

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

Pauline Dial King 1919 – 2014

Vernonia lost another of its honored citizens last month with the passing of Pauline Dial King. Pauline and her daughter, Christine King Redmond, were active volunteers at Vernonia Pioneer Museum until Pauline moved to her daughter Marilyn's home in Florence following the 2007 flood. The museum held a special place in her heart; her family has established a Pauline King Memorial Fund to which contributions may be made in her honor. In 2005, we interviewed Pauline as part of the museum's oral history project. The following is an excerpt from that interview.

Pauline was born in Renton, Washington, and lived her first years in Cut Bank, Montana, on the family homestead and then a wheat ranch in Oregon. When she was three, her father got word of the big mill being built in Vernonia, so the family came by sternwheeler to Rainier and from there to Vernonia in 1922. When her parents divorced, Pauline returned to Cut Bank with her mother until March of her junior year in high school when they came back to Vernonia. She graduated from VHS in 1936.

Pauline's mother opened a restaurant, the Squeeze Inn, located where part of the Cedar Side Inn is today. A barber shop occupied the rest of the future Cedar Side bar area. There were just nine stools in the Squeeze Inn; a sign in the restaurant read "We can serve 1000 a day, 9 at a time." The Inn was open nearly 24 hours per day most days during the late 1930s to accommodate the loggers and mill shift workers. Pauline worked long hours along with her mother. The Squeeze Inn was famous for its chili, turkey dinners and a big \$1.95 ham and egg breakfast. Business was brisk throughout the day with the mill and all the logging camps active. The railroad and logging crews came in early to pick up lunches that were made up in the wee hours of the morning.

Pauline's mother had a dog named Whizzer who sat outside the Squeeze Inn while her mother was working. Loggers would buy him ice cream cones and put them in a nearby, dog-height, flag stand; he even got Christmas cards from the logging

camps. Whizzer was resourceful when it came to garnering treats; he went door to door in the neighborhood and "knocked" on the doors with his hind leg until the homeowner rewarded him with a tidbit.

Pauline married Earl King, another VHS graduate, in 1941. Earl's family owned King's Grocery, now vacant but still standing on the east end of the green bridge. There were many full-service grocery stores throughout Vernonia in those days. King's customers primarily lived on OA Hill and in Riverside. Pauline worked in the family store six days per week, from 8 am to 8 pm on Saturdays and 8 – 6 on weekdays. The store carried fresh meat, produce, other groceries, and some toiletries. Camp McGregor residents called in their orders; the groceries would then be sent by train to the camp. Pauline worked at the store until her first child, Christine, was born in 1947.

In the early 1940s, Pauline and Earl bought a duplex and converted it to a single family home. Located right across from Washington Grade School, it now stands on a high foundation above flood level. Back then, between that house and the bottom of OA Hill stood Reeher's grocery store, the Midway Apartments (a one-level complex), the two-story Olive Apartments, and Stubbs New Deal Garage, a Shell gas station.

The first theater Pauline attended was the Majestic. It had an organ, and local people performed skits between featured films. The first matinee she saw was "The Volga Boatmen." The Joy Theater was built in 1926 after the Majestic burned down. Another theater, the Rose, was located next to a restaurant on Adams where Shay Park sits today. When "Ring of Fire" was being filmed in Vernonia in the late 1950s, the Women's Fellowship of the Christian Church cooked for approximately eighty people – actors and the rest of the film crew. The women volunteered to do this to raise money to finish the basement underneath the church. A former restaurant in the building that now houses the Laundromat held the stoves they used for all the cooking. Meals often featured turkey or ham and were served family-style when the crew was in town. Pauline and another woman prepared sack lunches when the crew was going to be on location. They also made up continental breakfasts for the mornings.

Pauline was active in a number of other organizations throughout her seventy-plus years in Vernonia. During World War II, she was a member of a ladies' poker club. She received her fifty-year pin from the local P.E.O. chapter in 2008 and served as its President eight times between 1963 and 1995. She was a lovely woman who will be missed by all who knew her. She lent the museum pictures for use in its Images of America: Vernonia book. See pages 76 through 79 for pictures of the Squeeze Inn and King's.

From Virgil Powell's Diary

Virgil Powell was a long-time resident who had a farm in the Upper Nehalem Valley between Natal and Pittsburg. Each year from 1906 until 1955, he kept a regular diary of his activities. Although Virgil was long gone by the time of the February 1996 flood caused by heavy snow followed by heavy rains, the winter of 1916 was also a cold, wet one. Last month we included some of his January 1916 entries and now continue into February.

Tuesday, February 1, 1916: Went up to Detrick place and fed the cattle first thing in morning. Rained quite hard all day so was around the house pretty much all day. Snow melting pretty fast.


Wednesday, February 2: Went out hunting NW. of here 11/2 mile and killed 2. Started out 9 and returned 11:30 AM. Rained and snowed pretty hard all day and was certainly good and wet.

Friday, February 4: Worked around the house all day. Salted down a lot of meat. Vic and some others went hunting. Pretty cold all day and still about 18 inches of snow. Ben came down late in evening. Burt boys here for dinner.

Saturday, February 5: Left 10 AM. in the sled for Smiths and got up there 1 P.M. Snowed quite a bit during the day and lots during the night. Elmer came down on a sled and got some hay. Old barn up at Detrick place fell down because of heavy snow on.

Sunday, February 6: Inez and I left Smiths 9:45 AM. and got home 1:30 P.M. Rained some during the day but pretty fair day. About 15 inches of snow on.

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at 511 E. Bridge Street and is open from 1 to 4 pm on Saturdays and Sundays (excluding holidays) all year. From June through mid-September, the museum is also open on Fridays from 1 – 4 pm. There is no charge for admission but donations are always welcome. Become a member of the museum for an annual \$5 fee to receive the periodic newsletter, and if you are a Facebook user, check out the new Vernonia Pioneer Museum page created by Bill Langmaid. The museum volunteers are always pleased to enlist additional volunteers to help hold the museum open and assist in other ways. Please stop by and let one of the volunteers know of your interest in helping out.




2/22 TBA
 2/28 & 3/1 Ray Tarantino
 3/6 Dinner Show with Nikki Hill
 3/7 Elbo G String Band
 3/8 & 3/9 Moody Little Sister
 3/14 Wil Kinky
 3/15 Scott Pemberton Trio
 3/16 Crosby Tyler
 3/28 Blue Skies for Black Hearts
 3/29 RootJack
 4/5 Britnee Kellogg
 4/6 Britnee Kellogg Unplugged

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