



Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs 1995 and 1996 Annual Report

Profile: George Schneider



George Schneider—1910-1996

"In order to really know the people here, a person has to break bread with them," said George Schneider who, after 40-plus years of employment, residency and breaking bread in Warm Springs, goes about a weekly routine not unlike that of any other tribal elder on the Reservation. George passed away last year at the age of 86. For all intents and purposes, George is a tribal elder, as he lived here longer than most Reservation residents. (Most weren't even

were't even born when Schneider moved to Warm Springs.) What's more, Schneider was the only non-tribal member—a non-Indian—to be offered a place in the Senior Citizen housing project.

"I mentioned to a tribal leader that I was considering retirement, and that I was looking for a house somewhere between Tygh Valley and The Dalles," recalled Schneider. "A couple of weeks later, he brought me up here and offered me this house. I was honored....there is no other place I would rather live."

Much about Warm Springs has changed since Schneider arrived as an Oregon State College extension agent in November of 1955. He recalls that Warm Springs' population was less than 1,000, there were probably fewer than 100 automobiles around to travel the Reservation's mostly dirt and gravel roads, and the present site of his home on Ollalie Lane near the Senior Citizen Center, was an expanse of juniper and sagebrush far from the center of town.

The most significant difference, he said, was the quiet determination with which tribal members labored through hard times.

"To make ends meet, many people had to take outside work

people had to take outside work close to home, and that usually meant work in the potato harvest," he related. "You see, they didn't have all of the services that the Tribe offers today...."

George Schneider was born September 21, 1910 in Pendleton. One of five children born to Alfred and Bertha Schneider, George was raised on the family farm and attended Pendleton schools. He graduated from Pendleton High School in 1928.

Schneider spent his early years working on the family's 1,100-acre wheat farm, a very large farm considering it was harvested entirely with horse-drawn equipment.

Schneider enrolled in the Agricultural Science Department at the University of Idaho in 1928, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in 1932 and a Masters Degree in 1933.

Schneider never returned to the family farm much after leaving in 1928, spending his summers working for the U.S. Forest Service during summer breaks.

George was employed as manager of a farm implement dealership in The Dalles when the Extension Service offered him the job in Warm Springs.

"I'm really not cut out for the kind of pressure that was involved in sales-type work," he

involved in sales-type work," he said.

When he first started working with Warm Springs livestockmen, he recalled, Reservation cattle had developed a bad reputation with livestock buyers because of poor growth potential.

"Most cattlemen were buying their bulls through a single seller, all for about three- to five-hundred dollars," George recalled. "It turned out that the seller was passing off culls, and it hurt the Reservation's cattle production."

Knowing that simply telling people was not enough, Schneider joined Land Operations director Joe Warner to help with the Rockin' 4-H Livestock Club in 1958. Starting with 15 young cattlemen, and a top regional bull on loan from a rancher, Schneider set out to prove a basic tenet of cattle ranching: quality bulls equal quality herds.

"Most cattlemen at the time were weaning off calves in the 300 pound range," George said. "When they saw that the club was producing weaning weights of five- to six-hundred pounds under the very same range conditions, well, no more cull bulls were sold around here."

For George, one gauge of the steady passing of time is in the children who once made up the

children who once made up the Rockin' 4-H Club. Many former club members, who George first encountered as eight-year-olds, are grown with families. But, George says, he still remembered them as the rambunctious youngsters who helped feed, vaccinate and brand the club's herd in the early years.

Gardening, both for landscape and fruits and vegetables, has always been a favorite pastime for George. He feels that the cultivation of plants and vegetables is therapeutic. He recalls he recently was assigned a number of workers through the summer work program. With no specific duties for the youngsters to perform, it would have been easy to simply put them to work pulling weeds and hauling garbage. Instead, George explained landscape design to them, then let the youngsters create their own landscape plan in his yard.

"For months afterward," George said, "they came back to weed and water the plot, and they asked about it for much longer. They took pride in their work."

As usual, George's thinking was focused on the long-term benefits to the youth of the Reservation—just as it had been for the past 40 years.

Profile: Rita and Earl Squiemphen

She is a tribal leader, a retired member of Tribal Council. He is a retired sawyer at the small log mill. She is a mother, a grandmother, and through her years on Tribal Council, a champion of those in need. He is a father, grandfather, cattleman and farmer. Together, Earl and Rita Squiemphen are the architects of an enduring marriage that has lasted more than 45 years.

They met at the Wasco County Fair in Tygh Valley in 1947. On that hot summer day, so long ago, they were locked in dusty battle on the race track. Rita was riding race horses for her Aunt Lena Picard and her father, Alfred Smith, Sr. Earl was riding for Thomas David and William McBride.

She was a member of the Wasco Tribe living on a ranch at Sidwalter. He was a member of the Warm Springs Tribe living on a farm at Miller Flat. In those days, almost half a century ago, tribal lines were drawn more tightly and it was uncommon for someone from one tribe to marry someone from another tribe. However, on December 21, 1950, a little more than three years after meeting in Tygh Valley, they were married in the Presbyterian Church at Warm Springs.

Both Earl and Rita were raised in families that spoke their respective language. Earl still speaks Sahaptin while Rita says she understands Wasco better than she speaks it.

Both remember their fathers traveling to Celilo for fish. "Dad used to go down to the river to fish. Mom would trade her beadwork for dried salmon," Rita remembers. Earl's dad, Sammy, was from Celilo, so he, too, was a fisherman. Remembering the Root Feast and Huckleberry Feast, Rita says, "The children had to stay home....only the adults went. The same way with funerals....only the adults were allowed to go. That was the traditional Wasco way. Earl remembers the two feasts as being the big events of the year in his family. The Tribe furnished nothing for the celebrations, that responsibility was left up to the people. "My dad used to take the stock over for the rodeo. He provided wild horses, cows...he even furnished the hay," Rita says.

The newlyweds moved in with Rita's folks at Sidwalter on the ranch. Earl worked at Dahl Pine, a logging operation owned by Phil Dahl of Sisters, Oregon. "I started out as manual laborer, learned all the other jobs and by the time I left, I was sawing," Earl reflected. "I spent twelve years at Dahl Pine, two years at Titeknot in Redmond, and finally got on at Warm Springs Forest Products in 1970." Twenty-five years later he retired as the sawyer at the small log mill.

For the first 15 years of marriage, Rita stayed home raising their family of five girls and one boy. In 1965, Rita went to work at the Agency. She worked part-time at the Post Office and part-time in Macy's store. In 1970 she was elected to Tribal Council. This was the beginning of a political career that would span more than 25 years, 18 on Tribal Council.

Things were busy enough in the Squiemphen household with Earl working at the mill and Rita on Tribal Council. But things were about to get busier in 1973! That's the year that daughter C.R., a 7th grader, picked up a rope and said, "I'm going to learn to rope." That simple proclamation started a chain of events that would change the Squiemphen household forever.

Earl remembers saying, "Well, we'd better buy some steers." CR was on her way. "We spent our last dollar to buy her a horse so she would have a good horse to ride," Rita remarked. "Yeah, we bought a diesel pickup because she just had to have one to haul her horse," Earl reminisced. Before the dust settled, the entire Squiemphen clan was into rodeo. Daughters Valerie, Priscilla, Sammi, Earlynne, and CR all barrel raced and Priscilla, Sammi and CR team roped and break-away roped, too. Brother Terry rode saddle broncs, team roped, and wildhorse raced. Larry Squiemphen, Jr., a nephew that Earl and Rita raised from age 11 until he graduated from high school, rode bulls.

The kids competed in high school and college rodeos, and eventually the Western States Indian Rodeo Association. With the family traveling to

rodeos and spending lots of time in the practice arena, Earl decided he might as well join them. He started team roping and wild cow milking.

Considering their heritage, this was a natural progression for the family. Both Rita and Earl came from farming and ranching backgrounds. They spent much of their early life on the back of a horse. "I remember when we were real young, my mother wouldn't let us use saddles....she said we would have to learn to ride...so if we fell off we couldn't get hung up in the stirrups," Rita recalled.

The family enjoyed remarkable success. In 1977, Priscilla won the barrel racing at the Crow Fair in Montana. Percy had to beat over 60 barrel racers to ride away with the buckle. C.R. is the only female to ever win the All-Around Championship title at the All Indian Pi-Ume-Sha Rodeo. In the early 1980s she and her dad won the team roping, she placed third in team roping with Anson Begay (who would later become her husband) and finished second in barrel racing. In 1983, C.R. and her brother Terry qualified for the All-Indian National Finals Rodeo in Albuquerque, New Mexico. C.R. qualified in barrel racing and Terry in saddle bronc riding. C.R. made five trips to the All-Indian National Finals.

Sammi finished fourth in break-away roping in the Northwest Region the only year she competed in college. She also finished third in break-away roping in the Western States All-Indian Rodeo Association in 1995. A few years earlier Sammi was named Queen of the Tygh Valley All Indian Rodeo and also Queen of the Christmas Holiday Tournament in Warm Springs.

Earlynne was another tough competitor. She won the Barrel Racing event at the Root Feast Rodeo. She says, "I was never so excited." Earlynne also won the Queens contest at the Tygh Valley All Indian Rodeo, was Queen of the Warm Springs Christmas Holiday Tournament, and was a Princess of the Jefferson County Rodeo Court.

Kids and rodeo have played a big part in Earl's and Rita's lives. But they have other interests too. On occasion, they have been in the horse racing business. Their horses have raced in Portland, Salem, Grants Pass and Yakima, Washington. For Earl there is farming and cattle. For Rita, now that she has retired from Tribal Council, there is the timber committee, as well as being on the Warm Springs Forest Products Board of Directors.

As mentioned earlier, Rita served 18 years on the Tribal Council as a member from the Agency district. She was first elected in 1970 and served three terms. After a break of six years she was re-elected and served three more terms. Many momentous votes were cast in Council chambers from 1970 to 1995. When asked what she is most proud of in all her time on Tribal Council, Rita recalls when Jerry Dibble was an engineer working with the Tribe. "Jerry talked about putting a turbine in at the reregulating dam for the purpose of generating electricity that the Tribe could sell. He talked about it for a long time and we couldn't get anyone to budge. I finally made the motion to start the little dam....and that's what I'm most proud of." Since coming on line in 1982, the hydro-project has returned in excess of \$30 million to the general fund. Rita takes pride in the passing of the 'Rainy Day Fund'. "We set aside \$10 million, and also dedicated 10% of any excess to be put in the Rainy Day Fund." When asked who she respected during her long tenure on Tribal Council, Rita responded, "Zane Jackson....I had a lot of respect for Harold Culpus, too. I would also have to mention Nelson Wallulatum and especially Ken Smith."

The way Earl and Rita raised their children could serve as a blueprint for parents of all children. "We had a rule at our house," Rita explained, "The kids had to finish high school....that was mandatory. Then they either had to go to college, or if not, they had to go to work." Daughter Valerie mentions that her parents both obtained their GEDs and have never stopped trying to learn. "I'm very proud of that," Valerie says. "When I was in college, my dad used to borrow my math and accounting textbooks to study."

The Squiemphen family is a close knit family. Earl remembers having the horses loaded in the trailer waiting outside during high school graduation. At the conclusion of graduation, the whole family was headed south to the Klamath Falls. "When everyone else was going out into the country to party with the senior class, our kids were ready to go rodeo." Rita says that when children are in school, their parents need to support them. "If they play any

sports, the parents need to be there. The kids are proud to see their parents there. I spent so much time on the road going to football, volleyball, or basketball games....I used to go with Mrs. Elston."

Speaking of her parents, Earlynne Graybael remembers, "You could always count on them to be there at any activity you participated in." She went on to mention their support at rodeos. "They would be there watching, helping us as we got set to run barrels or rope. If it wasn't for our brother, none of us would be rodeoing."

Earlynne tells of two instances where the love of a grandmother is touchingly revealed. "My son Dann needed a kidney transplant in 1991, and I donated one of mine. My family was there supporting us during this time of need. But my mother stayed around the longest, even her Council duties were set aside, just to make sure we were all right after surgery." When her daughter was five years old she needed heart surgery. "I took off two weeks from work for the surgery, and my mother was also there from start to finish. During this time Mom was complimented on how young she looked because the nurses thought she brought her daughter in for surgery. She told them, 'no....this is my Granddaughter.' Now if this isn't a Mother and Grandmother who cares for her family, I don't know what is."

As to advice for raising their own children, Rita says, "One of the things that I talk to my children about....if you are going to discipline your children, make sure that you and your husband agree before you discipline them. That way they can't go back and forth between parents." Rita goes on to say, "Always keep your children busy."

Earl and Rita kept their children busy. Those children are now grown and busy raising and rodeoing with their own children. As for Great Grandma and Great Grandpa Squiemphen? They do a little baby sitting, a little farming, a little traveling, a little rodeoing, and still find time to visit Indian Head Casino from time to time. They set an example on raising children, on serving the Tribe in public life, on being employed even if it meant leaving the reservation to do it, and on staying married for a lifetime. If they weren't so busy in retirement, they would probably set an example on how to retire. You don't suppose they found the answer to that, too, do you?



Earl and Rita Squiemphen at their ranch in Sidwalter.