

NOTICES

Editor's Note

This is the first feature article in what will be an ongoing series of articles dedicated to telling the stories of our Elders.

If you have ideas or names you would like to submit to *Siletz News*, please contact Brent Merrill at 541-444-8291 or e-mail him at pias@ctsi.nsn.us.

Van Pelt, con't from page 1

Israel and Africa to log rafts in the jungles of Belize."

The words were preserved on a piece of paper he carried with him to the interview.

Just like his 80th birthday party, people gathered again in 2007 to honor Van Pelt. His friends and family and fellow honorees gathered at Pacific University in Forest Grove for its Lifetime Achievement Awards Dinner. Van Pelt was honored by the university for his contributions to the school and for his contributions to the Siletz Tribe.

Among those in the audience that night to honor Van Pelt was Tribal Council member and Tribal Assistant General Manager Tina Retasket. She said Van Pelt is an inspiration.

"He is of those Elders who became successful on their own when the Tribe didn't have the funds they have now," said Retasket. "He is a nice person. At this stage in his life he is able to contribute back to the community. He is very selfless. He has a big, big heart."

Van Pelt as a young man entered WWII as a student. "It was good for me."

He said he was impressed with the legendary General Patton.

"We were well-trained," he said of his fellow WWII veterans. Van Pelt was part of Patton's Third Army. "We had a lot of pride."

Van Pelt was wounded during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944.

"We were in a Belgium village and German tanks rolled in," remembered Van Pelt. "I still remember the feeling of being blown up in the air."

Local villagers pulled him in out of the snow and hid him from the Germans for a week. He woke up in a hospital and had lost his right eye. "My face was bandaged, I was burned and I had been shot."

After returning home from the war, Van Pelt spent six months in a burn unit in New Orleans before coming back to Oregon, attending Pacific and graduating in 1949. He majored in French. "My parents (Roy and Gertrude) moved to Forest Grove so I could go to Pacific. Pacific University was very good for me."

He then got a degree from Thunderbird Graduate School of International Management in 1950.

He spent personal time with Gorbachev. A story he wants to keep off the record.

"He speaks good English and I know Russian," said Van Pelt of his meeting with the now deposed Russian president. "Gorbachev said (President

Ronald) Reagan was tough, kind and sharp. He liked Reagan. He (Gorbachev) is a good man, a sad man."

He is close with the Rev. Moon and travels the world at his request, although he is not a member of Moon's church. Van Pelt said people from more than 80 different countries attended the last conference that hosted him as a speaker.

"I was in Israel in December," said Van Pelt. "The Rev. Moon has asked me to speak all over the world, but he has never asked me for anything personally."

After he tells you what appears to be just a fraction of a scratch at his surface, you realize his "very good life" quote is a heck of an understatement. He has lived an amazing life and raised an amazing family. You don't have to meet his children and his stepson to realize they are all great in their own way. You listen as he rattles off a list of their accomplishments and you see the look in his eyes as he describes them — as he describes their lives together. You begin to imagine a Native version of the Kennedys ...

"I started out a poor little Indian boy in Waldport," said Van Pelt. "My dad was great. He told me since I was this high 'you're an Indian.' He told me I would be the first Indian in my family to graduate college. I kept prepared. I taught my kids the same... 'Sit in the front row. Pay attention.' They all graduated with honors."

Van Pelt told stories of his father ... "My father grew up in the Brookings area. He was a logger. He was very proud. He was a powerful man physically, but he was a gentle man to his family. He always talked to me as an adult. He guided my life."

Roy Van Pelt died in his 50s.

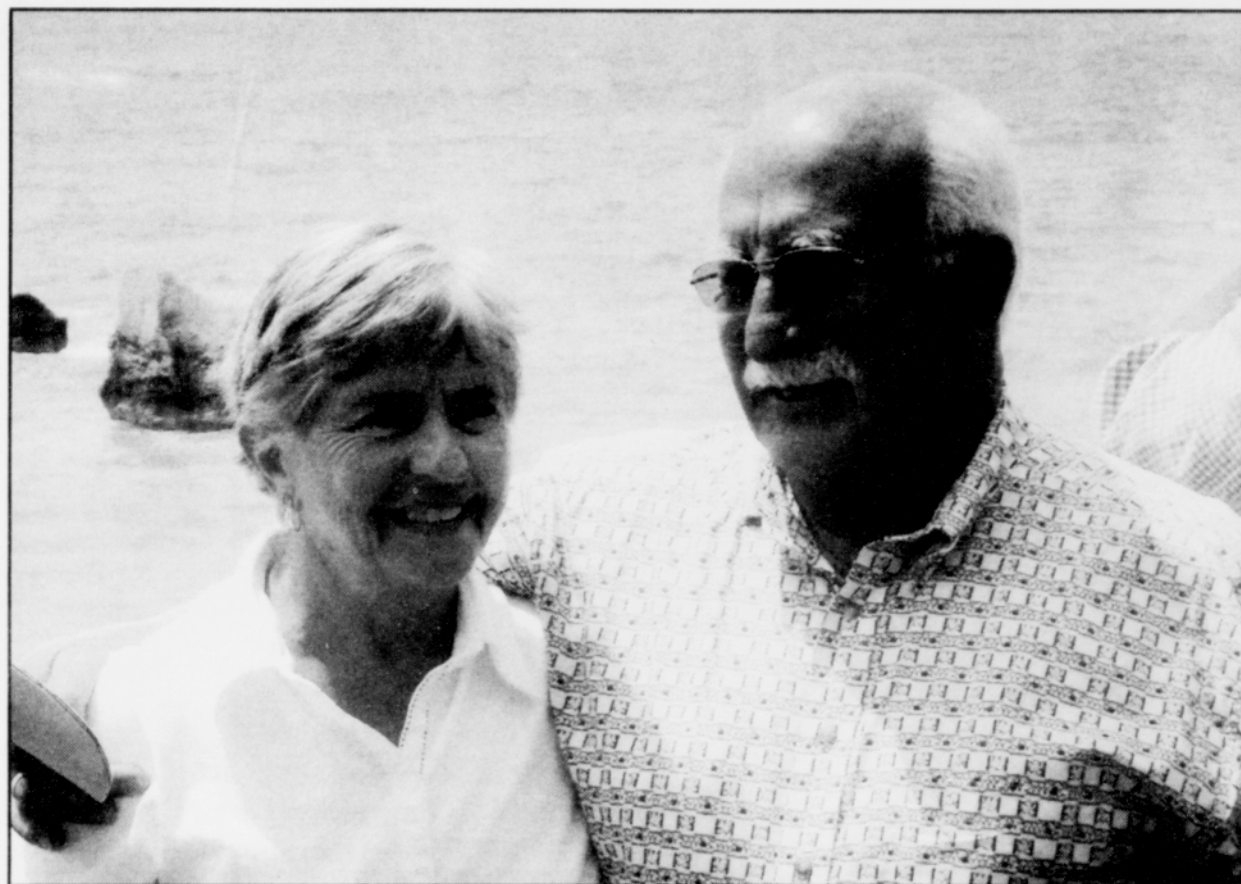
He told stories about his children ...

"Two of my boys (Paul and Larry) graduated from Princeton and both were captains of the football team," he said with pride. "My daughter Nita graduated from Oberlin (Conservatory of Music in Ohio) and she performs and teaches music in the Lake Oswego school system. My son Ken is a CPA in Portland and my stepson Craig Close is the vice president of Prudential Insurance in Europe. My children are all doing very well."

Ever the understatement.

He told stories about his careers. Van Pelt's professional life has taken him on journeys to all corners of the globe.

His world of international business started out with a humble job as an



Family Love Story - Siletz Tribal Elder Calvin Van Pelt, pictured here with his wife Loris, has traveled the world throughout his career in international business. Now he is dedicating the rest of his life to helping the Tribe and his alma mater Pacific University. Van Pelt completed his senior year of high school and his freshman year of college in the same year before entering WWII. He counts his sister "Chick" among his closest friends and allies and together they share pride in being Tribal Elders.

export trainee with Jantzen, Inc. in Portland. Van Pelt worked his way up to manager of the sports clothing company's international division.

Van Pelt has held executive positions with Columbia Exporters, White Stag, Sea-Pac International and Martin Sales International, and roamed the jungles of Belize on behalf of Toyota Motor Company. "I had to find Rosewood for cars and then negotiate permission to harvest it," said Van Pelt. "Money was no object. Mud was."

Van Pelt spent years working for mining companies in Russia, Japan, Israel and Africa.

"I was personally responsible for the technical, legal and language aspects of the operation," said Van Pelt. "I was also part of a company that developed flame-proof vehicles for use in the mines." He explained that the \$100,000 specialized vehicles had to be taken apart and put back together inside the mines.

He told stories about his brushes with fame ...

"I did the voice-over for the Ken Burns' television series *The War*," said Van Pelt of the nine-part series that aired in 2007. "My pro-am partner in my golfing days was Ken Venturi. I love the game of golf." Venturi was a prominent professional golfer in the 1950s and '60s who won the U.S. Open golf championship in 1964.

He told stories of his travels ...

"I love the Japanese," said Van Pelt. "They are very good people. I spent a lot of time in Russia mining. We used to fly into the mines in Russia from East Berlin. I worked the richest copper mines in the world in Zaire in the Congo." He described workers being lined up and shot in the Belgium-owned mines of Huate Katanga. "I met a lot of dictators in my time."

Van Pelt remembered the daughter of a friend who played piano for him in Singapore.

"I loved to listen to her play," said Van Pelt. "It was so beautiful."

He told stories of his sports car phase.

"I owned a Fiat and a BMW," he said. "I loved that Fiat."

He remembered a trip to the beaches of Hawaii with one of his sons.

"My son was staring out at the ocean and I asked him what he was doing. He replied that he was taking a picture with his mind that would last the rest of his life. My message to parents is to take care of your children."

Van Pelt traces his Tribal roots back to his great-grandmother Welsuni Shute Ta Nah who was also known after her marriage to Van Pelt's great-grandfather Thomas as Amelia Van Pelt. Amelia's mother was a full-blood Tututni named Kitty Ben. Thomas and Amelia were married in 1857. Their son, Lincoln, was father to Roy who was father to Calvin.

Given his life traveling the world, being considered a Tribal Elder is something new to him. He said he feels proud of the distinction and wants so much to give what he can to the Tribe.

"I've never been called an Elder," said Van Pelt. "I'm very proud. My children are very proud too."

He wants to share his knowledge with the Tribe and dedicate himself to helping the Tribe expand its business acumen.

"It drives you," he said of his desire. "I want to keep going. Pacific University and the Tribe, that is what I'm dedicating the rest of my life to."

Welcome to the family. Come join the circle of Elders.

"Looking back," said Van Pelt, "I had a lot of interesting experiences."

Truly, another understatement.