

Strawberry Fielder Forever

By Sally Harrison

Maybe it's an age thing, but, whenever the seasons change and I feel that warm sun on my face, my mind wanders back to summers long ago and all the wonderful experiences I had growing up in Vernonia.

For those of you who don't know, Charlie and Freda Biggs adopted me at the age of five. We lived at the end of "Biggs Road" north of town. I've always said the road was a half-mile long, but I've never measured it. I do know it seemed much longer at the end of a hard day's work.

At the age of nine I began my summer career of strawberry picking. When I was working, my regular chores of dishwashing, weed pulling and firewood packing were suspended.

The day started very early, 4:00AM. It was get dressed, pack a lunch and walk the half mile to catch the berry bus. Over the years we had many bus driver/field bosses, but the one I remember is Celeste Potter. She knew how to keep the unrulies in line on her bus and in the field.

For our picking enjoyment, some growers provided carriers with six cannery hallocks and a handle, while others had flats with twelve cannery hallocks. As I got older, I preferred the flat. Not so many trips to check in and get my card punched.

Now you must understand I was in this endeavor for the money. I bought all my school clothes and later my school books with my earnings. I teamed up with Rosalie Badley McCoy, and we were picking machines. The most we were ever paid per flat was sixty cents and when the berries were good, we made upwards of thirty dollars per day. Rosie was such a wonderful berry buddy. She was fun to be with, and there's something about a little competition to keep you on your toes. We did make sure that at the end of the day we each had the same amount of flats.

I must admit I had a couple of quirks like taking one tuna fish sandwich every day for lunch. And I never, I mean never, got down on my knees. Having my hands dirty and stained was all I could stand. When I got home, I would dunk my hands into full strength bleach. Painful but necessary!

The bus rides home were the best fun. Everyone was tired, dirty, hot, and hungry. A little insanity would set in and joking, laughing and singing would ensue. The usual songs like, "My Gal's a Corker" and "99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall" were always standard fare but my favorite was, "In the Boarding House."

In the Boarding House where I lived,
Everything is growing old.
Long gray hairs were in the butter
On the bread there's always mold.
When the dog died we had sausage,
When the cat died, catnip tea.
When the Landlord died, I left there.
Spare ribs were too much for me...

The last place that Rosie and I picked was at Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Hershey's, way, way up in the hills. They had small fields and a small crew. I'll never forget the time Richard Huntman put a snake in his berry carrier as a joke. I thought Mrs. Hershey was going to have a heart attack! The hills were alive with the sound of her scream.

It was hard work, it was fun and it gave us a sense of pride and a doable work ethic. It hasn't seemed to harm my fellow berry pickers or me physically or mentally.

All I have are good memories of life in the strawberry fields.

Another Vernonian Builds Towns Spelling Reputation

Noni Andersen won Second Place in the 12th Annual Oregon Senior (50 and older) Spelling Bee held April 18 in Aurora, Oregon. Twenty-two senior spellers competed in the tourney, which began with a qualifying written round of 75 words. The top fifty percent then competed in the oral round. Each competitor received a different word to spell aloud in successive rounds; competitors were eliminated after three incorrect spellings. First place went to Maggie Stuckey, Portland, and a playoff round for the four spellers tied for third gave the prize to Barry Pelzner, also of Portland. A separate certificate for first place in the written portion went to Linda Goertz of Portland.


Noni won the local Senior Spelling Bee in 2001 and has participated in prior years' state bees. Prior local winners of the Oregon State Bee include Audeen Wagner, Second Place 1998, First Place 1999; Carol Sawyer, Second Place 2002 and First Place 2003; and Tobie Finzel, who moved up from Third in 2002 to Second in 2003 to First in 2004. Once a competitor has won First Place, he or she may no longer compete. Retired champions are then invited to participate in the volunteer committee that runs the Bee; the three local women all do. The three have also competed in the National Senior Spelling Bee in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Audeen was the 2000 winner and Carol won in 2003. Tobie placed third in 2003 and 2004.

The National Senior Spelling Bee, sponsored by AARP, is open to anyone over 50 who likes to spell. This year it will be held in Cheyenne, Wyoming, on June 20. Visit the website www.seniorsspellingbee.com for details. Next year's Oregon Senior Spelling Bee will be held in Aurora on April 10. Contact Roberta Hutton at tansyacres28@hotmail.com for registration and information.

Law Office
Brindle McCaslin & Lee PC

Offices in Portland, Hillsboro and at
610 Bridge St., Vernonia

Open Tuesday and Friday
8:00 AM to 5:00 PM



Consultations
\$60.00

For an appointment call
503-429-2412

Senior Stars: Myra Baska

By Necia Dewitt

Myra Baska was born January 21, 1911, in Donnybrook, North Dakota, to Harry and Altha Graff. She was the eighth of fifteen children. She received her schooling in the tiny school in White Ash. Myra married Frank Dinger on January 22, 1934. They lived on a farm in Grano, North Dakota. To this union, six children were born, two boys and 4 girls-- Gary, Jerry, Delores, Fran, Carol and Pat. When Frank passed away in 1944, Myra took care of the farm, riding her horse to round up the cows. She also took care of sheep. She remembers one farm task was to churn butter. With a large family, she performed that act-- and many others-- often.



Myra Baska celebrating another birthday

Myra married Earl Baska in 1948. They lived in Mohall, North Dakota, until 1956. Earl's brother, Art, lived in Portland, Oregon, and encouraged Earl to apply for a position as a log truck driver for Crown Zellerbach in Vernonia, Oregon. He succeeded, and drove a truck for CZ for sixteen years. Earl and Myra had two children, Judy and Gene. When he became old enough, their son Gene followed his dad's footsteps and worked for Crown Zellerbach for many years. When Earl retired in 1972, the couple moved to Cornelius, Oregon, where Earl passed away in 1976. Myra decided to return to Vernonia, and spent a great deal of time tending to her flower garden, among other things. She still loves flowers!

Myra blessed the employees (and family members) of West Oregon Electric with her kitchen skills. She made pies and sandwiches for the Board of Directors' monthly meetings and often made donuts or cookies for West Oregon employees. Her cooking and baking skills were also apparent as she made food to bring to potlucks for the Vernonia Baptist Church, which she attended regularly.

Bowling is one of Myra's passions. Her teams won championship awards in 1979, 1981 and 1982. She was featured on Channel 2 and the Longview newspaper where she displayed her skills when she was 90 years old! In her 90th year, the family gave her a birthday party in the Vernonia Scout Cabin. Over 100 people attended, including many family members.

Five of Myra's children live in Vernonia: Delores Fowler, Jerry Dinger, Gary Dinger, Fran Fletcher and Gene Baska. Her daughter, Carol Bodenhamer, lives in Rainier with her husband, Ted, and a daughter. Daughter Judy White lives in Tennessee with her husband, Bruce, and daughter Pat Simonson lives in Prineville with her husband, Chuck. Gene Baska worked with the Vernonia Police Force for many years. Myra's longevity is strengthened by the knowledge that she still has living siblings. She has one brother and three sisters scattered across the US.

Another of Myra's skills is her ability to sing and remember lyrics. She recently sang all the verses of "Twenty Froggies Went to School" while at the Vernonia Senior Center. Necia hopes to have Myra sing another tune at the Senior Center someday, entitled "I Don't Want to Get Married." She sang that song during her interview for this article. Also, during the interview, Myra revealed another of her skills. She can play the piano by ear (not needing sheet music). Myra has a piano in her bedroom which she plays most days. Some songs she played during the interview were "In the Good Old Summer Time," "Roll Out the Barrel" and "Smile Awhile." One more skill Myra possesses is her love to paint, which the interviewer noticed was displayed in a painting Myra has on a wall in her home. She loves to play cards, especially pinochle.

Truly, Myra Baska has already lived a life full of varied experiences, and she intends to continue doing the many things she enjoys, as time and health allow. She and her family continue to strengthen the community of Vernonia. Add Myra to the list of Vernonia Senior Stars!

Clatskanie Seniors Celebrate 30th Anniversary of Flippin House

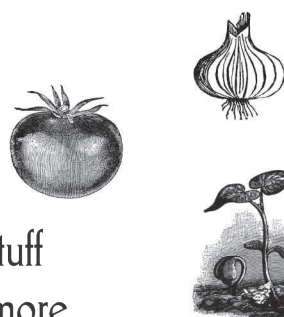
The Clatskanie Senior Citizens are pleased to extend an invitation to attend the celebration of their 30th anniversary of the purchase of the historic Flippin House by the seniors of Clatskanie. The celebration will be held on Sunday, June 14, from 1-4 p.m. at the Flippin House located at 620 Tichenor Street in Clatskanie. There will be free food, entertainment and tours.

In conjunction with the day's activities, the senior center is collecting memories of the Flippin House. If you have any special memories of this historic house, please send them to Memories - Clatskanie Senior Center at P.O. Box 383, Clatskanie, OR 97016. To be included in the pamphlet available that day, please send your memories no later than June 1. The day's activities and memories pamphlet are partially funded by the Columbia County Cultural Coalition.

Please feel free to contact Elsa at 503-728-3403 or Loretta at 503-728-3608 for more details.

VERNONIA SENIOR CENTER FUNDRAISER PLANT & GARDEN SALE

Brighten your Garden with
plants,
shrubs,
bulbs,
trees,
garden stuff
& much more.
(even fishing equipment!)



WEDS - SATURDAY
JUNE 10, 11, 12 & 13
9:00AM - 5:00PM



VERNONIA SENIOR CENTER 446 BRIDGE ST.
All proceeds will go to the Senior Citizens Center