

ROOTS And Branches

By MAIJA YASUI

Losing two great guys

The last few weeks have been difficult with the unexpected loss of two larger than life men, Bill Enyart and Leroy Nickerson.

Bill Enyart was bigger than life in many ways. His fullback physique and scarred nose added to the legendary football tales told at Medford High School and Oregon State reunions. He was inducted into the OSU, Oregon and College Halls of Fame for his fetes on the football field that earned him an assortment of nicknames, Earthquake Enyart, the Giant Killer, and Buff. A spectacular professional career with the Buffalo Bills was knee jerked to a halt by a serious injury after only two years.

Bill was a country boy at heart spending his formative years on the George Annala farm on the valley's east side, above the banks of Neal Creek. It was here my husband and Bill became fast friends, although Bill never made a friend that wasn't a best friend for life. They spent hundreds of hours hiking the forested hillsides looking for fishing hot spots. Bill's family moved to Medford, the mecca of high school football, as Bill's natural athletic ability began to shine, leaving Flip to read about his friend in the sports section of the newspaper. They rekindled their friendship at Oregon State University where Bill's football rise to fame continued, but never got in the way of friendship. A few years later, when Bill's football career with the Buffalo Bills was cut short, our growing families would meet at his home on the banks of the Deschutes in Bend so our kids could get to know one another. While others may have defined Bill by his football prowess Bill was much more. He was an academic all American, brilliant on many levels, a political animal, a father and a life-long friend. We only learned of his battle with cancer last week, shocking to think this bigger than life legend could be struck down at the age of 67. Flip picked up the phone and called his friend one last time.

Bill's death came on the heels of another shocking event, the sudden loss of Leroy Nickerson, another bigger than life man who left us much too soon.

We came to know Leroy in the last three decades of his life, when he moved to Hood River to work with the telephone company. He was never the stereotypical corporate executive, distant and stuffy. He dressed casually, played in a rock and roll band, and sought adventures in business and recreation. You were could always be comfortable around Leroy although his intelligence on so many subjects could astonish even the brightest among us.

None of us expected his life to be cut short at the age of 64. He was a lean athletic machine, a non-smoker, moderate drinker, who lived life with the honest expectation that he would match his mother Ollie's longevity, enjoying life into his nineties. From a preventative standpoint, Leroy was checking off all the long lived boxes, making his sudden death all the more painful but giving us a greater appreciation for each of the days of life we are given.

The vast number of people who filled every nook and cranny of the Tribute Center, overflowing onto the lawn, were a testament to his ability to establish and maintain relationships in an age when face book friendships are a dime a dozen. Tales of wild road trips in a lemon yellow van he personally "restored" its tires rolling off on a Corvallis road added a youthful exuberance to the man I knew.

Leroy's love for fun was legendary. He would dress up in one wacky costume or another at the drop of a hat, for Halloween or birthday parties. He was a Nordic fixture at the annual St. Urho's Day parade.

The dream that so many young men of the sixties and seventies shared, of starting a garage band and making it "big" like the Grateful Dead or the Beatles Leroy lived across a fifty year span. Making it big in Leroy's music terms was not about signing contracts with a music label, but enjoying music with his family, friends and fans.

In the early eighties Flip and I were stepping out in the Hood River dance scene with friends Aki and Cliff Nakamura, Lil and Koe Nishimoto, Tom and Kaz Sumoge. It was in the back room of Jack's Chinese Restaurant that we began our friendship with Dana and Leroy through the music of Larkspur. There is nothing like Proud Mary to get everyone on their feet. Rollin' on the river. No one on the music scene was rocking the house better than Larkspur. It was an honest to goodness feel good time, without the booze, drugs and fights.

We retired our dancing shoes as our children's sports and school activities took over our lives but we occasionally pulled them out of the closet for a Columbia Gorge Center (Opportunity Connections) or Sister City fund raiser where Larkspur filled the dance floor and the nonprofit coffers. Larkspur played for so many local non-profits that their music became synonymous with service. "People on the river are happy to give."

Leroy and Dana became a fixture at our family Christmas Eve parties. Our kids and later our grandkids became some of their surrogate children as did an assortment of children across the valley. Although initially apprehensive of playing the role of Santa, Leroy brought great joy to the grandkids by making several surprise appearances on Christmas Eve. The look on Cooper's face was priceless. That squeal of delight, saucer sized eyes incredulous as Santa strolled up to the front door of Grandpa and Grandma's house.

Leroy gave many of us that "just saw Santa" feeling; that special feeling of excitement of things to come, of caring and giving, of love and laughter, of the innocent playfulness of our childhood. We will miss his exuberance for life, his interest in exploring something new, his creativity, his playfulness and his love of Dana and music.

Leroy and Bill were two bigger than life men who left us a legacy of how to live life in their own unique ways. We are thankful to have had them in our lives and been able to call them our friends.



Leroy in the St. Urho's Day parade, 2003.

Jettes celebrate 50 years



Submitted photo

Mary and Fred Jette

Fred and Mary Reghito-Westlund Jette of Mt. Hood-Parkdale mark their Golden Anniversary on Feb. 20.

They were married on Feb. 20, 1965, at St. Cecilia's Catholic Church in Beaverton, attended by Nick Lambing (friend) and Carol King (sister of the bride)

Fred served as an Oregon State Police Trooper until retiring in 1992. Mary worked as a homemaker. They lived in Aloha before moving to

the Gorge 41 years ago.

Their children are Christopher (Angela), David, and Kathleen (Bill), and the Jettes have five grandchildren.

The Jettes are active in Lions Club, Lions' Follies and Back Country Horsemen of America, and Mary has volunteered at Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital for more than 20 years.

The Jettes will celebrate with a dinner on Feb. 28, hosted by their children.

TRAVEL

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ferences between the three children's homes except for two things that were exactly the same: In all three homes, every single child, no matter how young or old, were incredibly beautiful. They were filled with such love, acceptance, hope and joy. They were so amazingly precious that it broke our hearts to think that anyone could have possibly abandoned or abused them! And the second thing that was the same was we could feel Jesus' life-changing love completely immersing every square inch of all three of these Christian orphanages. We were so moved and humbled by each child's beautiful smile and infectious laugh and tight hug. We saw Jesus' love in the humility, tenderness and graciousness of the staff. We saw His love in their eyes and smiles and how they held each child as if they were their own.

To look at these children and realize they were in these Christian children's homes because they had been cast aside as a burden, or abused in every way imaginable, hurt our hearts to the core. Every single child had a story that revealed the tragic crisis Guatemala and most other Central American countries are trapped in with the breakdown of the family, deeply-rooted corruption and the perverse evil that exists in the form of the drug cartels and their inhumane acts. As we left each home and tore ourselves away from the tight hugs of the kids, we gave a large financial gift to each director on behalf of Immanuel Lutheran Church to be used for the most critical immediate need. They were all very grateful.

As our last day arrived, Lynda and I packed up our suitcases, shared our love and appreciation with Uncle Willy for all his help, and took to the skies once more, this time heading not home to PDX, but off to El Paso, Texas, and a risky trip across the border to another drug cartel hotbed, Juarez, Mexico, and more visits to more wonderful Christian orphanages.

But that's a story for another time and place.

To listen to much more detail about each children's home and the precious kids Jeff and Lynda met, go to ImmanuelHR.org/#/media and click on the play button. Then scroll to the 2/23/14 message to listen.

Postscript: Immanuel Church also sent teams to Tijuana, Mexico, Juarez, Mexico and San Salvador, El Salvador last year to learn from seven more Christian orphanages. Since then, the church has received a miraculous gift of a million dollar car, once owned by singer/actor Pat Boone. They are using the proceeds from the sale of that car to fully fund their own orphanage, called "Immanuel Children's Home," which is located in the heart of



Guatemala City. They will be receiving their first children this fall. If you would like more information on this new children's home, contact Pastor Jeff Mueller at 541-645-0191 or pastorjmueller@gmail.com.



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Heck, Murillo marry

Ashley Heck and Fernando Murillo of Odell were married Aug. 23, 2014 at Highland Farms in Mosier, on a beautiful summer day. Rev. Anna Carmichael of St. Mark's Episcopal officiated as the 150 guests gathered for the outdoor ceremony.



Submitted photo

Ashley Heck and Fernando Murillo

The bride is the daughter of Dave and Jackie Heck of Hood River and the groom is the son of Trinidad and Rosa Murillo of Snowdon, Wash.

The bride's sister Andrea Heck and Kara Graves were Matron of honor. Jessica Russum, Katie Pritchett, Jennifer Meresse, and Kim Hocht were bridesmaids.

The grooms brother Angel Murillo and Dean Russum were Best Men. Chris Haskins, Sam Murillo, Andy Meresse, and Jake Wilkes were groomsmen.

Ring bearers were Devin Russum and Lane Meresse. Flower girls were Hailee Heck (niece of the bride), Madison Russum and MacKenzie Hocht. Grandparents of the bride are Joe and Agnes Heck of Baker City.

Scripture readers were Sam Murillo and Patty Car-

rillo (cousins of the groom), Grandpa Joe, and Kim Cantrell (Aunt of the bride).

Sarah Benson arranged the bouquets and boutonnières and family helped arrange the bouquets of flowers grown by family and friends. Mark Whitehead of Ahi's Ohana Catering provided a feast for dinner. Pauline Koll made local fruit pies and Jennifer Bloom made the wedding cake. Josh Duffus and cousin Jason Fisher photographed the wedding day.

Dave Tallman and Natasha Muenzer (cousin of the bride) sang at the reception.

Fernando is employed at GS Long of Oregon and Ashley is employed at Ahi's Ohana Catering and home health care. Also, she is a volunteer EMT for the Wy'east Fire Department.

The newlyweds honeymooned on the Yucatan Peninsula and reside in Odell.

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