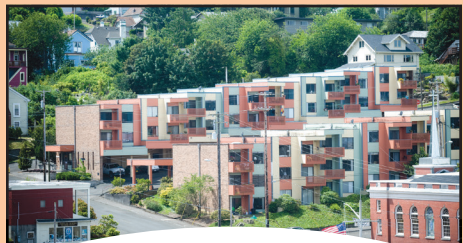


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A DECADES-LONG LAND USE STRUGGLE

‘For the Good of the Order’ focuses on Washington state farming family

Many of us have rued the loss of trees and wild-life habitat when chainsaws and bulldozers came grinding in and yet another human development took down green, wild places.

This week's book

‘For the Good of the Order’ by Timothy W. Ransom
Gorham Printing — 346 pp — \$29.95

“For the Good of the Order” tells a story with a different kind of ending.

Author Timothy W. Ransom, now retired, served on the staff of the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority when he met the man who became the focus of this book.

Kenny Braget was an embattled third-generation farmer on the Nisqually River Delta, in the southern reaches of the Salish Sea. For decades, real estate speculators, port authorities, the U.S. Army, environmentalists, and local, state and federal governments had ideas about what the land’s “highest and best use” should be — and it wasn’t his family’s legacy farm.

So like his parents before him, this determined fellow — a dairyman by occupation and a duck hunter at heart — did everything he could to slow down the march of “progress” as defined by the 20th century. He bought the surrounding acreage of other landowners who didn’t have the stomach for the fight. He alternately cajoled and berated government workers and elected officials.

Coming straight from doing milking chores at the barn and still wearing his flannel shirt, suspenders, muddy boots and National Rifle Association ball cap, he showed up at a mind-numbing series of public meetings over the years to harangue those trying to take away his farm and livelihood.

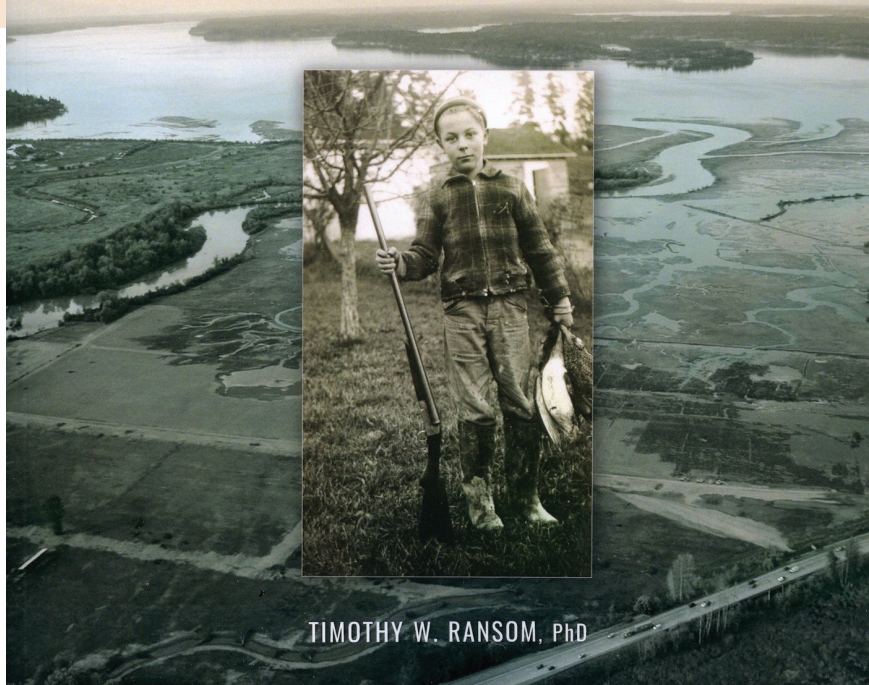
Ransom traces this stubborn farmer’s roots back a couple of generations, telling their stories too. Braget’s Norwegian ancestors knew hardship and heartbreak when they first arrived in Tacoma in the 1880s. But by 1896, they purchased a patch of Nisqually River Delta farmland. Ransom recreates the family rifts, neighborhood squabbles and natural disasters that tested them. He supplements these stories with dozens of family photographs.

Ransom also details the more powerful and well-funded outsider forces that sought not just to seize the Braget family’s land but to change the very character of that area in substantial ways.

Some nearby landowners wanted to expand facilities and amenities for their duck hunting clubs, while others petitioned to use

FOR *the* GOOD of *the* ORDER

THE BRAGET FARM AND LAND USE IN THE NISQUALLY VALLEY



TIMOTHY W. RANSOM, PhD

the site for a garbage fill. The Port of Tacoma and Port of Olympia thought the delta would be a great location for a superport. Industrialists proposed siting an aluminum plant or an oil refinery there. The Army lobbied for expanding Fort Lewis down into the Nisqually Valley. On the bluffs overlooking either side of the delta, there were plans for expansive housing developments.

Eventually the federal and state government stepped in with environmental restoration plans. But even then, the Braget farm, with its dikes and cow pastures, was considered an obstacle.

To borrow a phrase from the book, life became one long litigation for the Bragets.

Read this bittersweet tale to learn how Braget managed to foil most of his foes, “For the Good of the Order.”

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.com