



# NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

## September 2020

### Fall Always Meant Homecoming

By Karen Gersonde  
(Gierzycki-Class of 1973)

What a crazy time we are living in.!!! Covid 19, protest marches for social justice, social distancing, wearing masks, sanitizing hands and everything in sight, etc. etc. Since I have been following all of the mandates set forth by local and state entities, I have been in my home quite a bit. I suppose as everyone else, kind of cleaning out the house, going through boxes and trying to down size. While in my basement, I came across a large black plastic box that I had put away quite a while ago. Curious, I dug it out and lo and behold, it was filled with old photos of my family and friends from the past. It was in quite a disarray with photos in envelopes (of course to keep the negatives), along with numerous photos albums that were so popular years ago, since there was no digital photography or I Clouds or any electronic devices to keep your photos neat and arranged at your fingertips. I dragged it over to my computer desk and thought this ought to be a blast from the past. And it was. It was great to see the many photos of my relatives, now long deceased, and the happy times we all shared as a family. But it was a special treat to go back and look through my high school photos of my time at St. Francis High School, 1969-1973.

I always looked forward to going back to school in fall. No, I didn't like the homework, as no one does, but it was to be back with your special friends and the activities that school had to offer. I think one of the best times was always homecoming time. It was a great way to kick off the year. Our homecomings were always special and filled with lots of activities. We had float making for each of the grades, a special homecoming parade, the football game of course, a huge bonfire that was an awesome sight to see, and of course the homecoming dance. We also had a pep rally that was the best. The teachers used to put on skits that were just hilarious, and of course the pompom squad and the cheerleaders always put on routines that were top notch and entertaining. It was a must see and I would not have missed it for the world. The smell of the crisp autumn air outside at the football game and bonfire, all being shared with your best friends. Well,



Class of 1973 float

there was nothing like it in the world. These were the things that made true memories. And maybe after the game, it was off to your favorite pizza parlor. We used to go to Shakey's a lot on Howell Avenue, and a lot of good times were had there. Or maybe we just ended up at a friend's house to hang out.

I think back on these times and I think they were so special because we were still living in an age of innocence. Not a care in the world (besides homework).

Yuk! It was just a simpler time, a fun time, kind of one last hurrah before growing up. We all had hopes and dreams but weren't really sure what the future had in store for us. And that was okay with us. For that moment in time, we were all together, all for St. Francis, all for one and one for all. And I believe a lot of us Mariners still feel that way and always will. Once a Mariner, always a Mariner! As time marches on for us, our memories may start fading away, but you still know deep inside your soul, that you were a Mariner!



**Top, Karen with her favorite teacher, Mr. Sherman in 1972.**

**Bottom, faculty homecoming skit in 1972**

**Please consider including a gift to the St. Francis Historical Society in your will, trust or beneficiary designation. For more information, please contact Anna Passante at 414-316-4391.**



## What's New?

### Meeting Cancellations Due to Covid-19

Due to the Covid-19 situation, all board and general meetings have been canceled for the rest of the year, as well as the Christmas dinner. The December newsletter will update you about the 2021 meetings.

### State Marker for the Cemetery

Through the Wisconsin State Historical Marker Program, the historical society has purchased an historic marker for the Lake Protestant Cemetery located in St. Francis at the corner of Barland & Norwich



avenues. The St. Francis Department of Public Works installed the sign. The lake marker was paid for with the money the Society won at the South Shore Soup event last February. Sponsored by South Shore Chamber of Commerce, the Soup event helps fund community projects.

### Website Donor

Randy Borland, a current SFHS member and past board officer, has generously volunteered to pay for the cost of historical society website for the next two years. This will be the third time he has sponsored the website for a total of six years. Thanks Randy!!

### Photo Collection on the Website

Randy Barland also took on the task of posting the Society's photo collection on the Society website. The photos are arranged by category. Take a look and view our wonderful photos. I have gotten feedback from viewers who really like that section of our website.

Take a look!!

<http://stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org/PhotoList.php>

# Harbor View Village Subdivision (1952 to 1953)

by Jay Wesner

Harbor View Village Subdivision is a name that was lost a long time ago to the citizens of our fine city. If one were to ask anyone on the street today on how to find directions to this place, you would be met with puzzled looks. There are no markers pointing out its boundaries, and yet Harbor View Village Subdivision was once a really big thing happening back in the beginning years of the city of St. Francis.

When WWII ended and the GIs returned home, they got married and started families, and a national housing crisis was realized. There was a housing shortage of good, affordable homes. These desperate families sought any kind of housing they could find, from small cramped trailers, temporary government-issue metal huts, bunking-in with relatives, small cramped/ noisy one bedroom apartments, or just about any space that could be found. Enter real estate developer/speculator Benjamin Zenoff (1904-1969).

Benjamin (Ben) Zenoff was a well-known Milwaukee lawyer who was active in the local Democratic Party of southeastern Wisconsin. Around the late 1940s and early 1950s Ben and his newly organized construction company, "Beaver Builders Co.," saw a golden opportunity to get in on the ground floor of the housing crisis, to develop temporary housing projects on the south-side of Milwaukee. By 1951, he renamed his construction company "Zenoff Realty." He switched over from temporary to permanent housing projects. Ben visualized a project in St. Francis, just like the "Levittown" concept outside of New York City that was capturing the nation's attention. The city of St. Francis, Ben found, was

**MR. GI, EX-SOLDIERS, MARINES and NAVY MEN:**

**Here's How**

to help you get your family out of those cramped living quarters. I can help you to get them out of those attics, those basements and those trailer camps. Just put your wife and kiddies into your car—light move! Drive out to 4100 S. Kinickimic to Waterford, EAST 1½ blocks and there you will see beautiful 3-bedroom homes, complete with FULL BASEMENTS on great big, spacious lots. Ready for your family to occupy within 30 days after you qualify for your GI loan.

*Ben Zenoff says:*

**YESSIREE - FULL BASEMENTS**

With Ample Room for a RECREATION ROOM or PLAYROOM

3 Bedroom—GI Down Payment \$2,600

**Complete With . . .**

- Forced air heat.
- Disposal water heater.
- Beautiful hardwood floor.
- Laundry tubs.
- Beautiful kitchen cabinets.
- Included.

**Also Included . . .**

- Good screen in basement.
- Screen walls.
- Full bathroom with tub and toilet.
- Full kitchen with sink and stove.
- Water supplied.

**MR. GI, ONLY \$900 CASH DOWN**

(On V.A. Approved Loan)  
Down Payment Non-Veterans Loan 55% Higher

**GREAT BIG SPACIOUS LOT WITH SEWER, WATER INCLUDED**

Live in Low Cost Area of the New City of St. Francis  
Close to Schools . . . Churches . . . Shopping and Fast Transportation!

**OPEN HOUSE TODAY** 11 A. M. to 7 P. M.  
at Waterford and Lipton

4100 South on Kinickimic—1½ Blocks East of Waterford

**ZENOFF REALTY CO.**  
Builders of PAGE & HILL HOMES

Don't Forget, Vets!  
**\$900 Cash Down**  
for VA Approved Loan  
for Brand New  
3-Bedroom Home  
With Full basement  
and  
Full P.C. Lot  
Come Out and See for Yourself!

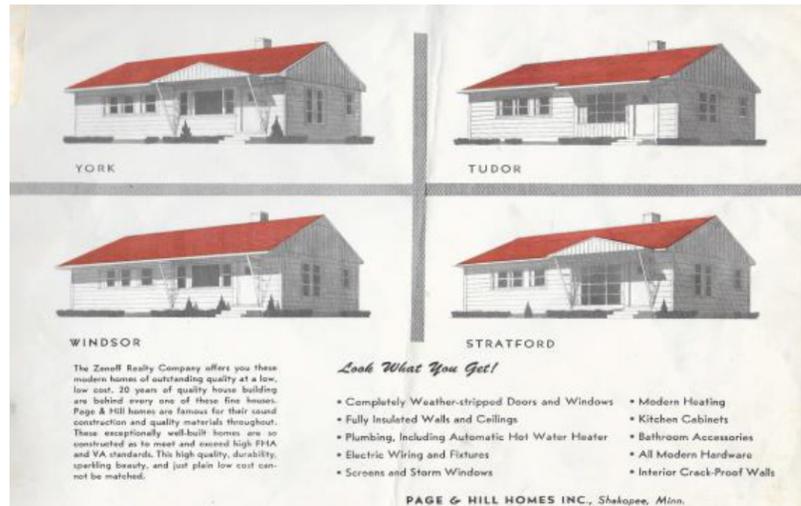
Zenoff's newspaper ad for the Open House on July 20, 1952.



The Harbor View Veterans' Project, now the site of Greene Park

the perfect location for this concept. He focused on open land in St. Francis. This project was developed on about 80 acres of land from Packard Avenue on the east, Shannon Avenue on the west, and stretching from Denton Avenue (next to the county-owned veteran's trailer park) on the south, reaching north to Howard Avenue. All together this under-taking provided home sites for 237 families.

On Sunday morning, July 20, 1952, a full-page advertisement appeared in the *Milwaukee Journal* announcing an "Open House Premiere" opportunity to check out the new Phase I of the Zenoff homes. What excitement that must have created! Ben Zenoff promised that any veteran with a GI approval loan and only \$900 dollars down could buy a brand new completed two or three-bedroom home that could be built in just 30 days. The price tag on the two-bedroom home was priced at \$12,200 and the three-bedroom home was priced at \$14,200. How could Ben Zenoff make such a promise? To build a completed house in only 30 days? This is where builder Page and Hill Homes enters the picture.



**Ben Zenoff's successful 3 bedroom model homes with basements**

Page and Hill Homes, from Shakopee, Minnesota, was a builder of prefab building panels that were assembled in a factory, with installed exterior doors and windows, then trucked to the building site and assembled to become the exterior walls. Page and Hill Homes turned to the national known architectural firm of E & W Close, who designed the layout of the Zenoff Homes. The prefab process was a new unique system to build desperately needed homes very quickly. This system proved to be the best solution possible to feed the huge demand for the national housing crisis. The Zenoff Homes certainly did help put the new city of St. Francis, Wisconsin, on the map.

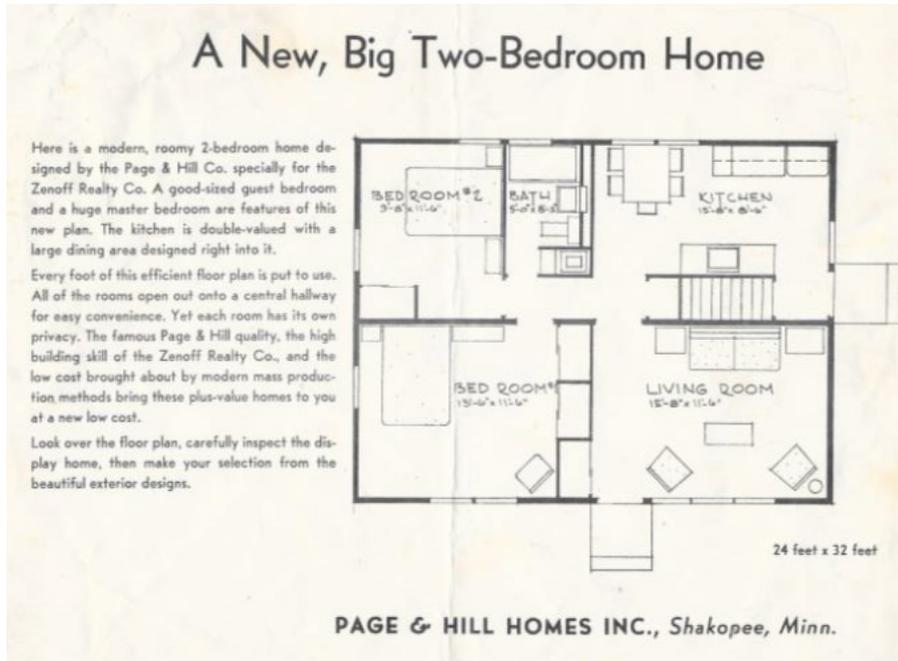
The Harbor View Village Subdivision project was divided up in phases I and II and spread out over a span of two years. Lipton Avenue was the dividing boundary line between the two phases. In 1952, the western Phase I started at the top of the hill at Shannon Avenue and sloped down east to Lipton Avenue, north to Howard Avenue, and south to Denton Avenue. In 1953, Phase II portion started at Lipton Avenue and continued east until it sloped down to Packard Avenue.

On the corner of Lipton and Waterford avenues, Ben placed five of his two-bedroom model homes. There was some varying of lot square footage in phases I and II, varying between 50' by 145' and 56' by 130'. The one special feature that Zenoff models offered was the new exterior siding product, a fire proof asbestos tile that came in a variety of colors to eliminate exterior painting. The kitchens were furnished with the latest popular "Youngstown" white enamel metal kitchen sink bases with matching upper cupboards. To the delight of a Zenoff homebuyer, they could choose the latest bathroom fixture colors of the day: pink, green, blue, or traditional white.

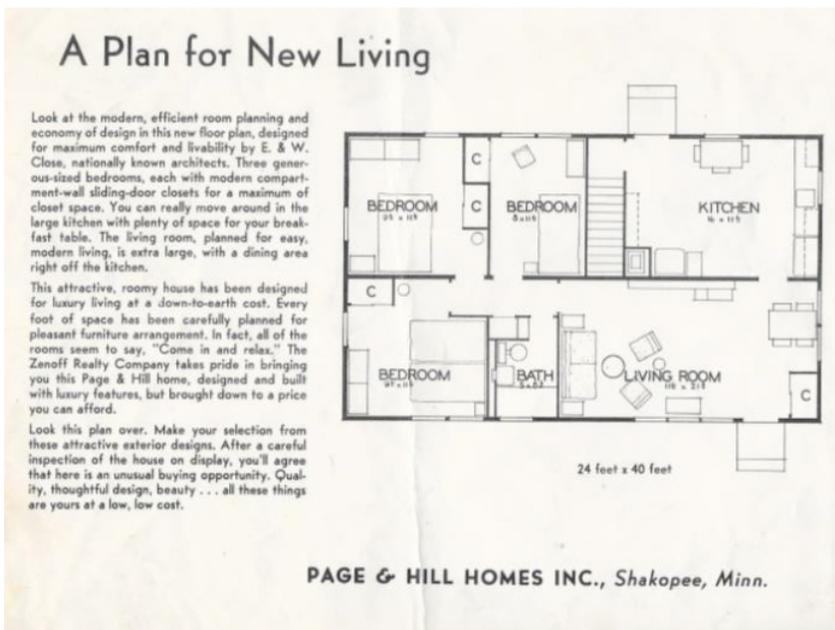
After the 30-day construction wait, the 237 eager families had to further wait because the interior / exterior painting, the interior flooring, and the door and door casing finishing was the

responsibility of the new homeowner. Depending upon how eager the 237 new families were to move in, it would take another month or two before a Zenoff home could really be occupied.

The three-bedroom model home (the most expensive of the Zenoff homes) was illustrated in the "Open House" full page newspaper ad on July 20, 1952. On a sad note, this three-bedroom model home lacked a basement, and perhaps due to this exclusion, this model showed a disappointing lack of interest in sales. Only one basementless home, beside the model home was built in Harbor View Village. It appears that 1952/1953 homebuyers demanded homes with basements, and a simplified Zenoff three-bedroom model with a basement proved to be more popular. This remarkable expensive Zenoff model, after many previous owners,



Above, the 2 bedroom model floor plan



Left, the 3 bedroom floor plan

still remains untouched today as it first looked in the summer of 1952 when it premiered. The house is located at the northern most corner of Harbor View Village Subdivision, at the corner of Howard and Lipton avenues.

My parents purchased the last house that Zenoff built in the Harbor View Village Subdivision. My father worked at the Ladish Company in Cudahy, and in the early summer of 1953, he heard that a fellow worker was going through a divorce and was very eager to sell a house, not yet constructed in Zenoff's subdivision.

My father saw this as a golden opportunity to move our family out of a cramped one bedroom apartment on Milwaukee's north side to a brand new two-bedroom ranch house in the newly formed city of St. Francis. My parents acted quickly and somehow were able to scrape together enough money to meet the required down payment. By a lot of luck, they got the house. They put in time and sweat equity to get this house move-in ready and we moved in on October 1. It had to have been the most exciting day of my family's life. To this very day, my mother, after 68 years, still resides in this house, and I believe that she has to be the last of the original Zenoff homeowners in the Harbor View Village Subdivision.

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It's been almost 68 years since that exciting "Zenoff's Open House Premiere" happened in St. Francis in the summer of 1952. There have been several generations of homeowners that have come and gone in Harbor View Village. Zenoff and Harbor View Village names have long faded from memory. The current generation of modern day families who have chosen to call this neighborhood home, may look around today and wonder why are there so many homes that look so similar? They wonder, what is the story that this neighborhood is hiding? But it is not hiding, it is right here.



**Zenoff's unsuccessful 3 bedroom basement-less model home located at 3374 E. Thompson Avenue.**



**Zenoff's last built home in the Harbor View Village Subdivision, located on the corner of Kingan and Waterford avenues, was purchased by the author's parents in the fall of 1953.**



Bill Drehfal, one of the historical society board members, came upon a treasure trove of T-shirts in his T-shirt drawer promoting the St. Francis Library.

Bill's wife, Mary, is a quilter and former employee of the St. Francis Library. She plans to create a quilt pertaining to the library, and the T-shirts will be included in the quilt. Some day the quilt will be part of the St. Francis Historical Society archives.



St. Francis Historical Society  
3400 E. Howard Ave.  
St. Francis, WI 53235

### **2020 Officers**

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Vice-President..... Sister Ceil Struck  
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### **Newsletter**

Anna Passante  
Barbara Janiszewski

### ***Mark Your Calendar***

#### **Meetings at the Civic Center:**

All meetings for the rest of the year have been canceled due to the Covid-19. There will be no Christmas party this year.

**Upcoming events** (see “What’s New” column for details)

*The historical society office (3400 E. Howard Avenue) will be closed until further notice.*

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