



Tales from a Sisters Naturalist
by Jim Anderson

Sasquatch, writers, and success

While at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), I met and married a snazzy science teacher and we produced two wonderful boys who have grown up as U.S. Air Force fighter pilots with kids of their own.

In the early days of our family we became a regular fixture at Don Smith's (aka Chief Lalooska's) home. Don was a transplanted member of the Cherokee Nation who took up residence in Ariel.

He became enraptured with the lifestyle and art of the Pacific Northwest Nations and took upon himself to learn all he could about their culture. He then obtained permission from

the Northwest People to tell their clan ancestor stories in the Longhouse, using art creations he carved and created.

Pacific Northwest frogs, bears, birds and their spiritual connection to The People become the subject of his thrilling stories in a way that helped my writing and also carried me into another life of appreciation of nature that is so powerful today.

One subject kept coming up as my wife and our boys visited with Don and his family at their home next to the Long House: The Great Men of the Mountains, aka Sasquatch.

One night, after a delicious dinner and games, Don got started with his Sasquatch stories and noted my inattention. He came up to me and with a very serious look asked, "You don't believe in the Big Men of the Mountains?"

I sort of hemmed and hawed, not wanting to get myself into hot water or hurt Don's feelings, when he interrupted me, saying, "You love birds, don't you? You study them and photograph them?"

I responded that I did. He then asked, "You've heard birds singing at night?" I answered that I had. Then, without hesitation,

he whispered in my ear, "Those aren't birds," and spoke louder, "Those are the Big Men of the Mountain, and that's the way they communicate."

At that moment, my brand new, sometimes boisterous young son Dean, began to complain so I placed him in one of those newfangled baby backpacks and went for a hike up the stump-covered hills overlooking the Longhouse.

Once on top Dean had quieted down and I sat down on one of the stumps overlooking Cougar Reservoir on that beautiful, quiet, moonlit night. Suddenly, right behind me, I heard (what I thought were) two birds talking to each other, twittering about this-or-that.

I could feel the hair on the back of my neck standing straight up and a funny feeling came over me. So much so that I scampered down the hill, right to the front door of the Smith home.

As I stepped into the house, the first person I met was Don, who looked at me, grinned and said, "You heard them didn't you?"

After my stint with Sunriver in the early 1970s, helping to make land-use planner Bob Royston's "Ecologium" into Sunriver Nature Center, came another

mentor: Dorothy Cale of Bend.

She hired me to take on the job of editor for her entry into the world of the local newspapers when she started publishing "Confidentially Yours."

She decided to focus on historical tales of early Bend and I had the honor of meeting and writing up stories of early history makers. Additionally I wrote for Eastwind, a monthly paper published by Jeff and Vicki Hill — more stories of people who led incredible lives in times past.

Oh, what a grand time that was!

Then, surprises of surprises, Vince Roth, my spider prof in Arizona, talked Sue and me into coming to Southeast Arizona to run Ramsey Canyon Preserve, which in those days was known as the Hummingbird Capital of the U.S.

That's also where our son, Caleb, got his middle name, Carroll, for Carroll Peabody, a conscientious giant of a man who once owned Ramsey Canyon and didn't want to see it developed. And our daughter, Miriam, got her name from Miriam Tefft, an extraordinary teacher of those historical days.

We moved back to Oregon in time for me

to kiss my old pal Dean Hollinshead goodbye when he went out among the stars.

That was quickly followed by Erik and Kiki Dolson of *The Nugget Newspaper* coming into my life. I started writing a nature column for them, which is still going on today.

To say that my time with Erik was instructive would be a gross understatement. He would frequently ask, "Got a minute?" and then give me another lesson on writing, especially the use of the article, "the." And current editor-in-chief Jim Cornelius does the same, ready to guide me along when I so obviously need it.

In the late 1990s, at the encouragement of publisher Aaron Swisher, I began writing an additional nature column for the *Source Weekly* paper in Bend.

And that has been a lot of fun. I tapped out tales for his readers about all the creatures I was interacting with in the world of sagebrush, forests, caves, lakes, air and rivers of Central Oregon.

And what a wonderful time I've had doing so over these past 25-some-odd years, especially with

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