

# Salem Couple Spur Search for Uranium

## Johnson Claim Starts Boom at Wilhoit Springs

By CHARLES IRELAND

Valley Editor, The Statesman

SILVERTON — Did the minerals in the Wilhoit Mineral Springs water that Grandpa drank in the Gay '90s include uranium?

A Salem-area man and his wife are gambling \$2,000 and a lot of their time that the answer is "yes."

Nestled in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains in southwestern Clackamas County — 30 miles northeast of Salem — Wilhoit Mineral Springs today is a faded and near-forgotten resort.

The name of the once-famous health spa was revived three weeks ago when 34 mining claims were filed at the Clackamas County Courthouse in Oregon City.

Responsibility for filing the 34 claims were a former Minnesotan and his red-haired wife who live at Keizer.

Practically all of the recent speculation about uranium at Wilhoit Springs can be traced to this couple, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Johnson.

### Tried Polk Co. First

Over two years ago, the Johnsons bought a Geiger counter and went tramping around the valley in search of the stuff that dreams and A-bombs are made of.

"We're great people to get out in the backwoods, anyway," said Mrs. Johnson.

Early prospecting by the Johnsons centered in Polk County. It was a tip that they might find bauxite, rather than uranium, that first sent them to Wilhoit Springs.

Wilhoit Springs is 14 miles northeast of Silverton via a winding, roller coaster country road.

### Made Many Trips

The Johnsons have made numerous prospecting trips to the area in the past two years. With them they lug their Geiger counter, the gadget that has transformed many Americans into weekend prospectors.

A Geiger counter (the Johnsons recommend purchase of a "good one," costing about \$300 new) is a portable device with a needle that flickers on a dial when radioactive elements are within its range.

While most worthwhile deposits of uranium in the United States have been found in Colorado and Utah, the Johnsons are convinced that Western Oregon has some, too.

The gyrations of the needle on their Geiger counter at Wilhoit Springs have strengthened their conviction.

### 'Hot' Reactions

So three weeks ago they filed claims to mineral rights on the government-owned land where they got some "hot" reactions.

The law limits one person's claim to 20 acres. That meant Mr. and Mrs. Johnson could file claim to a total of 40 acres. They decided to cut their friends in on the adjacent land.

As a result, 34 claims were filed within a few days by the Johnsons and their friends. They report that the 34 claims comprise all available land in the immediate area. All of the claims are near the Wilhoit Springs resort.

Cost of filing a claim is \$1 for each 20 acres. This gives the claimant just the mineral rights to the property for one year. The claim is renewable if \$10 is spent during the year on development.

The Johnson's prospecting entered a new phase Saturday when they began to drill into the ground at a spot their Geiger-counter indicated was particularly "hot."

Their home-made drill is powered by a 5-horsepower, 140-pound motor that had the Johnsons puffing Friday as they lug it 100 yards from their pick-up truck to the drill site.

### Can Drill 300 Feet

They have equipment on hand to drill 300 feet into the earth. Samples of what they find at various depths will be labeled and sent away to be assayed. Their investment to date they report is "about \$2,000."

If the Johnsons should strike important quantities of a radioactive mineral, they say they would leave the mining to a big mining company. They estimate that it would cost several hundred thousand dollars to set up a mine.

The Johnsons' nearest "neighbor" to the east is Theodore Mandrone, who has had a mine in



SILVERTON — Erecting home-built drilling rig on his mining claim in Wilhoit Springs area, 14 miles northeast of Silverton is Lester Johnson, 5160 Verda Lane, Salem. Johnson began drilling Saturday for uranium or other radioactive substance that could spell big money. (Statesman Photos)



SILVERTON — Talk of uranium deposits has failed to impress Theodore Mandrone, shown standing at entrance to shaft of mine he operates adjacent to the Johnson claims in Wilhoit Springs area. Mandrone sells product of his mine as soil builder.

operation for many years.

With his own hands, Mandrone has burrowed a shaft 2,000 feet into the hills. But he is interested primarily in a peat-like substance which is used as a soil builder.

### Named for Daughter

The Johnsons have chosen the name Lucky Linda Mining Claims for their holdings. They have a daughter, Linda, at North Salem High School.

A brother of Mrs. Johnson called his World War II fighter plane Lucky Linda, and it returned him safely from every mission.

Mandrone has mined in the area for 15 years. He has learned a lot of geology the hard way. He says somebody else can make the first uranium strike. Until they do, he's the lucky one.

Meanwhile, the Clackamas County clerk's office reports that publicity given the Johnson filings has prompted many inquiries and a few independent filings.

### 24 hr. PRESCRIPTION SERVICE

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## Detroit Lake Boat Concession Aired

Statesman News Service

DETROIT — Boat-rental concessions at Detroit Lake were discussed Thursday at a meeting of nearly 50 North Santiam Canyon residents and Alvin Sorseth, Detroit District ranger.

Sorseth said no decisions were reached at the meeting. He said the next step likely would be the awarding of concessions to several parties. He said the meeting was held to "get the feeling of the people" about the subject.

## Fire Damages Dallas House

Statesman News Service

DALLAS — Fire of undetermined origin Saturday caused considerable damage to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Otien, 505 E. Salem Road.

The blaze, which started around a bracket type chimney, was discovered by Otien about 3:30 p.m., when he returned home from the family's downtown floral shop. No one was at home prior to the discovery.

Damage was confined to the upstairs, roof and chimney by the Dallas volunteer fire department. The loss was covered by insurance, it was reported.

The Otiens were the victims about four years ago of another fire which almost destroyed their home.

## Sister Schindler Dies at Queen of Angels Convent

Statesman News Service

MT. ANGEL — Sister Stanislaus Schindler died Friday at Queen of Angels Convent here after a three-year illness.

She was born in Wollentzowen, Bavaria, Germany, March 22, 1875, came to the United States in 1888, and made her religious profession here in 1891. For many years she performed domestic tasks at the convent and its branch houses.

Surviving are a brother, George Schindler, Ocean Lake; several nieces and nephews including Mrs. Teressa Koch, Salem, Sister Mary Schindler, Mrs. Victoria Susee and Martin Schindler, all of Mt. Angel.

Services will be at 9:45 a.m. Monday in the convent chapel with Father Sebastian Terhaar officiating. Interment will be at the convent cemetery under direction of Unger Mortuary.

## Mrs. Gilham Recuperating

VICTOR POINT — Mrs. James Gilham is reported making satisfactory recovery from major surgery at a Salem hospital.

## Polk County Court News

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