

BY PAUL DORPAT

Path To The Future

THE NATURALISTS among you may be able to figure whether these are the leaves of summer or fall. The photographer, Werner Lenggenhager, stamped his print "October 1955." However, he may have recorded the photograph weeks or even months earlier.

On the back Lenggenhager has also titled his print "Country Road." It was that photographer's calling to record the doomed present, that is the parts of the cityscape that were as dilapidated as they were cherished. It was the poignant combination that got his attention.

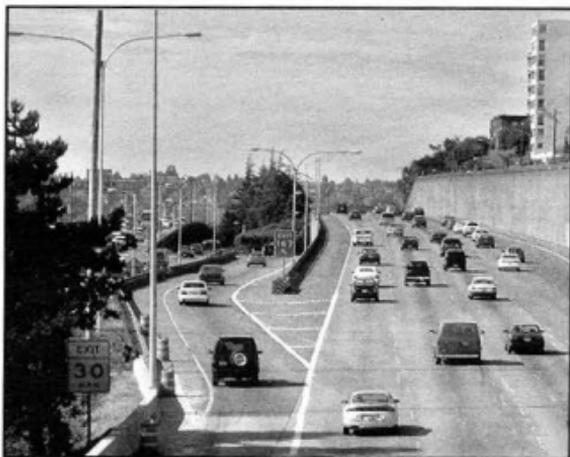
Almost certainly Lenggenhager understood the irony of his title. By 1955 this "Country Road" was already marked for the preferred path of the Seattle Freeway. That year the state passed a toll-road act to have drivers pay directly for the expressways they increasingly demanded. One year later Dwight D. Eisenhower made every driver nationwide pay. For the new highway system, Ike committed the federal government to paying a whopping 90 percent with an increase in gas taxes, not piecemeal, penny-a-mile tolls.

The road is Melrose Place North, a charming alley that ran north from Denny Way two blocks to Thomas Street between Melrose and Eastlake Avenues. After an admittedly quick inquiry at the municipal records "morgue," I was able to find for this street only a 1910 plan for a proposed sewer. The plan indicates that grade changes as deep as 12 feet would be required to lay the sewer. So this "Country Road" has been "improved." P

Vol. 1 and a new edition of Vol. 3 of Paul Dorpat's books, "Seattle Now & Then" are \$19.95 each from Tartu Publications, P.O. Box 85208, Seattle, WA 98145.



COURTESY OF SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY



PAUL DORPAT

When Werner Lenggenhager recorded the view (at top) of Melrose Place North in 1955 he no doubt knew of its likely fate. Lenggenhager gave our community one of its greatest gifts: photographs of the way we were. Examples of his work are at the University of Washington Northwest Collection, the Museum of History and Industry Library and the central branch of the Seattle Public Library. Let Lenggenhager be an example to other intrepid recorders: Before your relatives sell your work, get it into an archive or library.