

DeShazers return to Zig Zag family homestead

by Linda Lesowski

"I consider myself to be a native Oregonian," says Grant DeShazer.

And well he should. Though they lived for 34 years in Washington D.C., and their two sons were born and raised in the East, Grant and Velma have returned to the Sandy area, more specifically to ZigZag, to live on the land first owned by Velma's father.

The large house with gracefully sloping roof built in 1909 by Harry Morton stands like a sentinel in the forest clearing not far from Lolo Pass. Nearby is the DeShazer's modern home. A stream runs through the carefully landscaped grounds and bear and deer often come to visit.

DeShazer feels that he's come home. He lives not too many miles from the land once owned by his father, and his father before him, where the family's 145-acre dairy farm in Firwood was operated. This is where Grant was raised, and this is what he remembers best about his youth.

His grandfather, Robert DeShazer, was born in Kansas and ran a store in Golden, Colorado during gold rush days, hauling supplies up Cripple Creek to the miners. In 1870, with his wife and three-year-old son James, Robert came west on the railroad from Omah

to San Francisco. From there they came to Portland by boat. Robert bought 240 acres on the Clackamas River and hired 40 Chinese laborers to clear the land which he subsequently farmed.

In 1888 Robert moved with his family to the Dover district where he bought the Jones place, and two years later, purchased John Strowbridge's land in nearby Firwood. Robert gave his son, James, 80 acres of the Firwood property and at the same time bought 40 acres more of timbered government land.

When James DeShazer married Myrtle Howlett (whose father had come over the Barlow Road in 1952 and settled near Eagle Creek), he brought his bride to live in Firwood. He had big plans for the land.

James and Myrtle had eight children; Grant was the only boy. His seven sisters, Viola, Lula, Gertrude, Mildred, Ruth, Alta and Florence, all helped out on the farm, but it was Grant's place as the only son to help clear the land for the dairy farm.

During the years that James was active as a dairy farmer, he also served as a board member of the Firwood Grade School and Sandy Union High School and the Sandy Creamery. He helped establish the first local telephone system and supervised the building of Firwood Road.

As the family grew James added a kitchen, living room and more bedrooms onto the original house, which was built of foot-wide rough hewn planks. The large barn which accommodated 25 head of cattle has been gone now for many years and the house was torn down recently.

Though Grant remembers playing in the five-acre orchard where cherries, apples and pears grew, there was much work to be done. He fed the cattle and turned them out for water while his father drove the horses and the mowing machine. Later he and his father put in ten acres of corn, and he also helped his mother with the vegetable garden. His sisters took care of the chickens and the large hen house and the eggs were brought into Meinig's Store in Sandy. All of the children had assigned duties.

Grant also remembers walking a mile to the Firwood School. In 1914 the upper two rooms of the four-room Sandy Grade School were converted into a high school, which he also attended. He recalls hitching "Bird," his horse, to the buggy and driving the four miles to school on a plank road that turned to mud when it rained.

Meinig's Store was moved around 1920 from its original location to the present Thriftway lot. After the farm chores were done, Grant has fond memories of playing basketball in the upstairs of the store, which Meinig generously donated for that purpose. Like most early Sandy-area residents, he best remembers the Fourth of July Picnics in Meinig's Grove.

"We'd leave as early in the morning as possible," he says with a smile. "Everybody would dress up in their best clothes."

He recalled that after the speeches, fireworks, candy, ice cream and sumptuous picnic lunch on quilts spread on the ground, there were horse races. Highway 26 then was a dirt road with a white rail fence along it. The racing was a much-anticipated event, and people bet on their favorite horses. The children would line the fence and cheer as the horses came running from the west, kicking up clouds of dust. And after the race



Aerial view of the DeShazer family homestead located near Zig Zag.

there would be a baseball game.

Grant DeShazer met Velma Morton when she came to Sandy to attend school. On their first date they went to the "Hiss Show," a patent medicine show at the Odd Fellows Hall where target shooting was part of the entertainment. Both of them went on to receive college degrees (hers in Home Economics and his in

Mechanical Engineering) and both of their sons earned doctorate degrees. The DeShazers will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary next year.

Though he decided at an early age that dairy farming would not be his life's work, and though he lived much of his life away from Oregon, Grant DeShazer's home is still in the Sandy area.



James Grant DeShazer and his wife Myrtle Mae DeShazer on their wedding day on June 30, 1895.

Oregon grass under study

A seven-member team from Japan is in Oregon the week of June 18 to observe the state's grass seed industry and its present multiplication program under contract to Japan.

The team is composed of representatives of the

Forage Crop Seed Association, the Japanese Ministry of Food and Agriculture and of that country's seed trade.

The team, hosted by the Oregon Seed Trade Association, met Monday morning with State Director of Agriculture Leonard

Kunzman in his office and at 11:30 a.m. will visit Gov. Bob Straub.

Oregon has entered into contracts for production of forage grass seeds to be used for forage for Japan's beef and dairy industries. These contracts presently cover in excess of 1,000 acres.

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