

## Commentary... Of a certain age...

By Sue Stafford  
Columnist

Pioneers, writers, adventurers, farmers, intellectuals, business people, public servants – the roots of my family tree. They originally emigrated from England, Ireland and Scotland when America was in its infancy. They came first to Canada, Vermont and North Carolina, from where they eventually joined the advance wave of western migration, first to the western slopes of the Appalachian mountains, then to Indiana and Illinois. When the Far West became the land of promise, they left comfortable familiarity behind to pursue the dream of expansion and opportunity.

Growing up in Portland, I was surrounded by the legacy, history, and stories of my ancestors who had made the long trek on the Oregon Trail to secure the promise of new lands and a new life. Several years ago when I drove across the country in a comfortable air-conditioned car, I marveled at the toughness and courage it must have taken for my pioneer forbearers to strike out into the wilderness with no guarantee of what they would find, no creature comforts along the way, and unbearable hardships.

My maternal great-great-grandfather, John Tucker Scott, his wife Anne, and nine children left the comfort of a prosperous Illinois farm in 1852 to seek the opportunities of the west. Anne made it only as far as Fort Laramie, Wyoming, where she is buried along the trail – one of the many victims of cholera. Weeks later, the youngest child, Willy, also succumbed to the disease. With no time to

grieve their losses, the family pushed on.

John, now a single father of eight children, remarried soon after arriving in the Oregon Territory and settled down to farm once again. His son Harvey went on to become the first graduate of Pacific University and the first editor of *The Oregonian* newspaper in Portland. John's daughter Abigail became the leader of the women's suffrage movement in Oregon, the editor of her own newspaper (when Harvey wouldn't editorially support the vote for women), an author, a mother, and a businesswoman.

My paternal great-great-grandparents made their way from Vermont to Shelby, Indiana, and then across the Oregon Trail in the same year as the Scotts, but in a different wagon train. Their destination, also Portland, was where my great-grandfather Charles Holman ran steamboats on the Willamette and Columbia rivers. His wife, Mary, raised 11 children and was instrumental in establishing the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon. Their youngest son went on to become a United States Senator from Oregon.

Civic responsibility and a fervent passion for the land that is Oregon are qualities that have filtered down through the generations and reside strongly in me. As I have researched our family's history, I have gained a keen appreciation for my ancestors' strength of character and record of public service.

Such was not always the case. As a child I was steeped in family history and surrounded by dozens of relatives to the point where I was delighted to move to Seattle in 1971 and get away from it all. I remember while

growing up, every Memorial Day we would troop out to Riverview Cemetery and place flowers on what seemed an inordinate number of graves and I would again hear the fabled family stories. Now at 72, I wish I had asked more questions and been more engaged, because the family history fascinates me and has so much more meaning.

I have always felt a special affinity for the Sisters-Camp Sherman area and, when I moved here 13 years ago, there was a comfortable sense of coming home. Many childhood summer days were spent in Camp Sherman playing in Lake Creek and frequenting the Camp Sherman Store to purchase penny candy and wax Tacola sticks filled with sugary fruit-flavored juice.

It was only after finding a journal in my father's desk that I discovered a wonderful connection between an ancestor and my living in Sisters.

My paternal grandfather, Benjamin Holman, kept a carefully written record of his 1894 autumn, when he came by horseback across the Willamette Valley into the Cascade mountains above what is now Sisters. He spent several months of his 20th year as part of a hunting and fishing party organized by Judge John Waldo, for whom Waldo Lake is named. He reported seeing smoke from Indian campfires across the lake. An extraordinarily early snowfall on their way out of the mountains almost trapped the party near Breitenbush, where one of their pack-horses fell to its death at the bottom of a cliff. After climbing down to retrieve badly needed supplies, they did make it safely back to

the valley. The beauty and ruggedness of the mountain wilderness made a lasting impression on my grandfather, who was also one of the founding members of the Mazamas mountaineering organization in Portland in that same year.

Often when I gaze up at those glorious Three Sisters, I imagine the spirit of my grandfather up there watching over me. Here in Sisters, like no place else in Oregon, I feel a closeness and kinship with those rugged individualists – my ancestors – who, in fulfilling their destinies by coming west, gave me the gift of living in this special corner of the world. I feel linked to them in their love of the land and their desire to work for the welfare of Oregon and its people. I am grateful for their courage, tenacity, sense of adventure, and belief in service. Their strength of character inspires me to live, as well as I can, a life of integrity, fueled by compassion, curiosity and optimism.

I believe I know who I am partly because I know from where I came.

## Mr. SHS pasta feed benefits FAN

The contestants and escorts of the Mr. Sisters High School pageant fundraiser are hosting the annual pasta feed on Sunday, March 12. The pasta feed will be held at Sisters Community Church at 6 p.m.

Tickets are being sold by contestants before the event, and can be bought at the door for \$5. The proceeds from every fundraiser involved in Mr. SHS benefit Family Access Network, which helps families in the community through the local food bank, and help provide school supplies for kids.

There will be baskets being auctioned off to raise additional funds. The couples will also be auctioned off to do any sort of work buyers ask for. The pasta will be made by contestants' parents and there will also be dessert and drinks provided.

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