

ALKIO: She spent about three decades teaching home economics

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dise spans the decades as does Alkio.

Her grandparents came on the Oregon Trail, living in the Willamette Valley and Washington, before settling in Pendleton. Her grandfather sold buggies and wagons.

"In about 1909, he realized cars were coming in and he sold his shop," she said.

Alkio sat in a chair in a pool of sunlight filtered through her shop's large front windows. Her two Chihuahuas, Peck and Lucy, stayed close. Behind Alkio stretched her cavernous store lined with shelves and showcases filled with thousands of objects. Up some rickety stairs was a loft filled with vintage clothing. Inside drawers was hidden treasure. On one shelf sat a bowl filled with nothing but old keys.

"I never throw anything away," she said. "I leave it until the right person comes along."

Alkio and Pat Glenn, a colleague at Pendleton High School, started the shop in 1969 as a place to showcase the work of local artists. After Glenn moved to Portland, Alkio switched over from art gallery to antique shop. In 1991, she bought the building.

The LaDow block is older than Alkio. Built in two stages completed in 1880 and 1884, it stretches the entire block on Southeast Court Street, bordered by Southeast Second and Third streets. The ground floor offers eight retail spaces. The building, once Pendleton's biggest commercial space, has been occupied by an array of establishments including U.S. Post Office, tea room, meat company, machine shop, fabric store, piano dealer, clothing boutiques, bicycle shop, cigar factory, gas station and music store.

Alkio is the third owner of the LaDow building after Mattie LaDow, who financed the building, and William Matlock, who purchased it in 1913.

Alkio said she was born two blocks away at her family home. Her father, William Purchase, owned and operated the Troy Laundry at the time. During World War I, the business flourished along with the economy.

"People sent their clothes to the laundry, but they didn't have money to pay," she said.

Her father shuttered the business and started farming



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Elnor Alkio walks through her antique shop, the Collector's Gallery, on Monday in Pendleton.

with his father-in-law on land near the present-day Wildhorse Casino. They farmed wheat, peas, barley and canola. Alkio and her mom eventually moved to a house in town so the girl could attend high school. After graduation, she earned a degree at Oregon State University (then Oregon State College). She wasn't the first woman in the family to experience higher education — her mother, Catherine Purchase, graduated in 1915 from OSU, then Oregon Agricultural College.

In Alkio's store, an orange and black Oregon Agricultural College pennant hangs on the wall to document the accomplishment. The pennant is one of the only items in the shop she refuses to sell.

"A lot of people have wanted to buy it," Alkio said, "but I'm not selling."

She found love with George Alkio, but lost him early when he died at age 52. They raised two daughters, Elaine and Diana, who eventually brought Alkio five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Alkio spent about three decades teaching home economics to Pendleton middle- and high-school students. One of her students, Vic Kucera, 71, remembers taking home economics from Alkio as a seventh grader, learning to do such things as bake cinnamon apples, darn socks and make potholders.

"She was very, very kind," Kucera said. "No matter how crooked our potholders were, she still liked them."

Kucera, an Arizona resident and author who is researching old theaters, stopped by the LaDow building last month and reconnected with Alkio. She gave him a guided tour of the building's second floor where an opera house once featured chamber music,

plays and dances, and once served as an armory where recruits drilled before the 1890 Spanish American War. The dusty time capsule has apartments with vaulted ceilings, claw foot tubs and Murphy beds. Kucera was charmed with both the building and his former teacher.

"She was a picture of grace," he said. "She just smiled and answered all my questions."

As her 100th birthday approached, Alkio has received an avalanche of flowers and birthday cards, including many from former students. Family members from near and far have been celebrating all week, she said.

She doesn't have words of wisdom to impart. She deflects any such queries, preferring to chat about the history of an item or the here and now. One hundred is just a number to the newly minted centenarian. She plans to keep coming to the shop until it is no longer fun. She said she'll have the building paid off soon.

"Four months and it'll be paid for," she said. "Then I hope to do some cosmetic work on the outside."

She has backed off from buying for her shop, though.

"I've been here so long that people bring things to me constantly," she said. "I've almost stopped buying because I might not live forever."

Alkio said she still feels good, except for macular degeneration, which affects her vision.

"I've been fortunate to have good health," she said. "The store has given me something to do. I've met many very nice people over the years."

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

LaDow block future in question

Alkio desires to restore building's façade, apartments

East Oregonian

The LaDow block has seen better days.

Many of the windows are boarded up at the more than 125-year-old building on Southeast Court Street in downtown Pendleton, and the façade is in need of restoration.

But that hasn't prevented interest from swirling around the building, which is owned by longtime resident Elnor Alkio.

Don Potter is Alkio's friend and manages the building, and contends that despite the interest, it is not for sale.

Potter said Portland developer Jordan Schnitzer leveled a complaint to the city about the building in a move to possibly acquire the structure, and that complaint led to an inspection.

Shawn Penninger, the city's fire marshal and assistant fire chief, conducted the inspection, and Pendleton police chief Stuart Roberts said he also was on hand because he and Potter have a rapport.

"Initially, Potter was not going to allow the inspection, but eventually conceded," Roberts stated. "We walked through the building ... no issues were noted."

The *East Oregonian* was not able to reach Schnitzer for comment, but city manager Robb Corbett recalled this summer the



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Many of the upstairs apartments in the LaDow block have fallen into disrepair.

developer had invited several local thinkers and movers to lunch to discuss the development of an old bank building he had bought on Main Street.

"In that conversation," Corbett said, "there were a lot of projects that got talked about," including possibilities of Alkio's building.

Mike and Jill Thorne in 2008 bought the Haw Building across from the LaDow block and established a home for the thriving Prodigal Son Brewery & Pub, 230 S.E. Court Ave. Mike Thorne said at one time they were interested in the LaDow block and looked at other buildings as well.

Umatilla County assessment records show the building and land has a real market value of \$489,380. Thorne said he is not aware of Alkio accepting offers. He added no one is likely to buy until there's a price tag available.

While the LaDow block might not have received the same restoration treatment as some of the buildings

that surround it, that doesn't mean that Alkio's vision for the building doesn't match the city government's goals for urban development.

According to city officials, Alkio has long desired to restore the building's façade and the second-floor apartment units to re-open the space to tenants.

Alkio did receive a \$72,358 façade grant from the Pendleton Development Commission, but Pendleton Mayor Phillip Houk said she never used the grant because of the financial demands the project entails.

City councilor Chuck Wood, chairman of the commission, said he last toured the building in 2013.

Given Alkio's age, Wood didn't think she would be able to undertake a major renovation effort, but he still had high praise for the LaDow block.

"It's a marvelous old building," he said.

Antonio Sierra and Phil Wright contributed to this story.

SETZER: Speaks six languages including Spanish

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Murdock, "we are moving away from direct services and more into areas such as prevention, healthy communities, and population health. Setzer's broad experiences in Africa and Asia have provided him with a wealth of experience in the very areas that are a focus for our work."

Murdock said Setzer's epidemiology training is a necessary tool of public health.

"Eastern Oregon has a shortage of individuals trained in this area so this will be a bonus for the county and the region," Murdock said.

Murdock said a major part of Setzer's work in

Africa and Asia has been to foster a wide array of partnerships designed to improve health in the community and regions in which he has served. He has led projects and worked in many areas including Kenya, Niger, Ghana, Cameroon, Togo, Bangladesh, Egypt, the Republic of Georgia, Zaire, Madagascar, Tanzania, Zambia, Viet Nam, and Djibouti among others.

Murdock said Setzer has been published regularly and won awards for his work in the field. He speaks six languages including Spanish.

Setzer is a board member of the Dikembe Mutombo Foundation. Mutombo, who served as a

reference for Setzer, retired after eighteen seasons in the NBA and is known for his world-wide humanitarian efforts.

Setzer said he looks forward to working in Umatilla County.

"I see this opportunity as a chance to bring it all back home and engage directly with the diverse communities in the county to see if we cannot collectively work together to make things better," he said in a press release. "I see it as a chance to apply my skills and talents on a daily basis with a team of dedicated professionals and see how to effectively manage limited resources in a creative and transparent way."

BURKE: Marches on Main Street will continue each Saturday until the pipeline issue is resolved

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marches for the past three weeks as a show of solidarity.

Wallace said the marches have been larger each week and will continue each Saturday until the pipeline issue is resolved.

Although she considered the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision to delay the pipeline's easement to provide more time for environmental studies a step in the right direction, Wallace said the oil company behind the pipeline could still forge ahead with the project as long as they're willing to accrue the corps' fines.

In addition to the Standing Rock Sioux's contention that the pipeline trespasses on ground sacred to the tribe, the issue has gained wider traction among environmentalists because of the pipeline's potential to leak into Standing Rock's drinking water supply from the nearby Missouri River.

The crowd, a mix of tribal and non-tribal members, began a short march up and down Main Street between Byers and Frazer avenues, alternating chants between "mni wiconi" and "cuus iwa waqiswit," the Lakota and Umatilla phrases for "water is life."

Although there was little reaction from pedestrians and business patrons who watched the march, Wallace and Wiley-Melton said they've felt the downtown business community has been supportive of their cause,



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Chief Bill Burke smiles during the unveiling of a statue of his father, Chief Clarence Burke, Saturday afternoon on Pendleton's Main Street. Bonnie Burke sits to his right.

"Everybody liked him and everyone thought he was a great person."

— Bill Burke, son of Chief Clarence Burke

sometimes clapping for them as they walk by.

After the march ended back at Brownfield Park, some of the participants returned to the 100 block of Main Street, where the Clarence Burke bronze was being unveiled.

Keith May, chairman of the Pendleton Arts Committee, said it was fitting that Burke's bronze faced the west since his tribal name — Wetyetmes Tileylekeepit — meant "Swan Facing the Sunset."

"There is more that can be said about this man than a statue and a plaque with 200 words," he said.

Bill Burke was pleased by the tribute to his father.

"Everybody liked him and

everyone thought he was a great person," he said.

Both Bill Burke and the march organizers acknowledged the significance of unveiling a bronze of a local tribal figurehead on the same day as people marched for Native rights, but perhaps the notion that connected the two events the most came from Clarence Burke himself, via the plaque near his statue.

"A local tribal woman once said that the most important thing Burke taught her was to build no barrier between yourself and others."

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