Home at Oral Hull

After a lifetime of travel, woman at home in Sandy

by PAULA BURNS

Alice Bankston, 88, has worked and traveled throughout the world, but she has a fondness for the quiet weekends she spends at the beautiful and secluded grounds at the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind, where she stays in her privately owned trailer with her seeing-eye dog, Dixie.

Bankston, who looks 20 years younger than her age, talks with pride about her accomplishments.

She was born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y., and after a brief marriage, moved to southern California and purchased a home in El Monte, which she owned from 1923 to 1966. "However I traveled all over the United States in between," she said.

One of her jobs took her to the East Coast where she worked for four months for Reader's Digest magazine as a training supervisor for 109 women. She returned to southern California and said she "tried to get in uniform when the second world war started." She had some familiarity with the government, having worked as a secretary for the domestic trade department in Los Angeles from 1928 to 1934.

Bankston said getting into uniform did not materialize. Even though she passed all written exams, she failed the physical because of retinitis pigmentosa, a progressive degenerative disease of the eye, which would eventually cause total blindness.

"When I was 16, they discovered I had it," she said.

After failing the physical, Bankston was still determined to work for the government in some capacity. "So I got a job with the war department as a civilian," she said.

She was sent to the war department in San Francisco, which was responsible for employing workers for Venecia Arsenol, a branch of the army. Her job consisted of analyzing various jobs, writing job descriptions and assigning appropriate grade numbers to each job. Little did she know that her job experience would prepare her to travel overseas at a later date, performing similar tasks.

Bankston resigned 2½ years later because of a reduction in force, and returned to her home in El Monte, where she took flying lessons. She received a pilot's license, but her eye disease prevented her from realizing a goal of getting a commercial license, and as a result, she was restricted to flying alone. "I could not take anyone but myself and I certainly did have a delightful time," she said.

While she was having fun flying, the personnel officer she had worked for at Venecia Arsenol, who was with the Department of Defense in Washington, D.C., recommended her for a job in Okinawa, where he was being transferred. "So I went as head of the classification branch of civilian personnel," she said. Her job involved writing job classifications and assigning grade numbers to them.

After working about three years in Okinawa, Bankston said, "I got bored with being on the island and resigned."

She decided to tour the Orient, and included Athens, Italy, Paris and Germany in her travels. While she was touring Wiesbaden, Germany, she was offered a job with the Air Force. She wrote job descriptions for all civilian employees of the command level of the Air Force, including NATO employees.

One year later the headquarters were moved from Wiesbaden to Paris. "I did the same work all over Europe," she said. "That was very interesting work. There were all kinds of jobs. Jobs you'd never guess about."

In 1953, she resigned, returned to California, "and played for three years," she said. "Then I decided I'd better do some more work in my life because I was running out of money."

She then applied for another government job and was sent to San Diego writing job descriptions for the Bureau of Yards and Dock, an engineering arm of the U.S. Navy. About two years later she was transferred to the head office in Washington, D.C., and stayed there until she retired in 1964.

During the years she worked her eyesight progressively worsened, Bankston said. But it did not advance into the final stages until after she retired and moved to Seattle. She traveled throughout Washington and got people interested in forming an organization called Washington Council of the Blind, an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind. Bankston said the primary function of the organization was to develop means of assisting blind individuals to live as independently as possible.

Alice Bankston and Dixie

Bankston also wrote for the Braille Reporter, a newspaper for the blind. One article she wrote was about the beauty of the park maintained by the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind in Sandy.

She said because she knew about the beauty of Oral Hull, and after researching it for the article, she decided to move to Sandy and has lived there on weekends from spring to fall for about 13 years. She also has an apartment in Sandy.

Currently Bankston is a coordinator of volunteers for Oral Hull. She is also a spokeswoman for Oral Hull and has often spoken on television and in front of groups at various clubs. "I give talks to various organizations, accompanied by slides," she said.

Even though Bankston refers to her life now as being "lazy" compared to her past, overall she feels she has led an exciting life. "I've had fun. I've had a delightful time living," she said.

Local college students study in Japan, France

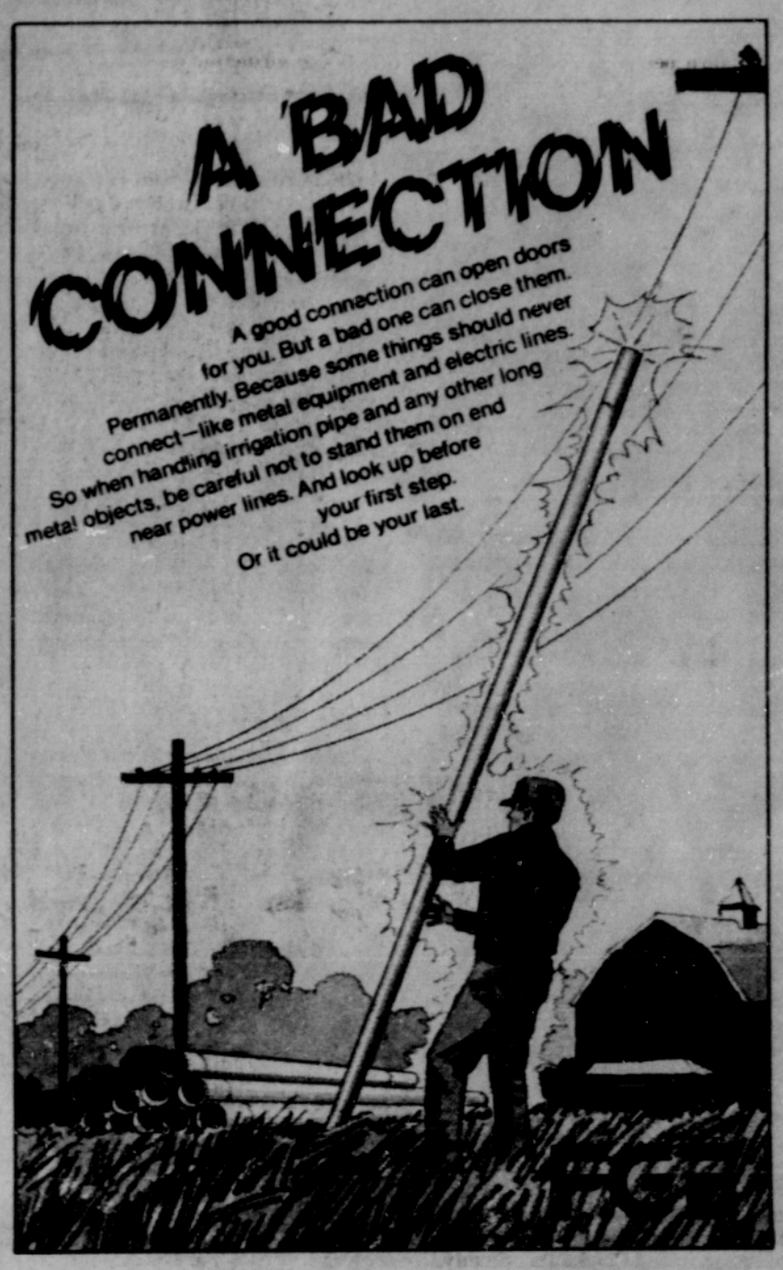
BORING — Two Linfield College students from this community are studying overseas this fall as participants in Linfield's semester abroad program.

Anne Lindberg is studying in Japan, while Lisa Lind is in France. The students left Oregon Aug. 1 and will return home in mid-December.

In the Japan program, Lindberg will be studying Japanese language, Japanese culture and society and Japanese political and economic institutions at Kanto Gakuin University in Yokohama.

This month, she and the other 11 Linfield students visiting Japan are participating in an orientation program with emphasis on intensive "survival" Japanese language studies and field trips to acquaint them with Japanese culture.

In Paris, France, Lind and 13 other Linfield students will be studying French language, French art and literature and contemporary French society this fill. The students in France also are involved in an orientation program this month.



In the military

David Burghardt

Navy Seaman David A. Burghardt has completed a Russian language course at the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio base in Monterey, Calif.

Classes, which consist of six to eight students, offer six hours of intensive spoken language instruction daily.

He is the son of Adam and Charlotte Burghardt of 40977 S.E. Wildcat Mountain Drive.

James Sorrels

James S. Sorrels Jr. has enlisted in the U.S Army and will leave for his assignment as a food service specialist at Fort Bragg, N.C., on Nov. 19.

Sorrels is married to Sandra Lyn Sorrels of Seaside. He is the son of James Sorrels Sr. of Sandy and Wanda Sorrels of Seaside.

John Schuldheiss

Air Force 2nd Lt. John J. Schuldheiss has arrived for duty with the 2021st Information Systems Squadron, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

He is an air traffic control officer.

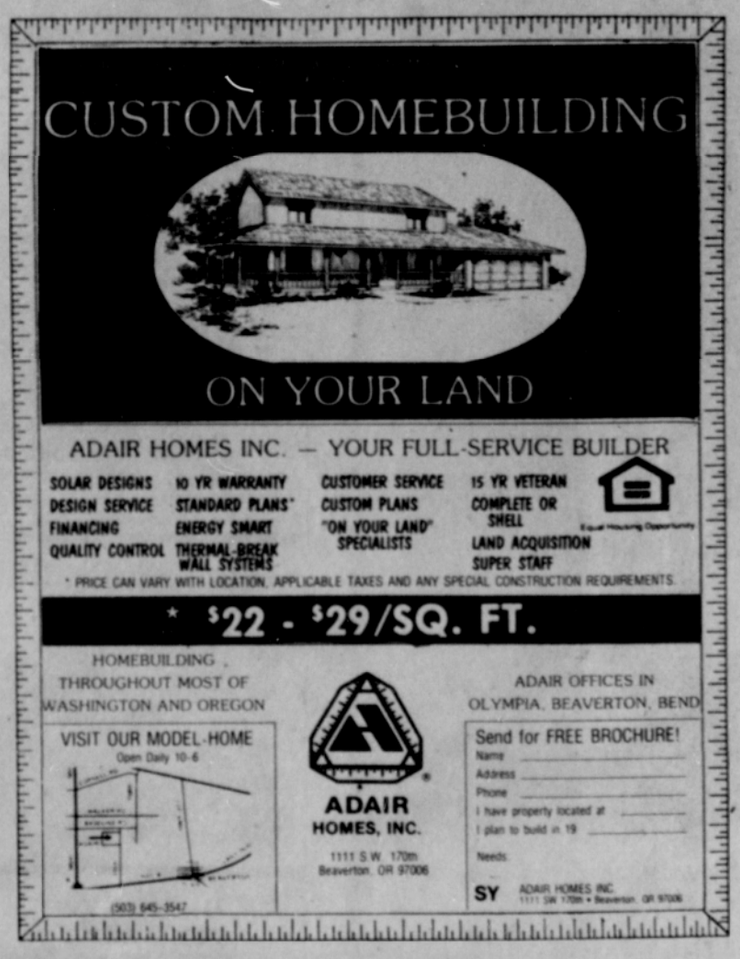
He is the son of Iris Harris of 21965 S.E. McCabe Road, Sandy; and grandson of John Steiner, 49550 S.E. Coalman Road, Sandy.

Country Cut-ups offer lessons

BORING — The Country Cut-ups, a Boring-based square dance group, is offering lessons beginning Sept. 11.

The lessons are offered on Thursdays from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Boring Barn, one-fourth mile south of Highway 212 on Southeast Richey Road. Don Young is the caller and instructor for the classes. Cost is $4 per couple per lesson, but the first session is free.

For additional information, call 761-2493, 663-3102, or 655-1775.



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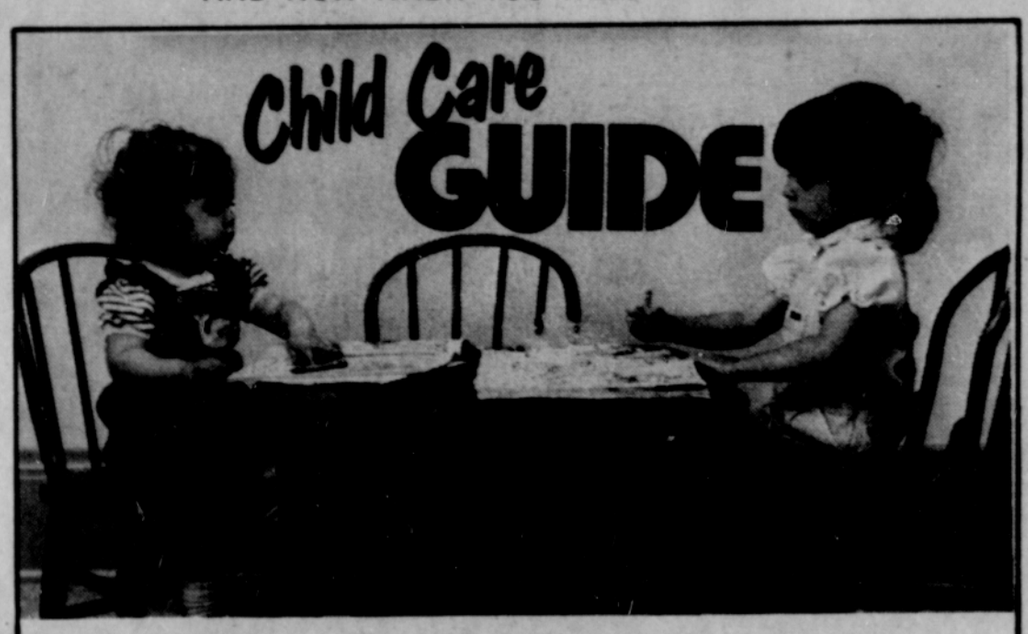

Look for this special feature in today's Classified in the Gresham Outlook, Sandy Post & Metro