

Local

Ann “Bebe” Ellis Racey

It’s impossible to sum up an entire life in a story, book or even a movie—and especially not in something as short as an obituary. That task becomes even more difficult when it comes to describing someone like Ann “Bebe” Ellis Racey, who was truly one of a kind.

Bebe was born Annie Glenn Pace on September 18, 1921, in Asheville, North Carolina, to parents Birdie “Big Mama” Newsom Pace and Burke H. Pace. She spent her childhood along with her seven siblings during the Great Depression—part of The Greatest Generation. She received her nickname from her baby sister, Emily, who couldn’t yet pronounce her name. She was raised in a colorful family. Not much is known of her father’s side except for his ties to the sketchy 1920s bootlegging scene. Her mother came from a completely opposite background with old Southern ties. Big Mama was part of the Bibb and Harding families, growing up in Governor Bibb’s mansion in Alabama, closely related to President Warren G. Harding, and one of very few women at that time to attend a university.

The family moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina when Bebe was a small child. Her memories included playing for hours outside on the mountain, and such poverty that school lunches sometimes only meant a cracker with some ketchup and a slice of onion. The family’s milk was watered down to make “Blue John” as it lasted longer. As a result, wasting nothing was central to her life.

When Bebe was 19, one of her favorite stories was how she put on her leather motorcycle belt and helmet, which she had tooled herself, braided her hair, and rode her Indian motorcycle from North Carolina to California and back alone, sometimes spending the night beside the road in a sleeping bag.

Later, she moved to St. Augustine and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, but the family eventually continued on to either Texas or Southern California. It was in California where Bebe met Robert “Bob” Ellis Jr. at work for Douglas Aircraft. They enjoyed company dances together, and eloped in Las Vegas after one in October of 1946. On her 30th birthday, September 18, Bebe gave birth to their only child, a daughter, Suzanne “Suzan” Annice Ellis in Inglewood, California. Bebe changed careers, later becoming a real estate agent and managing Bob’s run for Congress. Bebe and Bob were both very active in Los Angeles County Young Republicans at the same time as Ronald Reagan. She was an elected Precinct Committee Person in Los Angeles County.

When Bob passed away suddenly at the age of 41 due to an aortic aneurism, Bebe and Suzan remained near family in California for a time, before moving to southern Oregon.

Bebe remained interested in politics and preserving Constitutional rights—a conservative thinker all her adult life. In her later years, she was horrified at the loss of American freedoms she had seen over the decades.

On a trip in 1970, Bebe met Andrew Racey on a hunting trip to Baker County, and they hit it off, corresponding afterward about mutual hobbies and political beliefs. In 1972, Bebe married Andy, moved to Bridgeport, and began the process of putting the cattle ranch into financial order, selling her real estate in Medford to do so. At their height, the Racey Ranch ran about 800 head of cattle, which they eventually reduced to around 200 before retiring. They were the first to introduce Charolais to the area. Bebe and Andy built their own house by hand on the upper part of the ranch (the old McCorkle place), and planted an orchard behind it. Suzan’s family also lived and worked on the ranch, and Bebe taught her two granddaughters, Kerry and Kasey, how to change their own flat tires, load and shoot the .22 rifle, and catch fish.

Bebe and Andy were two of the original founders of Eastern Oregon Mining Association.

Over the years, Bebe’s generosity touched multiple households in at least three states. Her nephew Don said she had a “charity heart.” She was known to help family members without question in times of need, and was responsible for helping Black Lyon Publishing in Baker City, Oregon and Old Town Baking in Rancho Cucamonga, California initially get off the ground.

In 2014, Bebe became the eldest member of the Editorial Board for *The Baker County Press*, one of four generations of family involved in the newspaper.

Bebe is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Suzan and Keith Jones; granddaughter Kerry McQuisten; granddaughter Kasey Phelan and husband Nick; great-grandchildren (in order of age) Kailyn McQuisten, Savannah Phelan, Jakob Phelan and Vivien McQuisten;



many nieces and nephews, particularly Don Bishop and Michael Robert Pace both of whom she remained particularly close; and numerous other great nieces and nephews.

She is preceded in death by husbands Robert Ellis Jr. and Andrew Racey; mother Birdie “Big Mama” Newsom Pace; father Burke Pace; siblings and their spouses Peyton (Helen), Billy, Caruthers (Nettie), Myrtle (Red), Burke (Joan), Emily (Whitney) and Allen (Vickie).

On Sunday, April 2, Bebe survived a heart attack the magnitude from which medical staff said they had never seen a person walk away. For a while, she was convinced she might even skip the E.R. and just “get over it by herself.” She was surrounded by family during her hospital stay, laughing and talking, until a second heart attack on Friday, April 7, proved too much, even for her “charity heart.” She was, as she put it, “the last of the Mohicans.” She passed quickly at 7:56 p.m. surrounded by love to the very end.

A graveside service will be held Saturday, April 22 at 3 p.m. PDT, at the Malheur Cemetery where she will be laid to rest beside Andy. Friends and family are invited to an informal gathering at the Devils Canyon Ranch upon leaving the cemetery. To light a candle for Bebe or leave a condolence for the family, please visit www.coletributecenter.com. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made locally to the Malheur Cemetery, which relies on those donations for all its care and maintenance, in care of Cole’s Tribute Center.

September 18, 1921 - April 7, 2017. Beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

Wyden town hall

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Wyden tossed into his response the fact that he voted for President Trump’s new Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke, because he understands that Zinke is against the transfer of public lands back to state or county levels, and will buck other Republicans who are in favor of that transfer.

A student, Jessica, opened up about her family’s struggles living on disability and expressed insurance issues created by Obamacare.

Wyden acknowledged that Oregon’s management of health insurance “was not one of Oregon’s shining moments.” He said he’s focused on cracking down on “prescription drug ripoffs.”

In response to a question from the moderator himself about addiction, Wyden said he believes the feds should regulate the number of pills a doctor can prescribe at once.

Richard Haynes asked the senator his thoughts on military involvement in Syria and/or North Korea.

Wyden said he disagreed with Trump’s desire to increase military spending but reducing money to diplomatic efforts. He said he did support Trump’s decision to strike after the use of chemical weapons, drawing a groan from the more liberally inclined in the audience.

Jackie Sanders asked about Wyden’s stance on the Forest Service closing roads under RS2477, and harvesting more timber from federal lands.

Wyden said, “We have got to fix the system of fighting fire.” He believes fire fighting isn’t adequately funded.

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor Tom Montoya was in the

audience, and said, “We try to manage for multiple use, but there are times when roads need attention.” He said public input is always sought in decisions and RS2477 is a complicated law.

This response drew groans of disbelief from the more conservatively inclined in the crowd.

Another lady suggested that America get rid of the electoral college, “open democratic primaries,” and eliminate superdelegates.

Wyden said it’s time to “really rethink” the electoral college as outlined in the Constitution and go for a strict popular vote due to communication and transportation now being so connected nationally

unlike when the founding fathers put in the electoral college to “protect smaller areas,” he said.

Wyden, who was a superdelegate himself, said they “weren’t so super” and would see them eliminated. He would also like to implement a national vote-by-mail system like Oregon has.

Cynthia Roberts said she would like to get the “impeachment ball rolling” on Trump, who has been in office three months. Wyden sidestepped the question and called for Trump to release his tax returns, calling that action the “lowest ethical bar.”

More questions were asked about increasing timber harvests and ben-

efits for military, including National Guard.

Former chemistry teacher, Laura Miller, said global warming will bring “catastrophic consequences” and Wyden agreed, then suggested exploring geothermal energy use, energy storage, and tidal/wave energy.

Finally, Madison Turner asked Wyden about the divide between rural and urban Oregon, and the senator assured her he represents all Oregonians.

Wyden then led a round of applause before leaving BHS. He stopped at Safeway, drawing attention, before leaving Baker City to continue on to additional scheduled town halls.