

## Keasey Century Farm: A Family Farm Survives in Vernonia After Many Generations



By Scott Laird

The Keasey Tree Farm has been part of the Vernonia landscape for many, many years. Officially established in 1896, it has been recognized as a Century Farm and was also named the Tree Farmer of the Year in 1992 by the Columbia County Small Woodlands Association. Generations of family members have lived on and cared for the property, maintaining its natural beauty and rustic feel, while still harvesting timber and actively managing the property assets.

Located five miles

from Vernonia along Keasey Road, the almost 400-acre property meanders on both sides of Rock Creek, and is of historical significance to the Vernonia area. The Keasey family line has now reached its seventh generation in the region and continues to have a presence on the farm.

Today the Keasey Family Corporation controls the property with only a small handful of family members still residing in Vernonia. A board of directors makes management decisions and the property is maintained

by a caretaker. The family occasionally logs timber in order to pay for maintenance and taxes, and family members continue to use the property for recreational purposes--for family picnics, hunting, mushroom gathering and just general wandering around in the woods.

The Keasey family first settled the property in the 1880's, and have been on the property ever since. Ralph Keasey, the fourth generation

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## Rainier Police Chief Painter Killed in the Line of Duty

Rainier Police Chief Ralph Painter was killed during an altercation with a suspect on Wednesday, January 5, 2011.

Painter, a veteran of twenty years with the Rainier Police force was 55. He had served as police chief for the last five years. He leaves behind a wife and seven year old son, in addition to six grown children and several grandchildren.

Painter was killed while responding to call at the Sound Authority in Rainier. He was removed by Life Flight Helicopter and later pronounced dead at a hospital in Longview, WA.

A suspect, Daniel Butts, 21, of Kalama, WA, was shot and injured during a shootout with police following the incident. Butts was taken into custody and transported to a hospital. He was arraigned on Friday, January 7 for aggravated murder.

Painter's body was taken to the State Medical Examiners Office in Clackamas, and given a police escort back to Rainier



on Thursday, January 6.

Rainier Mayor Jerry Cole was emotional as he addressed a press conference on Wednesday.

"This has been a tragic day in our city's history," Cole said. "No one thinks something like this will happen."

A public memorial service will be held on Friday, January 14 at 1:00 PM at the Chiles Center located at 5000 N. Willamette Blvd. on the University of Portland campus.

Columbia River Fire and Rescue Volunteers Association is accepting tax exempt donations to assist with the funeral expenses and other unmet needs for the Ralph Painter Family. Donations may be sent to the Columbia River Fire District office at 270 Columbia Blvd., St. Helens, OR 97051.

Make checks payable to: Columbia River Fire and Rescue Volunteer Association, in memory of Ralph Painter.

## Josette Mitchell is New Vernonia Mayor

Josette Mitchell is the new Mayor of Vernonia.

Mitchell, 35, took the oath of office at the beginning of the January 3 Vernonia City Council meeting, along with new City Councilors, Marilyn Nicks and Willow Burch.

"The goal for me is to remain transparent and efficient," said Mitchell in an interview after her first City Council meeting as Mayor. "Because we are elected to represent the citizens' interests and to do what is best for Vernonia, it's my goal that, as a Council, we do that."

Mitchell has been a resident of Vernonia for ten years and has been extremely active in the community. She has served on the Board of Directors for the Vernonia Cares Food Bank and is currently the Treasurer. She has also served as the Chair of the Vernonia Community Learning Center and is on the City Budget Committee, serving as the Chair this year. She was a member of the Ford Institute Leadership Development Program's Cohort 2 in Vernonia, and acted as a community

Trainer for Cohort 3. She and her husband, Casey, have also served as the Co-chairs for the Vernonia Salmon Festival for numerous years. Mitchell says the only elected office she has ever previously held was as her college sorority President.

Mitchell, who grew up in Bend and graduated from the University of Oregon, has taught school and substituted in the Vernonia School District, including teaching fifth and sixth grades at the Mist School. She has also been a stay-at-home mother with her daughter, Sailor.

As Mayor, Mitchell says she is planning to hold monthly workshops before City Council meetings, based on large projects and issues to help better inform the City Councilors and the public. She also intends to revamp the agenda for Council meetings and intends to keep those meetings to the business that is on the agenda. She is also planning training for all City committee members to streamline the processes and the way information from those

committees is shared with the City Council and the public. There is also the intention to have training for the City Council members provided by the Oregon League of Cities in February.



Mitchell is especially interested in the upcoming wastewater system upgrade that is still in the planning stages, and in the City's financial stability. "People are starting to get used to the fact that we

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