

'She-Devil' and her pack had run of area

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

She was known as one of the greatest bandits of her time, and the stories surrounding her exploits grew as the raids in communities neighboring Sandy continued.

Old-timers of the farming communities of Cottrell, Mayberry, Kelso and of the logging town of Bull Run, remember this wild dog bandit and outlaw queen well.

For it was they who build the legends surrounding her, by telling of her

marauding deeds against any man who dared to claim the land that her ancestors once used as their hunting grounds.

She was a large collie whose beautiful, long brown and white coat seemed almost ghostlike as she appeared and reappeared in the night with her stable of loyal followers.

She was the leader of the pack, strong, gallant and almost mystic, as man tried to capture her in every conceivable way, only to be outwitted by her time and time again.

To others, however, the killing of sheep, calves and poultry, created only anger and hate in their hearts. To these farmers and ranchers, she was a night raider that took what did not belong to her, and created hunger in the bellies of their family members, who already did

not have much.

They called her "She-Devil," a wild dog who seemed to materialize and vanish in the shadows of the oaks and maples.

Her howls seemed to echo in the stillness of the

night air on Cottrell Hill.

Just when the night raids on the communities began seems to have been lost in the obscurity of time. Manda Colson Stewart, 79, formerly of Cottrell (now living in Portland), said

that the outlaw queen was part of the area's lore when she first arrived with her husband, Roy Colson, in 1926.

In the twenties, Cottrell was an out-of-the-way farming area, "half-way bet-

ween nowhere and going somewhere," according to Stewart.

Bluff Road was the only road to Sandy then. Mt. Hood was hours away by a rugged gravel road pitted with chuckholes and large boulders.

Kelso had no store, nor even an actual road through it. Rather, there were crude trails, widened by hand just enough that an early model car or a horse and buggy could pass.

There was a small store on Cottrell Road near where the cannery now stands. Behind this was a large farm, built and operated by Frank Beers, who logged the surrounding hills and opened one of the first sawmills in the area.

On his land was a cookhouse and living quarters for his timber crew.

Even Cottrell School wasn't much back in those days, said Stewart.

It was comprised of one room and a handful of students. It wasn't until years later that another room was built on and the ceiling lowered enough to add an auditorium upstairs. It took until 1940 for the school to even boast that it had students in 12 full grades.

Isolated and sparsely populated, Stewart said that it was no wonder that this dog queen and her pack could maintain their grip on the area.

Stewart said that in the beginning, the local citizenry believed that it was wolves or coyotes responsible for the killing of their stock. But as the raids persisted, and the anger among the people grew enough that someone baited them and waited up half the night, that they learned the true identity of the predators.

Where the dogs came from is only speculation, said Stewart. Some felt that they had been dumped out in the woods by someone who did not want them, or just plainly turned wild and answered the call of their past.

Few people had even actually seen the dogs, said Stewart. The pack was comprised mainly of collies and shepherds (a breed which was rare for this part of the country at that time.) And just how many there were actually in the pack can only be "guesstimated." Not guns, steel-jawed traps, snares, guard dogs or poisoned bait, could stop them.

With the people unable to kill off the pack, their numbers quickly grew. If some were killed during a raid, they were quickly replenished. As a result, they became bolder and stronger each year.

She-Devil's pack was even joined by household pets who chose the life of the wilds over the comforts and protection of domestication.

"It doesn't take too long for dogs to go wild," said Stewart, "when so many dogs were running so free."

She-Devil's pack consisted of as many as 30 dogs at times, said Stewart.

On raiding parties, they numbered about 15.

The territory of the wild dogs ranged as far south as Kelso and as far north as the Columbia River. On the west, Cottrell was the boundary, and they later even extended their domain eastward up into the rugged area of the Bull Run watershed.

But primarily they ran the lower portions of the Big Sandy River. The primary denning area was located in the area which is now Dodge Park.

Stewart said that "She-Devil" acted like a general, barking out orders and

growling and challenging the rest of the pack to follow her.

And follow her they did, until finally the people of the area could no longer stand for the raids. An armed search party was organized to track the pack down.

It was about the time Albert Andrews and the Hudson's farm fell victim to a raid that people decided to join together, recalls Stewart.

No longer was the pack an individual problem. She-Devil had now become everyone's concern.

The men folk armed themselves and by word of mouth came together. Stewart's husband, Roy, grabbed his shotgun and joined them, although they were just starting out and had no livestock.

Some were on horseback, others on foot. Some even used dogs for tracking. The search was long and difficult, but gradually the dogs were located and killed, one by one.

But when the posse thought they had finally dwindled their numbers down to nothing, more would appear.

Finally the trail of She-Devil and her pack led along the trestle in the Bull Run, where they were vigorously pursued.

The dogs were ambushed and all believed to have been killed in a canyon. However, when the posse inspected the bodies of the pack, She-Devil's was nowhere to be found.

Somehow, it is believed, She-Devil and maybe a few of her followers escaped the firepower. The surviving pack members retreated back into the thickly wooded area of the Bull Run, never to return.

She-Devil's hold on the area was finally broken, and she was cast deep into the wilderness to escape the fate of the citizens' angry guns.

But the pack's retreat was not without reward, for her new territory lay in a protected watershed where neither man nor his guns were allowed.

Today the land around Cottrell has little resemblance to the territory where the mystery of She-Devil grew and became grossly exaggerated with the fading memories of story-tellers and the passage of time.

No longer is it a land of cruel remembrance where a ghostlike dog and her loyal followers would suddenly appear out of nowhere, plunder some livestock, and vanish into the woods, only to reappear, unexpectedly, another time.

The land has now been tamed and the outlaw wild dogs, which roamed the area, are now a thing of the past.

The final days of She-Devil are a mystery. One can only speculate because no one can recall when her death actually took place.

Some claim (even in recent times) that they have seen this mighty leader—as strong and as bold as ever—skirting the edges of civilization at night.

She and her pack continue to pilfer, but this time striking and then moving on and keeping a safe distance between her pack and the blast of a shotgun.

Stewart believes that after the pack was dispersed, that She-Devil may have died shortly afterwards. She was now old and ailing, and probably she moved one of her pups to the head of the pack—a strong, long-haired brown and white collie.

She-Devil retired to her den, would accompany the rest on a few raids, and lived out the rest of her days in contentment.

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Pruning roses tricky

Where the early spring pruning of ornamental shrubs is concerned, roses are a special case. "They are special because the type of rose plant grown determines how the plant should be pruned," says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University extension home

gardening agent. Depending on the type, rose bushes may need light, medium or heavy pruning, but in all cases, the old canes and crossing growth should be removed. For light pruning, remove about one-third of last year's growth.