Family settled 100 years ago

Eagle Creek man recalls early days

By LYNDA LESOWSKI
Special Writer

Hank Suter was born in Eagle Creek and has lived there all his life — longer than most other residents, happily perched on his hilltop acreage with his three-year-old Norwegian Elkhound as a companion.

What Suter refers to his bachelor quarters is really a handsome white farmhouse, one of the oldest in town. The farm, of which he is justly proud, is only five years away from being named a century farm. Suter's father Eli and his wife "sweat blood" to buy the choice piece of property in 1883.

The original 160 acres that Eli Suter bought for $1500 now has dwindled to 38.8. The property was originally a J.W. Foster landclaim, passing through the hands of two more families before belonging to the Suters. Here Henry and his son George, the fourth generation to work the land, graze sheep.

It was Henry's grandfather, Danial Suter, who first came to Oregon in 1871 with his wife, three sons and two daughters. They left Suterville, Pennsylvania which was named for their family, to try their fortunes in the west.

The Suters who came west worked hard to carve out a place for themselves. Henry still has a small glass flask containing sand from an Alaskan beach which his father brought back from the gold rush. Anchored offshore, camped on the beach at Nome in freezing weather and weathering many hardships, Eli Suter failed to find gold and returned to the Oregon logging camps.

He worked for years for Simon Benson's logging operation at Napa. Henry explains that loggers didn't move around so much in those days, referring to his own work history. "Though there were always some who would take off if they didn't like the hotcakes for breakfast."

ROOTS IN GEORGE

The Suter family first homesteaded in George, near Eagle Fern, where Suter Creek was named after them. In 1878 Eli Suter moved his family from "German Burn," as it was called then, to Eagle Creek where they selected the beautiful piece of land that is still in the family.

One of Henry's uncles, Jim Suter, was a professional carpenter in Eagle Creek, and it is said that he built pioneer Philip Foster's coffin. He also built the first "half" of the house that Henry Suter still lives in. An ancient, hand-carved grandfather clock ticks away in one corner of the original part of the house that was begun in 1883. The rest of the room is filled with various family mementos.

Henry remembers the big dinner bell that sounded all over town when it was rung, often bringing unexpected guest to the house for a meal. The children were allowed to ring the bell on New Year's Eve.

Born and raised in Eagle Creek, Henry took his first job cutting cordwood at the age of 14. Then, like his father, he turned to logging. Later he worked for P.G.E., and after being laid off several times, went to work for the Forest Service.

Life as a ranger suited him well. Henry has a hundred stories about working for Ranger Al Armstrong in the Clackamas River District in the 1930's when there were no roads through the dense forest. He worked as a trail foreman and fire crew member, then as protective assistant to Armstrong. "You had to be tough," he says of those days, remembering the endless miles of telephone line that had to be maintained and other chores.

FOND MEMORIES

He also remembers the occasional days-end jaunt to Bagby Hotsprings, where the water was hot enough just as it came from the creek to make soup or coffee. Tubs large enough for a man to float in were carved out of cedar logs, and the place attracted many who were adventuresome enough to make the trek.

It was in the forests of Clackamas County that Henry met and befriended Marshall Dana, former editor of the "Journal," and often packed for him on expeditions. Dana was a unique man, Suter recalls, one who was equally at ease in a formal dining room or sitting on a rock eating a freshly caught salmon with his bare hands.

Though unduly modest about it, Suter is also a talented cartoonist. He drew several cartoons for Dana's paper and for the publication of the Portland shipyards where he worked for 28 years as a welder after World War II.

Now "retired," he still tend the farm and the sheep and maintains a large vegetable garden. He's widely-traveled, but is a familiar figure around Eagle Creek and Sandy in his well-worn straw hat.

His son George literally represents the Suter family's entrance into the jet age. A former commercial jet piolot, George now flies for the Air Force Reserve while keeping tabs on his Washington Square restaurant and helping out on the farm. The Suters are branching out into other areas, but they maintain their base on the hilltop in Eagle Creek, and probably always will.

Staff photo

BILL GREEN of Oregon City practices cardiopulmonary resuscitation on a "Resusci-Annie" manequin at a Clackamas Community College CPR class as Art Gleason looks on. CCC holds the public classes several times each month.

Mandatory insurance law works out

Oregon motor vehicle officials say the first month under the state's new mandatory auto insurance law has gone better than expected, but there are still some rough edges.

Administrator Harold L. Grover said Friday that quite a few people still come to a DMV office or mail in applications for titles and license plate renewals without certifying liability coverage.

During a 15-day period in July, approximately 87 percent of more than 8500 letters written in connection with vehicle title and registration transactions concerned mandatory insurance.

"We had to return 28 percent of the registration renewals during that period because people had not certified insurance," Grover said. A smaller percentage — 19 percent — of title transactions had to be returned.

The most frequent problems, according to DMV, are people who do not have or forget to include insurance company and policy number on forms. Some give the wrong information, such as giving information for a "collision only" policy.

An informal survey of field offices indicates the number of customers being turned away there for lack of insurance information is lower than business done by mail.

"It varies from office to office," Grover said, "but our Portland area supervisor estimates it at about 10 percent in that region. In Eugene, the figure is about 20 percent."

Early in the month, a few offices were reporting a 30 percent turnaway rate for lack of insurance but officials say that is to be expected during the early days of a new law.

In addition to problems with people who do not provide insurance information, a DMV spokesman said it is getting quite a few accident reports filled out on old accident forms. The form had to be changed for the new law and now includes a carbon copy of insurance information which DMV sends to insurance companies to verify coverage.

If reports are filed on the old forms, DMV clerks have to fill out the insurance form and that takes time as well as slows down the verification process.

Grover said this will be a difficult problem to overcome because there are thousands of old report forms in car glove compartments and offices waiting to be used in case of an accident.

Most police agencies and insurance agents — major suppliers of the form to the public — got supplies of the new forms before the law took effect, but even some of them apparently failed to get an order in, Grover said.

Another problem, he said, is that people who are titling and registering a vehicle for the first time think if they provide documentary evidence, such as a copy of an insurance policy, they do not have to give DMV a signed statement of coverage. The law, however, requires both a signed statement and documentary evidence on new titles or title transfers.

Grover said the division a few notices from insurance sample of certifications until about September so figures on possible false certifications will not be available for some time.

DMV has begun receiving a few notices form insurance companies telling the division that policies have been cancelled by an owner within 120 days of original issue.

The first few convictions for driving without insurance also have been submitted by courts and recorded on driver records, Grover said.

Registration open for MHCC day care center

Registration is open for the Child Care Center at Mt. Hood Community College which opens Monday, September 25, for the fall term.

The center is licensed to care for 54 children 3-5-years-old and offers a social and educational program designed to nurture developmental needs of the total child.

Open classrooms, team teaching, and shared activity areas characterize the three- and four-year olds preschool program. The kindergarten program for five-year-olds operates independently thorughout the morning.

The center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Daily schedules include a curriculum designed to promote social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. There is a balance of structured activities, creative and free choice periods, group exercises, individual learning times, outdoor play, rest times and meal times.

Mt. Hood Community College students, staff members and district residents are eligible to register their children for the child care center.

Fees are available for part-time, three-fourths time and full time enrollment. Information is available for financial aid programs offered through state or federal day care subsidy programs.

For more information, or to preregister, contact child care center coordinator Marilyn Ballinger at 667-7169.

College offers CPR class

OREGON CITY — During the past year, about 600 persons have been trained to respond with first aid in the form of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation to victims of heart attacks or drownings in a special program sponsored by Clackamas Community College. The class, currently being taught by Hank Rice, a paramedic for Willamette Falls Ambulance, aims to teach people how to react in emergency situations until an ambulance arrives.

It's good to know CPR, Rice said. So many people are victims of heart attacks.

The college sponsors several CPR classes each month that are open to the public. Participants are required to attend one three-and-one-half hour class to learn the technique. Certification cards are issued to participants who complete the class.

Rice said the average class size is about 25 persons. The college will hold classes anywhere in Clackamas County for interested groups, he said.

Rice covers the causes of heart attacks, preventative measures, how to recognize a heart attack and CPR technique before students practice on a life-size mannequin called "Resusci-Annie."

He uses an anatomical model of Annie that has the lungs, heart and pulmonary system exposed, enabling students to see how the cardio-pulmonary system functions. It also enables them to check the effectiveness of their resuscitation efforts.

At one class, attended by several couples, Rice asked each couple if they had thought about practicing cn their mates, citing the probability of the situation of having a husband or wife stricken at home.

He later added that persons who know CPR often have been called to use it on someone around their home or on someone they know.

The classes are during weekdays and evenings and on weekends and have a small fee to cover college costs. For more information about CPR classes, call 656-2631, extension 232.

Volunteers sought for senior survey

Volunteers to conduct a comprehensive curvey of senior citizens needs in Clackamas County are being sought by community development coordinators.

A special training session will be held Sept. 7, at Clackamas Community College to prepare volunteers and agency representatives to conduct the survey.

The survey is a cooperative effort by Clackamas County resource agencies and is being funded by the Clackamas County Area Agency on Aging.

The survey will identify whether or not senior citizens are aware of the economic, social health and transportation resources available to them and to determine whether or not it is felt these services are fulfilling the real and personal needs of county citizens.

A random sampling of seniors will be selected to answer the survey which will be kept confidential. The survey is expected to be done in September.

Persons interested in volunteering to be surveyers may contact: Lola Burge, Colton, 824-2311, extension 254; Karen Douthit, Molalla, 824-2351, extension 2; Gretchen Williamson, Gladstone, 655-5296; Cheryl Gribskov, West Linn, 638-9874; or Nancy Dunis, Oregon City, 655-8335.