

Valley woman reflects on her 90 years

Judy Hoyle and Dan Klapheke
IVN Contributing Writers

Millie Box celebrated her 90th birthday Saturday, June 4 with a party at Wild River Brewing & Pizza. Box reminisced about her life in the Illinois Valley, which has included many different jobs, places and people.

Box grew up in Flint, Michigan as one of nine girls and two boys, and she was third from oldest. She said she remembers heavy housework in her early years, like washing clothes on a scrub board, before modern inventions.

The family moved to Pasadena, California during World War II, where her father got a job in an airplane engine factory. The family moved in pieces, with Box's aunt driving the seven youngest children across the country in one of the last cars built on a Detroit assembly line before the factory was converted for the war effort. Box and her older siblings travelled to Pasadena separately on Greyhound buses.

"After the war, everything was getting really crowded," Box said. "Dad decided to sell the house and was looking for property."

Box said they saw an ad in the Illinois Valley offering 24 acres for \$999, and her father took it. Box had two children of her own, so her and her husband bought three acres from Box's father. Box ended up having six

children—four boys and two girls—who gave her 19 grandchildren. She has many more great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren.

The family lived in a tent before logging the property to build a house, but Box said they wouldn't have made it if it wasn't for the people around them.

"People back then were really nice," Box said. "We couldn't have survived without the neighbors. Old timers made sure nobody starved. Everyone helped everyone else."

As a writer, Box produced a column called the Bridgeview News for the *Illinois Valley News* and the *Grants Pass Daily Courier*. Box said the *Mail Tribune* and *The Oregonian* would occasionally publish her work, but they never paid her. Box dropped the column in 1957.

Box also delivered the *Daily Courier* six days a week, growing from around 75 homes to over 200.

"We told them we would get the news to them by dark, and we always did," Box said. "The people always liked to read the news because we didn't have local news on TV then. Not everyone had a TV."

Box and her family had to move from the Valley several times to find work. Box found jobs in various stores, as well as in the sterilizing department of Southern Oregon Hospital in Grants Pass. They moved back to the Valley in 1977.



(Photo by Judy Hoyle, Illinois Valley News)

Millie Box with her family at her 90th birthday party. Box has 6 children, 19 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

Box said a lot has changed since she's lived in the Valley.

"Everything," Box said. "The whole of Cave Junction has changed. The only buildings I know haven't changed are in Kerby."

Box also has advice on how to make it to 90.

"I've never been depressed; always been busy," Box said. "I always encourage everyone to do the best they can with their life."



(Courtesy photo for The Illinois Valley News)

Riders take a coffee break during the fourth annual Otis Memorial Bike Ride hosted by the Spiral Living Center, Sunday, May 22.

Land conservation in Southwest Oregon

It is beautiful here, so let's keep it that way. Kristi Mergenthaler, stewardship director, will provide an overview of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy's work protecting low-elevation farms, streamside forests, rare plants and special places important to the community by working cooperatively with landowners. She will discuss upcoming conservation opportunities, including a gorgeous property on the Rogue River outside of Eagle Point, a pristine low elevation valley owned by the Department of State Land's near Woodcock Mountain outside of Cave Junction, and a special grassland in the Cascade foothills. Kristi is also a board member with Siskiyou Field Institute. Location: Siskiyou Field Institute, 1241 Illinois River Road, Selma, OR. For more info: 541.482.3069 or info@landconserve.org.

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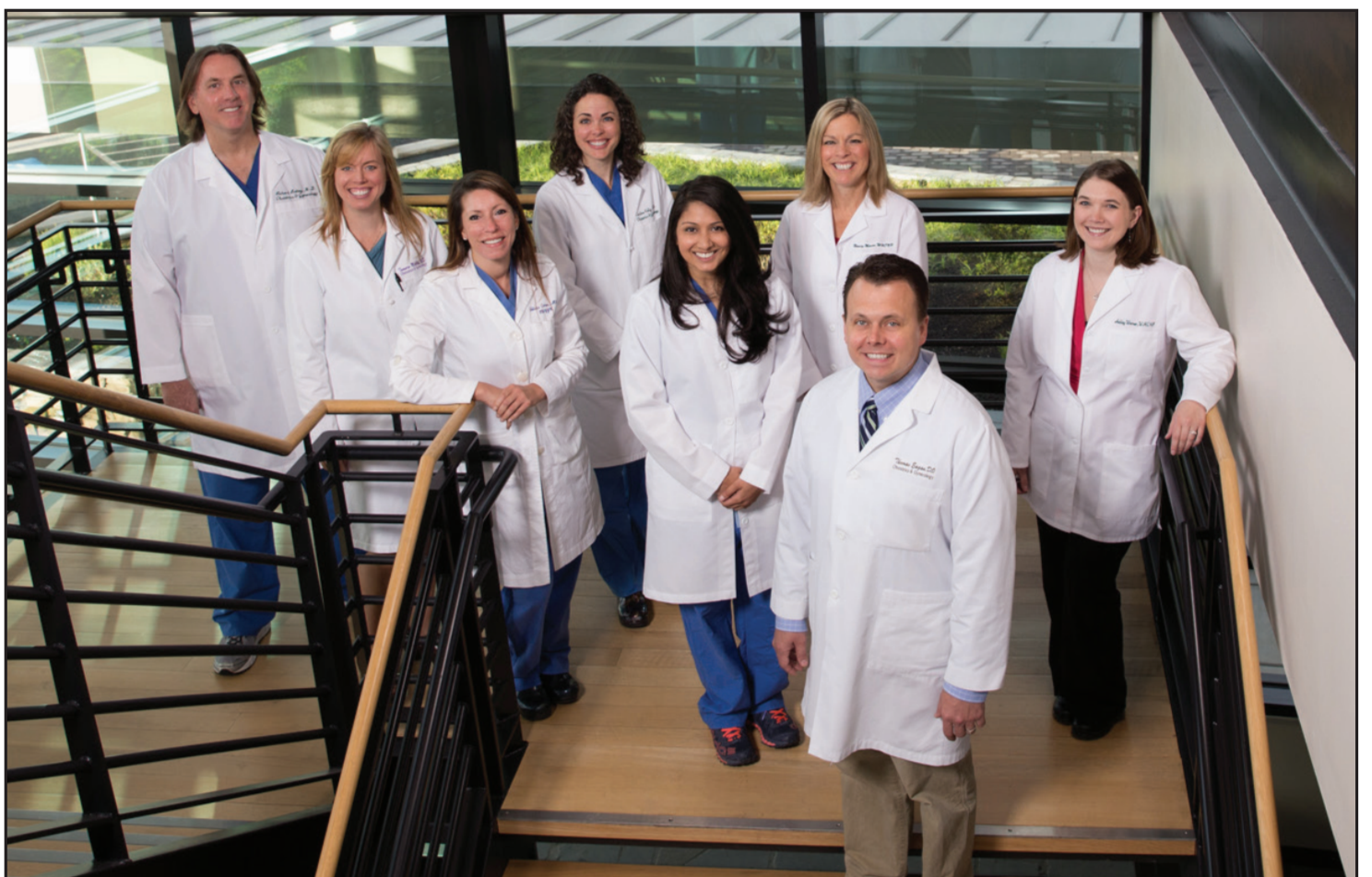
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