



STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

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Driving Miss Vicky

Friends take trip of a lifetime halfway around the globe in Model A Ford



COURTESY GERARD BROWN

Miss Vicky splashes through water and dirt, her engine laboring on two cylinders after mud shorted out two spark plugs.



COURTESY LEE HARMAN

Lee Harman and Bill Ward toast their success with champagne before they drove to the hotel. They checked in and washed off the dust and road grime then put on their formal duds that they'd shipped ahead. The rally ended with a formal awards dinner in Paris.

By PEGGY WENDEL | Staff Reporter

Miss Vicky, a 1931 Model A Ford Victoria, recently returned home to Camano Island, victorious and perhaps a bit disheveled from the 10,000-mile Peking to Paris Rally. The drivers flew home in July, but Miss Vicky took her time, cruising by ship through the Panama Canal.

Her owner, Lee Harman of Camano Island and his buddy Bill Ward of Olympia and Arizona, checked this punishing cross-continent trip off their bucket list. They call themselves the “Co-conspirators.” They’ve been great friends for 40 years as owners of British cars. They are both competent drivers and fixers.

They had two goals: to finish under their own power and arrive in Paris still friends.

All they had to do was drive 10,000 miles cross country, find their way with obscure directions, outwit disaster and persevere harrowing ordeals.

■ SEE MISS VICKY, A6



COURTESY LEE HARMAN

Lee Harman and Bill Ward crossed the finish line in Paris after 36 days traversing Asia and Europe. See more photos from their adventure at SCnews.com.

Crematory hearing dives into details

Decision expected in late November

By PEGGY WENDEL
Staff Reporter

A hearing examiner listened to 10 hours of testimony Friday on whether a crematory should be allowed in downtown Stanwood.

Peggy Kitting appealed Stanwood’s decision to allow a crematory in American Cremation and Casket Alliance, at 8808 271st St. NW, diagonally across the street from the police station. Bill and Tari Dexter bought a Smokey Point funeral home business in 2018 and moved it to Stanwood so they could incorporate their own crematory in-house.

The appeal was heard at the North County fire station in Stanwood in front of a few dozen citizens.

Hearing examiner John E. Galt presided, saying the appellant has the burden of proof to show that the city’s interpretation of city code is wrong.

Galt will issue a decision by Nov. 27, after receiving closing statements from attorneys and Bill Dexter.

Kitting’s appeal states that the city’s decision was in error based on two counts:

- The city erred in determining that a crematory qualifies as an unlisted use in the Mainstreet Business-1 zone. Stanwood Municipal Code 17.30.020 says the community development director must find the use is consistent with the purpose and intent of the MB1 zone and with Comprehensive Plan policies, and the use is similar in nature and no more intense than listed uses.
- The city’s decision lacked conditions that would ensure compliance with SMC 17.50.020, which applies to industrial zones to protect adjacent areas from detrimental effects such as odor and air quality.

Testimony

Kitting testified that she frequents downtown and considers the main street the heart of the city, often filled with parades, activities and events. She said that a crematory would harm that central location and her ability to enjoy and visit downtown.

“The city failed to make adequate findings,” Kitting said. “A funeral home is allowed, but an industrial strength incinerator is not.”

■ SEE CREMATORY, A6

★★★ ELECTION 2019

Voters deciding on several top Snohomish County positions

By SC NEWS STAFF

Snohomish County sheriff, treasurer and auditor are the three contested races on November’s ballot.

Sheriff candidates Adam Fortney and Ty Trenary outlined different approaches during an Oct. 16 voter forum in Stanwood. Trenary and Fortney sharply disagree on how to approach jail bookings.

“We are on the heels of how our county will change. It’s community first — not hug-a-thug; it’s not ignoring crime,” said Trenary, the incumbent. “I believe law enforcement can be compassionate, and it can help people — that’s our job — and get them back into a healthy lifestyle, saving you money.”

Last year, the jail connected 45 chronic utilizers of the jail with treatment options, and they are now drug-free and employed, Trenary said.

“Stuff is not right with public safety in Snohomish County, and I want to change that,” Fortney said. “I want to refocus the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office to what we do best, which is enforcing the law.”

Fortney is a south county precinct night shift patrol sergeant. He wants to bring a balance between compassion and accountability in the opioid epidemic.

“What do you want the primary focus of law enforcement to be? I think it should be law enforcement,” he said.

■ SEE ELECTION, A8

Election 2019 coverage

This week, the Stanwood Camano News concludes a five-part series previewing the November election.

Oct. 1	Superior Court
Oct. 8	Stanwood City Council
Oct. 15	Stanwood Camano School Board
Oct. 22	North County Fire
Oct. 29	County-level races

ONLINE

- Find all of our five-part series, plus letters to the editor at SCnews.com
- Check SCnews.com at 8 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 5, for local results

Crematory

■ FROM A1

Vision statements going back at least to 2002 talked about preserving the small-town character, Kitting said. She read excerpts from vision statements that saw a resurgence of downtown Stanwood as the heart and core of the community, a pedestrian-friendly place to live, shop and visit.

“We want to retain this character,” she said.

Kitting had support from various community members who spoke at the hearing.

Kitting and Cathy Wooten visited a crematory at Hawthorne Funeral Home and Memorial Park in Mount Vernon.

Kitting said it was far off the road and surrounded by a cemetery. It’s about 500 feet from apartments. She also said the crematory machine was loud outside, and black smoke came out the chimney.

Inside they spoke with the cremationist and looked at the monitor with the cremationist. The monitor didn’t show a problem

with the smoke. It was loud inside from fans and a shaking bowl that separated ashes from bones. Kitting said she was told the smell was from fat.

Kitting brought people to speak on the issue.

• Expert witness Bob Landles, a retired city of Everett land-use manager with 35 years in the field, said a crematory is not similar to the listed uses. He said a crematory fails to meet Stanwood’s strategic vision of a vibrant pedestrian-oriented downtown hub.

• Michael Ryan, certified cremationist and intern funeral director, said he works at Hawthorne and Gilbertson funeral homes in Mount Vernon and Stanwood. The Hawthorne location has a crematory with a 1997-era machine refitted with a new Matthews Power Pack 2 and features state-of-the-art monitoring and pollution controls and is the most efficient machine in the industry.

Most of the time, it emits vapor, but occasionally there’s an error that results in thick black smoke that smells bad, he said.

“We take care of it quickly, but not soon enough to keep it from happening,” Ryan said. “New facilities can have an ‘upset,’ as well.”

• Steve Shepro, vice president of Stanwood Planning Commission, gave a rundown of what led to the appeal. He discovered in July that the Dexters had been readying the building for a crematory since April 5, when city staff gave them written approval for a crematory. He sent a letter complaining that a crematory was not a listed use, and the project was stopped.

On Aug. 20, the city made an administrative decision allowing a crematory as an unlisted use. Kitting appealed.

Shepro said the Dexters’ business offers cremation services throughout the Interstate 5 corridor, which doesn’t add to the effort to make Main Street a pedestrian-oriented downtown. He said it contradicts the city’s vision and plans they were making for a welcome arch or gateway that would by on that corner.

On cross examination,

Bill Dexter asked if his business could stop the arch from being placed there. Shepro said no.

• Cathy Wooten, a long-time Stanwood resident, said she worked to stop the septage treatment plant from being built near downtown. After that, she worked with the city on ordinance 1459, which restricts smell, noise, light, etc., from industries to their property lines so they don’t affect neighboring businesses and residences.

After the city passed the ordinance, “I believed we were protected,” she said.

When Wooten visited the crematory at Hawthorne, she said she could hear the machinery 120 feet away. Dexter’s building is 30 feet from the property line, so noise would affect the neighboring businesses and people eating outside or going to the Farmers Market.

City responds

Community Planning Director Patricia Love has been involved in the project since the beginning.

City staff analyzed the issue to see if it kept with the purpose and intent of the

MB1 zone, if it were similar in nature and not more intense, Love said. She saw it as a service use.

The MB1 zone has a historic overlay with a dense, historical block of pedestrian-oriented businesses. Across the 88th Avenue from the historical block is the Dexters’ site, where the landscape opens up to parking lots and set-back buildings.

There’s a long-term vision of how the city wants to grow, but on a project level, the business is going into an existing building, Love said. Pedestrians can still walk up and down the street. They’re working with what was existing, so it’s similar in nature and no more intense than any other type of business.

Love and Senior City Planner Amy Rusko observed the crematory at Solie Funeral Home in Everett and talked to the operator.

“We didn’t see the impacts being described today,” Love said.

They heard no noise from the viewing room and no smoke from the chimney, only a slight vapor wave

above the stack. People were sitting and standing on decks at the three-story building next door, and some were eating.

“I couldn’t smell anything,” Love said.

Love also drove by a crematory in the heart of Fremont in Seattle and on the main street of Oak Harbor in a general commercial area. She said staff studied other cities’ zoning codes and found that crematories are commonly attached to funeral homes.

“The Comp Plan wants to see a vibrant city, wants to see broad categories of businesses,” she said.

It doesn’t restrain this type of use; it should be evaluated. It’s important to take a step back in terms of looking at this as an unclassified use, she said.

Kitting’s attorney, Rick Eichstaedt, asked if Love felt pressured over financial liability to continue its approval.

Love said, “I told the city management team; we need to do what the right thing is; it could potentially cost us money. And if there’s a lawsuit, we’ll have to deal with it.”

Miss Vicky

■ FROM A1

After 36 trying days — every day a challenge — the Co-conspirators are still friends.

And Miss Vicky? She could use a new axle, but she did it.

Of 120 entrants that started the Peking to Paris Endurance Rally in Beijing, China, 103 made it to Paris. Of those, Miss Vicky was one of only 21 vintage vehicles that made the entire trip under their own power. That means she was never disabled, towed or given a lift on a flatbed truck.

Help from the CIA

Harman said they owed Miss Vicky’s success to the CIA — Camano Island A’s, a group of car guys who love to work on vintage cars and especially to Rick Gilmour, a professional mechanic and machinist and Mark Norgard, who gave Miss Vicky 54 modifications, such as an auxiliary fuel tank, bush plates under the carriage and structural improvements.

“Every piece was looked at by Rick Gilmour, and all the guys at the CIA were behind the effort and cheering us on,” Harman said.

The CIA gathered to bid Miss Vicky adieu March 27 on Camano Island, then she was shipped to Beijing, China. Harman and Ward joined her May 30 for the grandfather of all endurance rallies across Eurasia.

And they’re off

The rally started at the Great Wall of China with performances of dancers and Chinese Dragons dancing to traditional music. Drivers from around the world showed off many types of vintage vehicles. Harman and Ward befriended vintage car enthusiasts from around the world as they drove the course and helped each other along.

The P2P rally route followed the original 1907 rally’s route through China, Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Germany, Belgium and France.

The rally ran 36 days, from June 2 to July 7. Participants pushed 350-400 kilometers per day. Drivers got three “rest days.” The cars got to rest, but drivers spent those days fixing cars.

They stayed each night in designated four-star plus hotels and camped under desert stars — with lots of good food and cultural entertainment, all arranged by P2P organizers.



COURTESY LEE HARMAN

Some of the 120 participants and the support crews get ready to camp under Mongolian stars in June.

Mapless motoring

There were no road signs. They were driving on fire trails, dirt roads, ruts through wide-open expanses. Maps of this outback would only offer a bird’s-eye view and be useless for navigating, Harman said.

Instead they travelled by written directions in the “Tulip Book,” augmented by correction pages made by the rally’s 48-hour advance team that scouted ahead. The book tells drivers to turn after a number of kilometers or at a landmark. It was easy to get lost, and some drivers did.

“You can’t take your eye off the road,” Harman said.

Each day, they woke up around 5 a.m. to break camp and left by 8 a.m. to drive all day long on tough terrain. The roads were mostly unpaved ruts going through the deserts, rolling hills and mountain passes. A wooden bridge in Siberia was hazardous, with many loose and missing boards.

Ward said each day they’d look over the course and note whatever dirt was scheduled. They had to navigate long stretches of potholes and big ruts with many levels of abuse.

“We broke the car several times, but we managed to repair it. We made it through by the skin of our teeth. We could have been stuck by the side of the road for the rally at several points,” Ward said.

They came across herds of goats crossing the roads in the mountains of Mongolia. Miss Vicky made it over the steep road over an 8,250-foot pass, while some other cars had to be pulled up.

“Every time we came to an inhabited place, the whole town would turn out to look at the cars,” Harman said.

Skilled rookies

Though Harman and

Ward were first time rookies, they were skilled at keeping the car on the road through varied terrain and weather. This took expert mechanical, endurance, driving skills and solid friendship.

“It was very arduous, no doubt about it,” Harman said.

“Lee and I are both different people; they say opposites attract,” Ward said. “We respected each other’s opinion for any problem that might arise.”

During those long hours driving across the continent, they defined four types of rallyists, Harman said.

1. Larksters: Those who did it as a lark. They weren’t good drivers or mechanics, but had shiny, new tools they didn’t know how to use.
2. Rookie Novices: They were on their first rally ever, like Harman and Ward.
3. Rallyists: Drivers who had been on other rallies all over the world.
4. Rally Lifers: These wealthy enthusiasts have made rallies their lifestyle, participating in two or three per year.

Hazards

The Co-conspirators guided Miss Vicky through torrential rain, high wind, gravel, grit, mud, dust, sand traps, potholes, boulders and gullies. They searched for shallow places to ford rivers. One unfortunate car chose a crossing that turned out to be 3 feet deep. The river came up to its door-sills “and the Alfa Romeo became the Aqua Romeo,” Harman said.

Drivers had to make extensive repairs in the middle of nowhere all along the way. Some repairs were by the driving team, and some by the P2P mechanics crew that followed the rally along with medics.

“When we needed help from the mechanics, they

appreciated the fact that we’d already gotten our hands dirty,” Harman said. “When we found a downed car, we always stopped to see if they needed any help.”

Two British men bought a 1941 Pontiac prepared for rally use. The car was nearly rebuilt en route.

“They were great guys, lots of fun, they never gave up,” Harman said. “The car constantly broke down. Crashing it didn’t help either.”

A wealthy Porsche driver was racing other cars. Blinded by dust, he crashed and rolled it in a gully. He came back two weeks later with a new car and his arm in a cast.

The Co-conspirators survived two serious incidents that could have been the end of the road: a broken fuel line and fatigue.

The broken line spewed fuel under the hood that could have exploded.

Fatigue crept over them as miles and hours sped by. At one point, Ward nudged Harman, who had fallen asleep at the wheel, drifting over the centerline.

Harman heard Ward say, ‘Bear to the right, Lee, if you would.’

“I woke up and saw a truck coming at us,” Harman said. He righted his course and catastrophe was averted.

Casualties of the trip

During the trip, the Co-conspirators made most of their own repairs.

They had to contend with and mend two ruptured hydraulic brake lines and a blown tire. The second time Miss Vicky was airborne, the car body separated from the wooden subframe. Mud shorted out spark plugs, causing an ignition failure.

They used silicon window caulk found in a Russian hardware store to fix a

leaking head gasket.

The tailpipe broke and fell off after hitting a Boulder. Ward lost his car keys while tying up the tailpipe.

A broken axle got a “bush fix,” so they had to take off the wheel and tighten the axle every day before setting out.

When a water pump failed, they kept putting water in until Paris, where the roads were gridlocked. Then they got stuck without water and had to replace the pump.

Ward lost his phone in Kazakhstan, and Harman’s cellphone was pickpocketed on his last day in Paris.

Taken by beauty

Harman said that it was one of life’s lessons that “people are friendly the world over, even Russian border guards.”

“No matter what was going on, people would come by and see if we needed help,” Ward said. “Every place we went, people were friendly, interested and helpful.”

Both were struck by the stark beauty of Mongolia.

“It’s Montana 150 years ago. It was just free, no borders, no fencing for anybody’s property, everyone’s animals ran free,” Harman said.

Welcome home

In the end, Miss Vicky carried the Co-conspirators across the P2P finish line. The Co-conspirators met their goals to complete the race under their own power and remain buddies.

“Little Miss Vicky, as long as we drove within her parameters, she worked out just fine,” Harman said.

Back home, the Co-conspirators met for breakfast with the CIA — those Camano Island A’s who are bonded by “a love of cars and grease.”

Harman and Ward regaled the CIA with tales of vintage cars braving the elements, goats and other hazards.

During the trip, Harman would check in with the CIA.

“I’d call them at break-fast time. They were all there. I’d let them know what we were up to,” Harman said.

When Miss Vicky broke an axle, they called Rick Gilmour at 2 a.m. for a consultation. Gilmour was the tie-breaker on which method to use, and it worked for more than 4,000 miles — then broke last week on a trip from Camano to Stanwood.

“The CIA was instrumental in us getting through this,” Harman said. “They’re great guys from all walks of life, all strata, all bonded by a love of old cars and making them go.”

Now, the pair is considering their next chapter.

“We’ve shared experiences that are somewhat unique and that tends to draw people together. I have no doubt we’ll have more adventures,” Ward said.

“I think we’re both sniffing the bait of another rally somewhere,” Harman said.

OBITUARIES



VIOLET MADISEN

Violet G. Madsen, 87, of Stanwood, passed away on October 19, 2019.

She is survived by four children, five grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. Violet was preceded in death by her husband and son.

Private family services were held under the direction of Gilbertson Funeral Home.

We will cherish our memories forever.

OBITUARY NOTICES

Obituary notices may be sent by using an online form at scnews.com/obituaries, by email to obits@scnews.com along with a photo attached, or by mail to Stanwood Camano NEWS, P.O. Box 999, Stanwood, WA, 98292. The fee to print an obituary is \$10.90 per column inch, including the photo. A short death announcement the week prior to the full obituary will be printed at no charge. An obituary may be linked to an online guest book for an additional \$30 charge. For more information call 360-629-2155.

