April Oral History with Clarence Mershon

Sunday, April 21, 2013
Glenn Otto Park in Troutdale
2:00 p.m.

Sharon Nesbit will be interviewing local author and historian Clarence Mershon at the April Program/Business Meeting.

Clarence Mershon, raised on a farm in East Multnomah County, became interested in history at an early age, inspired by his grandmothers. Encouraged by his teachers at Corbett Grade School and Columbian High School, he spent nearly every spare moment reading “adventure” books by authors such as Thomas Meader, westerns by Zane Grey and historic novels such as Charles Nordoff and James N. Hall. Later, books in the Mainstream of America series nourished his interest in history and his love of writing.

April is the annual business meeting, so THS Member of the year will be announced and nominations will be made for THS Board Members for 2013-2014.

Free Program and the public is encouraged to attend! Donations Gladly Accepted!

Light refreshments will be served so please join us for this amazing program!

Call the THS office for more information at 503-661-2164.
Thank you Renewing Members!
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Welcome New Members!
Bob & Phyllis Pattock
Jerry & Janice Simnitt

In Memory of Elsie Simnitt
Jerry & Janice Simnitt
Edward Montecucco
Louise Dix
Karen Zakrzewski
Julie Madeira

In Memory of John Eaton
Louise Dix

In Memory of Doris Caramella
Yolanda Nusser

In Memory of Orlin B. Huston
Barbara Huston-Freund

In memory of Dorothy Kerslake
Richard Kerslake

In Memory of Arnold Parker
Marlene Parker

THANK YOU!
Judy & Len Norby donated two
8-foot tables to THS!

For our email subscribers!!!

(please print, cut out and mail back)

Thank you!
For remembering
The Troutdale Historical Society
Preserving the history of Troutdale, the Sandy River and Columbia River Gorge. Caretakers of the Harlow House Museum, the Barn Museum and the Rail Depot Museum.

Annual Dues: $20 Individual $30 Family $100 Lovers Oak $250 Business Sponsor

I want to donate an additional sum for:

_____ Ongoing work of the society
_____ Endowment Fund for future operations
_____ In memory of __________________________
_____ Highway Exhibit

Dues $__________ Donation $_________

My gift in memory of __________________________

Total enclosed_________ I would like to volunteer _______

Name__________________________ Phone_____________________ 
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Donations are tax deductible. THS is a 501c3 non-profit organization,
Federal Tax ID# 93-073877
503-661-2164 219 E Historic Columbia River Hwy Troutdale, OR
Website -www.troutdalehistory.org

Please support our important business sponsors!
Elsie Simnitt

Elsie Joan Simnitt died at the age of 95 on March 05, 2013. Elsie was born on August 22, 1917 to Gottlieb and Emilie Meger, the youngest of 12 children in Saskatchewan, Canada. She immigrated to Oregon in 1924 and lived in Troutdale the remainder of her life. She married Kenneth J. Simnitt in 1936 and worked with her brother, Roy Meger at Troutdale General Store for 45 years. Elsie enjoyed bowling, quilting, gardening and especially "spading", but most of all she enjoyed her six children, 14 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren. She was a member of Cherry Park Presbyterian Church for more than 80 years. Elsie is survived by daughters, Darlene Alley of Gresham, Debora Simnitt of Portland; and sons, Theodore of Estacada, and Jerome of Canby. She was preceded in death by her husband in 1983; daughter, Nancy in 2011; and son, Kenneth Jr. in 2012. A funeral was held on March 9 in Canby. Donations may be made to the Troutdale Historical Society.

Remembering Elsie

By Jim Glenn

My brother Tommy and I were never very lucky at thinking while growing up in East County but we made up for that malady with the friendships we made and so we were both saddened when we heard that one of Troutdale’s true icons Elsie Simnitt had recently passed away.

Our Mom would allow Tommy and me to stop in at the General Store on Fridays to spend five cents on candy on our way home from the berry patch. Roy was at the counter that first Friday and silently dealt with the frustration as we deliberated for a good length of time over our choices. We eventually decided on malt balls at five for a penny. Roy hastily counted out the candy and sacked the chocolate morsels and sent us on our way. Tommy and I were never very lucky at thinking while growing up in East County but we made up for that malady with the friendships we made and so we were both saddened when we heard that one of Troutdale’s true icons Elsie Simnitt had recently passed away.

The following Friday as we walked through the front door of the store, Roy looked up in horror and yelled “Elsie, customers,” as he retreated to the safety of the store room. I figure he didn’t want to referee another fracas with the Glenn boys. Elsie came to the counter and introduced herself as Elsie. Not Mrs. Simnitt. We asked for a nickel’s worth of malt balls which she promptly started counting and sacking. Tommy took his portion and stuck them in his pocket insuring his fair share and off we went. We never called an adult by their first name before.

After leaving the store, the malt balls had disappeared by the time we got to Handy’s Service Station. Some-how Elsie had pulled a sleight of hand maneuver by not only dropping in a 26th malt ball but also two red jaw breakers. I pulled them from the bottom of the sack and handed one of them to Tommy, not so much for the virtues of honesty but because I didn’t want to participate in a brawl with him over a jaw breaker.

That scenario played out every Friday and by the end of the berry picking season, Elsie stood ten feet tall in our minds.

Goodbye, old friend. May you rest in peace.
The Director’s Chair

Leaving is such sweet sorrow!...but Yahoo! Central Oregon here I come. It is also with great happiness that I am able to introduce to our membership, our new Executive Director, Nell Simien.

Nell came to us from the Easter Seals Oregon Senior Community Service Employment Program. She loved us so much that she volunteered to help at last July’s “On the Water” event before she even started to work in the office on August 1.

She has an extensive background in law enforcement for the Department of Justice, office management and is receiving her Bachelors in Human Development on April 17 from Warner Pacific College. Nell has also worked on Portland Public Schools Bonds and Finance Committees.

We are thrilled to have her on board. I am leaving THS in good hands!

More from Nell in May’s newsletter.

THANK YOU!
Donations to Operating!

Carol & Walter Ottoson
Frieda Ryland
Judy Jones
Wynn Kaiser
Ginger Harlow Allen
Jack & Ellen Cantwell
Dr. & Tami Campbell
Debbie Schoeopper
Mel & Shirley Miller

THANKS for supporting our February Auction at Tippy Canoe for the Upcoming Highway Exhibit at the Barn Museum!

Greg & Sue Handy
Dennis & Mary Bryson
Ed & Phyllis Thiemann
Clarence & Colleen Mershon
Bob & Jean Ice
Doug & Diane Walker
Doug Freeman
Rod Canzler
Cathy Peetz
Pat & Pat Brothers
Scott Anderson
Dr. Cranford
Steve & Judy Lehl
Helen Wand
Shirley Welton-Tippy Canoe
James Burson
Jim Buss

THS NEEDS YOU!

Can you volunteer at one of our museums for a third Saturday? We have all three museums open on the third Saturday of each month from 10-2 or for a special tour. Take photos at an event? HELP on the newsletter? Dust? Scrapbook? HELP with fundraisers? Do you know or work for a company who would donate goods or services?...Call the office to volunteer.

The smallest task helps a lot! All of these things are part of our mission to gather, preserve and make available the history of our area.

Please support our important business sponsors!
Thank You To Our Business Sponsors

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The Smelt Return to the Sandy River

From Sharon Nesbit:

Smelt returned to the Sandy River on Sunday, March 24, prompting Troutdale Mayor Doug Daoust to send out an email letting people know that it was a "good sign" for the city.

In the old days before email, you could tell the smelt were running when Roy Meger put his dip nets on rent out in front of the Troutdale General Store.

Smelt were listed in 2010 as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, so there was no dipping taking place this year and officials ran off the few who showed up with nets. That did not stop many people from walking out on the pedestrian walkway of the Sandy River highway bridge and stare down at the tiny fish making their way upstream.

It also required us to go to our files and add the latest run to our list of smelt runs. The last runs in the Sandy were 2001 and 2003, making a 10-year gap since we last saw them. Fish and Wildlife officials say that it is "characteristic of smelt to disappear for a number of years" and most old-time smelt dippers remember the 14-year gap in the 1970s.

In 1923, however, there was a huge run, which brought 60,000 people.

“Way Out West” Murder Mystery Dinner set for September 15 at Brickhaven Bed & Breakfast

We have ten tickets left for this walk on the “Wild Side” — the Wild West Side that is! Buy your ticket to be a part of the cast of the “Way Out West” Murder Mystery Dinner on Sunday afternoon, September 15th at Brickhaven Bed & Breakfast high above the magnificent Columbia River Gorge. Festivities start at 4 p.m. Enjoy a western bar-b-que dinner with appropriate libations while trying to solve the “who-done-it” mystery.

Tickets are $50 (we only have ten left) and may be purchased at the Rail Depot Museum and Store from 10-2 Tuesday through Saturday. We can do a credit card purchase over the phone. The proceeds from this event will go the Historic Columbia River Highway Exhibit to be in the Barn Museum.

A big thank you to Pat & Pat Brothers, Ed & Phyllis Thiemann at Brickhaven Bed & Breakfast and the Troutdale Historical Society Board of Directors.

Please support our important business sponsors!
Connie Purvis

February 6, 1940 - March 11, 2013

Connie Kaye Purvis passed away on March 11, 2013. Connie was born in Caldwell, Idaho on February 6, 1940 to Francis and Flora Martin. She met her future husband, Victor Lewis Purvis in 1954. Connie graduated from Gemstate Academy Class of ’58 and attended Walla Walla College. In 1960 she married her high school boyfriend and was married to him for almost 53 years. They lived in Pendleton, OR, Wrangel, AK and Walla Walla, WA before building their Dream House in Troutdale, OR.

Connie worked as a secretary for many years, ending her career as an Executive Secretary for an actuarial firm. She was an early user of word processing equipment and in her prime; she could type faster than the PCs running, DOS Word Perfect would accept the keystrokes, shifting from standard text to superscript, subscript, italic and bold without breaking the rhythm of her flying fingers.

Connie was a longtime member of our historical society, and contributed to our oral history collection by transcribing our interviews.

In high school Connie was President of the Girls Club. She was also president of the Town Family Association and a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Society of Women Descendants of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company.

Being handicapped from birth by a congenital hip condition, Connie was prevented from enjoying many physical activities, hiking, running, jumping, etc. She vowed that when she got to Heaven with a body made new, she was going to cavort!

She is survived by her husband, Victor Purvis, brother, Larry Martin of Pendleton, son, Tony Purvis of Spangle, WA, daughter, Richelle Aboujaoude of Portland along with her 2 grandsons, Dakota and Jake Purvis and her granddaughter, Danica Aboujaoude.
Mission Statement: To gather, preserve and make available material relating to the history of the community of Troutdale, the Sandy River, the Columbia River Gorge and nearby area: To stimulate interest in and knowledge of, the locality’s past.

Bygone Times

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Remember!
THS is a 501c3, so your donations are tax-deductible and help support the museums, programs, preservation of artifacts and our local history. Thank you for your continued support!

Contributions to
Columbia River Highway Exhibit Fund
And Fundraisers For the Exhibit

Karon Eggers
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