

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 10-8-03) , ©2005

Want to visit a real farm? Nikki and Allen Johanson own Pheasant Fields Farm on Clear Creek Road north of the Kitsap Mall. It's been a working farm since 1884. The farm has been in Nikki's family since the late 1940s. You'll want to visit and meet the Johansons and the month of October is a great time to do so.

On Saturday October 11 and 18 you can experience "No Ghoul, No Gore, No Scare!" at the farm. Evening tours run at 6, 7 and 8 p.m. Cost is \$12 for a family of five or five dollars for adults and three dollars for children fifteen years and under. Your family will be able to tuck animals in for the night, explore a two-acre cornfield maze with flashlights, enjoy a storyteller nestled around a campfire in the "tame" woods. Bring your own flashlights. After the storytelling you'll want to sit around the campfire and sip hot chocolate listening to live music. You can even sign along.

Both nights listen to John Clauson, a grand master in the art of storytelling who has appeared in the Yukon Territory, Canada and all over the United States. He has moved to our area and is affiliated with a story telling group in Poulsbo. You won't want to miss his family appropriate stories.

Pheasant Hill Farms also offers "Wild Woods" Friday and Saturday nights on October 24, 25, 31 and November 1 from 7-9:30 p.m. Tour the haunted cornfield maze and five acres of wild woods. This event appeals to people seeking fun and thrills. Parental guidance is advised because "you know your child the best," says Nikki. Children twelve and under must be with an adult. Admission is \$18 per family of five, \$7.50 for adults and \$5 for children fifteen and under. Reservations are recommended for large groups. If you'd like to volunteer or want more information call 360-697-6224.

You can also tour the farm in the daytime Monday through Friday during school hours during the growing season. Senior citizen groups and people with disabilities are also welcomed although the farm is not one hundred percent wheelchair accessible. The Johansons have plans to make a maze with wheelchair accessibility. When visiting the farm Nikki suggests you wear old, comfortable shoes and bring a camera. Tours during the week are four dollars per child and chaperones are free. Weekend family tours are offered at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. No pets are allowed because it would upset the resident critters at the farm.

But wait – there's more! Pheasant Hill Farm has cut flowers every year until a hard frost. You will find already bundled bouquets or can cut your own. Eggs, pumpkins, squash, gourds and other farm produce are available. During "Harvest Celebration" participants take home sugar pie pumpkins at the end of their one hour or longer tours.

The farmhouse was built in 1929 by Conrad Peterson. A mural in old town Silverdale shows Conrad's son Earl holding a bucket of eggs. Nikki has photos on display showing the history of the farm. The farm was homesteaded in 1884 and the wood for the house

was milled at Port Gamble. Some of the wood displays the Port Gamble lumber stamp. The wood was purchased for thirteen dollars a sling.

The first chickens raised on the farm were Rhode Island Reds. Nikki's mother would gather up the eggs, delivering and selling them to Naval Shipyard workers. Nikki remembers walking across her farm to the Petersen farm at the east end of Trigger Avenue and the Schold farm south of there all bordering each other before Highway 3 ran through. Nikki and Allen have had the farm since the late 1980s but began seriously farming it in the last three years. The fields of corn feed the cows and chickens. The corn in the maze is actually called "maze corn" because it grows very leafy making it ideal for walled trails.

In addition to the cows, chickens, a horse, and two dogs, are goats named Joe and Jane Doe. Doe is the breed of goats. The goats once belonged to a classically trained musician and they love classical music. Nikki also raises Rouen ducks, related to Mallards and colored quite similarly. The ducks are reproducing a bit too rapidly and she has several for sale.

I hope you'll visit Johanson's Pheasant Fields Farm soon. I'm glad I did and I know I'll be returning again and again.