

The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

Newspapers of the Upper Nehalem, Part Three

We always appreciate feedback from readers of this column, and we especially appreciate corrections and additional information. This writer must have been working far too late into the night last month when she referred to an October 1982 article in the publication, *Country Echoes*. The article covered the retirement, not the passing, of U.S. Bank Assistant Manager, Ralph Bergerson. As most of our long-time Vernonians know, Mr. Bergerson enjoyed over three decades of retirement, only passing away this past February. It was also pointed out that he was actually the Assistant Manager for many years, not the Manager, who during Ralph's tenure managed both the Hillsboro and the Vernonia Branches. Thanks to Pat Ray for catching the errors.

Longtime resident, Betty Holsey, asked why Jack Seeley hadn't been mentioned as the editor who succeeded Marvin Kamholz at the *Vernonia Eagle* when it was sold to Sel-Mor Publications in 1970. There was a succession of editors after Kamholz including Jerry Moore (1970-71), Jack Seeley (1971-72), Larry Garner (1973), and Bill Rhoades from August 1973 until it merged into the *Columbia County Herald* in 1974. Mr. Rhoades went on to establish the *Vernonia News Weekly* in 1976 which we covered last month. We were lucky with this month's column because both publishers of our most recent papers were able to fact check the article before publication; thanks Noni and Scott.

Hoping to eliminate the lack of news coverage in the northern and interior parts of Columbia County, the *North Columbia Reporter* was established in November 1983 with Jerry Painter at the helm. A weekly publication, its target market was Clatskanie, Rainier, Vernonia and the areas between those towns. Within its first two months, Vernonia newcomers, Dirk and Noni Andersen, became involved in managing the struggling paper that ceased operations within two years. Noni, with a background in journalism, was the publisher and editor, and Dirk was the business manager. The Andersens had moved to Vernonia in 1983 following Dirk's retirement from teaching in California. Their children were grown, and they wanted to get back to the Pacific Northwest where both had lived before. They chose Vernonia because it was a small town, but close to Portland, and didn't realize that there was no local paper.

For a year or two, the Andersens published the Jamboree paper and a special Christmas publication, but they wanted Vernonia to have its own newspaper. In January 1986, they launched *The Independent* that served Vernonia for twenty-six years. Billed as "The Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley," Dirk and Noni diligently covered city council, planning commission, school board, fire district and other public meetings. They took strong stances in

their editorials but also covered human interest and local business topics. At first a monthly publication and always free of charge to readers, advertising revenue increased sufficiently that it became a twice monthly paper and added coverage of the city of Banks in Washington County. Early advertisers included Vernonia Market Place (now R&S Market), Sandra McLean Nursery, Sam's Food Store and Ralph's Chevron, the latter three businesses now long gone.

The Independent's contributors over the years included the librarians in Banks and Vernonia; Dale Webb's outdoor column on behalf of the Izaak Walton League; Jim Buxton who covered West Oregon Electric Cooperative meetings; a gardening column by local master gardener Schann Nelson, health column by Audeen Wagner and Judy Hargis, P.A.; senior center news was covered by Jacqueline Ramsay; recipes were presented by Gladys Sharar Gans and others, while editorial cartoons were from Bruce Jensen and Robb Wilson. Following Dirk's passing in 2006 and Noni's retirement, Noni's son, Clark McGaugh, and his wife, Rebecca, took over daily operations. Noni continued to edit and contribute until the final issue in December 2012.

Vernonia's Voice was launched in June 2007 by Evangeline Doyle and Scott Laird, co-publishers and managing editors, "to produce a paper that reflects the spirit of our community." With original graphic design by Rebecca Wright and more color than earlier papers, the Voice featured articles about local businesses, civic and school activities with the intent of promoting the positive aspects of the community. It also covered City Council meetings. The very first front page stories covered a women's cancer awareness bicycle ride and the first "First Friday" celebration featuring Vernonia artists, extended local business hours, music and food. Advertisers in this first issue included Sentry Market, Wauna Federal Credit Union, Grey Dawn Gallery, True Value, R&R Motors, and local realtors. Other articles covered the recently-opened Learning Center, the Blue House Café's first location on Nehalem Highway North, Julie Prohaska's flower business, and the Old Mill House Bed & Breakfast

(now the Carpenter's House).

Scott Laird became the sole Publisher and Editor in 2008, and the Voice continues to the present as Vernonia's only newspaper, a twice-monthly free publication with subscriptions available for people who live out of town. In an age where print journalism is not the only source of information, our town is lucky to still have a paper that features stories of local interest following the long tradition started when Vernonia was young.

From Virgil Powell's Diary

Virgil Powell (1887-1963) was a long-time resident whose family 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. Here are a few entries from a rainy and later cold November 1906. As with many holidays back then, Thanksgiving meant a community dance.

Sunday, November 11, 1906: Went down to the Boales Creek and caught some salmon in the morning. Went down Cooks Creek in the afternoon and Claus Messing and I caught a few salmon. Rained a little in the morning but pretty fair all day.

Monday, November 12: Oiled the buggy harness and split some wood in the morning. Went up to Pittsburg in the afternoon and mailed eight postal cards to Eastern people. Rained most all day.

Tuesday, November 13: Carried the mail to Mist. Sent for 120 more postal cards. Rained pretty hard all day. Got to Mist at 11:15 back home at 3:10 P. M. Big slide on the lower side of the road between here and Pittsburg.

Wednesday, November 14: Killed a hog in the morning. Worked on the road at big slide between here and Pittsburg in the afternoon. Rained quite hard in the morning but not very much the rest of the day.

Thursday, November 15: Cut up the hog the first thing in

the morning then went up and worked on the road the rest of the day. Rained quite a little all day.

Wednesday, November 28: Started for Clatskanie at 2:30 A.M. Arrived at Clatskanie at 9 A.M. Awful cold going out, froze up solid. Got several postal cards and mailed while out. Had a fine time. Left Clatskanie at 12:30 P.M. Got to Mist at 3:15. At home 6 P.M. Pretty good weather most of day.

Thursday, November 29: Did not do much of anything any of day. Clear and a pretty good day. Sent postal card to Alice. The Thanksgiving turkey went up to Vernonia in the evening to the dance. Had a good time, 29 numbers sold. I had No. 22 danced quite a bit. The dance broke up at 6 A.M. Got home at 7:30 A.M.

Friday, November 30: Got home from the Vernonia dance at 7:30 A.M. Had breakfast and went to bed and slept until 2 P.M. Pretty good weather most of the day. Went up to the Post Office in the evening for the mail. Got postal from Lameck.

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. We now have a page on the Vernonia Hands on Art website, www.vernoniahansonart.org If you are a Facebook user, check out the Vernonia Pioneer Museum page. 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.

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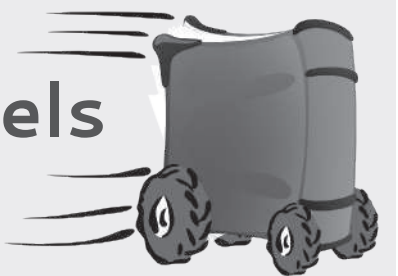
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