

Eleanor Thompson is Turning 102!

By Scott Laird

One of Vernonia's best treasures is getting ready to celebrate another birthday this month.

Eleanor Thompson will turn 102 years old on January 30.

I recently visited with Eleanor to hear a little of her life story as she gets ready to commemorate another trip around the sun.

"I never thought I'd live this long!" says Eleanor with a laugh. "But I'm so thankful that I still have my mind." She continues to live in

Vernonia in her own home on North Street, the house she has lived in since 1952. Her mind is still sharp and quick, and she loves to laugh, but she has started to use a walker to get around because she has trouble with her balance. Her three daughters and a granddaughter, who all live in Vernonia, come over every Saturday to help with the housekeeping. She pays her own bills, plays Bridge every Monday with her pals Ilene Grady and Sally Harrison, along with daughter Jan Bernardi, and meets with the Vernonia Seniors at the Legion Hall to play Penuchle every Friday.

Eleanor says she loves to watch sports on television, especially football and basketball – her favorites are watching the Seahawks and "I like watching Kansas City – they have that young quarterback who's only 23, he's really a wiz!" and any college sports. She says a friend who still takes the Oregonian calls her every morning at 8:30 after checking the TV schedule to let Eleanor know which games will be on and at what time so she can be sure to tune in.

Eleanor was born in North Dakota, part of a large family. Apparently living to ripe old age runs in the family – she has a sister who will turn 104 this year and a brother who will turn 95. She remembers riding a horse bareback to get to the little one-room school house where they had a barn for the students' horses. "The horses would spend all day in the barn, and one time my horse got all foxy and started bucking and I



ended up in a snowbank and I had to walk home."

She says with a sly smile that she was "very young" when she got married to Bob Thompson, and that's all she'll say on that matter. She and Bob moved to Vernonia in 1939, 80 years ago. "I'm really a long-time resident!" she says. Their first home had no hot water and no indoor plumbing. Their third home was up at the cemetery where they served as caretakers, earning \$30 a month and free rent for opening and closing graves, and mowing and watering the lawn. She says Bob was paid \$10 to dig a

small grave and \$20 for a larger grave with a cement liner. Bob got a job at the local Chevy Dealership, working as a "grease monkey" – she says Bob earned \$75 a week when he only made \$45 back in North Dakota. "We thought we were in pig heaven!" She says with the raise she was able to buy a clothes washing machine. Later they operated a Union 76 service station for 25 years.

She remembers wooden sidewalks in Vernonia, along with seven service stations and three auto dealerships, a Ford, Chevy, and Dodge/Plymouth. "And of course the mill was going. The whistle would blow every morning at 8, and every night at 5:00."

They raised three daughters, Deloris (Dede) Webb, Joyce Weller, and Jan. They bought a school bus and Eleanor drove the Stoney Point bus route. For many years she delivered the mail between Vernonia and Mist and also delivered the mail in Timber. She belonged to a bowling team and has been playing Bridge since 1962. "All the people I played Bridge with have passed away, so now I'm on my second generation, and they're all in their 70s."

At the end of his life Bob spent almost 10 years at home on dialysis with Eleanor caring for him; he passed away in 1988.

In recent years Eleanor played drums in the "Golden Oldies," the musical band that played week-

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New Name Selected for The Public Health Foundation of Columbia County

The Public Health Foundation of Columbia County (TPHFCC) is announcing a change of name for the organization. Since being founded in 2003, TPFCC has been a leading provider of public health and wellness services to residents throughout Columbia County. Effective January 1, 2019, TPFCC will officially become Columbia Health Services (CHS).

The new name was selected to help clarify that Columbia Health Services is not a foundation, but rather operates with funding from private foundations and public agencies. In addition, the organization is no longer the local public health authority, a title now reserved for local governmental agencies. CHS will continue to provide a wide range of clinical services, including prevention and education programs.

Michael Carter, board president, reinforced the importance of the name change: "For some time the board of directors and staff have shared a concern that our original name may cause some confusion about the purpose and value of the organization to the residents of Columbia County. The name Columbia Health Services is more direct, succinct, and very specific to the organization's purpose and mission."

Services offered by Columbia Health Services include primary care, women's healthcare, reproductive healthcare, prenatal care, immunizations, STI testing and treatment, insurance application assistance, prevention programs for suicide, alcohol, drug and tobacco use, nurse home visiting, and the WIC nutrition program. Besides the main office on Gable Road in St. Helens, there are two primary care clinics open to the general public: Sacagawea Health Center in St. Helens and Rainier Health Center in Rainier. CHS also operates school-based health centers in the Vernonia, St. Helens, Rainier, and Clatskanie school districts.

"We are taking great measures to assure all of our partners, patients, and clients understand that the name change will not impact our delivery of affordable medical and wellness services," stated CHS Director, Sherrie Ford.

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Salem Report

By State Representative Brad Witt



Greetings from Salem! Recently we spent three days at the Capitol preparing for the Session in January and trying to anticipate what will be the hot topics this time around. The last of the taskforces are reporting back to committees with their findings, and some of this information will be pivotal as we consider proposed legislation. Each taskforce or workgroup is comprised of both legislators, concerned citizens, and research analysts, and their goal is to bring back the best information available on a particular issue. They are invaluable to our work here.

On Wednesday, December 14, the House Transportation Policy Committee, of which I am a member, listened to updates from the Department of Transportation and their continuing efforts to ease the growing congestion in the Portland Metro area. Especially problematic areas like I-5 through the Rose Quarter and segments of the 205 will see the construction of auxiliary lanes, which should help speed things up. And, as you may have heard, they are also still investigating the use of tolls along these same corridors. We also listened to a report from the Willamette Falls Heritage Coalition that is coordinating the redevelopment of the former Blue Heron Paper Company site in Oregon City. For

the first time in 100 years there will be public access to this cultural treasure marking the end of the Oregon Trail.

In House Agriculture and Natural Resources we listened to an update from the State Forester regarding the 2018 fire season. This involved not only a report on progress cleaning up after last year's fires, but also smoke management and programs to manage chronic diseases plaguing our forests. The fires that ravaged both Oregon and California over the past two years point to a need to be better prepared. The bottom line is that we need to manage forest densities. Many of our forests are overgrown and stocked with underbrush and other highly flammable materials. These forest restoration projects are something that we must begin planning for as soon as possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support and feedback on issues this year. It is always gratifying to hear from you and I am eager to once again begin working for the constituents of District 31. Please know that if you are in the Capitol, you are always welcome to stop by the office. Call ahead if you can, just to make sure that I am not in Committee or otherwise scheduled.

Last but not least, I hope that you all have a New Year filled with everything that you are hoping for!