstanding."

Surviving in addition to his wife and his brother, Scott of Bremerton, are a daughter, Mrs. Florence L. Turner of Yakima, two grandsons and three nephews and a niece.

Services are pending at Pendleton-Gilchrist.

* * *

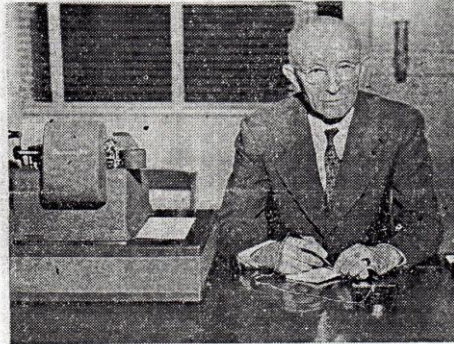
Port

The Only News

Volume Seventy One

Price-10c

SERVICES TODAY FOR GUY WETZEL



GUY L. WETZEL

... Pose Familiar To Many ...

Final rites were held here today for Guy L. Wetzel, 74, well-known Port Orchard Clerk and former owner of The Independent.

Mr. Wetzel, in ill health for the last two years, died at his home at 903 Kitsap St. during the early morning hours on Tuesday following a heart attack.

Despite his failing health in recent months, he remained on the job at the town hall and was a familiar figure on downtown Port Orchard streets as he walked about, conducting town business and visiting with friends and acquaintances.

Just one week before his death, on Oct. 28, Wetzel played a feature role before television sound cameras in preparation for a half-hour program about Port Orchard that is scheduled for showing this Saturday at 12:45 p.m. on KIRO-TV Channel 7. He will be seen on the program, showing some early photos of the town and commenting on its past and future.

Prior to his passing away, at the request of a relative, Mr. Wetzel wrote a history of his life in a warm, sometimes humorous vein, in keeping with his own personality.

The Independent is privileged to carry that personal account in today's edition and indebted to the family for permission to use it. The account will be found on the back page of this issue.

In honor of Mr. Wetzel the majority of Port Orchard business houses were closed today from 1 to 2 p.m.

Services were held at the Pendleton-Gilchrist Funeral Home with the Rev. Wayne Griffen officiating.

Active pallbearers were Port Orchard Mayor Ray B. Hall, and town councilmen Harold Baker, Vern Caldwell, Verd Nichols, Nick Repanich and Dusty Winebrenner.

Honorary pallbearers were charter members of the Port Orchard Kiwanis Club Charles

Hodge, Ned McDowell, H. G. Sutton and Rex Thompson.

Mr. Wetzel was a charter member of the local Kiwanis club and a past president.

Burial followed at Sunset Lane Cemetery.

Survivors include his wife, Florence G., of the family home; a daughter, Mrs. Florence L. Turner of Yakima; a brother, Scott Wetzel, Bremer-ton; two grandsons, and three nephews and one niece.

BREMERTON SEARCHLIGHT

VOLUME 9, NO. 33

BREMERTON, (NAVY YARD, PUGET SOUND) WASHINGTON, FRIDAY JANUARY 12, 1912

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From Left to Right—Robt. D. Sawyer, foreman pressman; Wilford Jessup, assistant (to everybody) commonly designated as the "devil;" William P. Scott compositor; Guy L. Wetzel, mechanical superintendent; Wallace B. Jessup, editor and manager; Carlton Fitchett, city editor; Mark H. Hawkins, (not Jim Corbett) former advertising compositor; John H. Jessup, circulation department; Ray E. Oliver, linotype operator and machinist; Bert Perrin (behind the navy yard fence) advertising compositor.



