

SMOKE SIGNALS

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SPECIAL EDITION



Beauty And Intrigue — Harriet Lindsay, a Rogue River Indian and the recognized wife of General Phil Sheridan, was a member of high society in Grand Ronde in the late 19th century.

The Mystery of Harriet Lindsay

■ The story of a Civil War general, an Indian girl and the Reservation at Grand Ronde.

By Ron Karten

At the Riverview Cemetery in Portland — Section 14, Lot 324, in spaces four and three — lie Harriet Lindsey and Edith Marian Fedder, Harriet's daughter. Records indicate that Fedder died at the age of 52 in 1929 in Portland; and that Harriet died at the age of 94 in 1933 in Grand Ronde. Stones mark the graves purchased by Edward M. Fedder, husband of Marian, in 1929.

Today, Harriet remains a footnote to 19th Century America, the stuff of fading memories, but the story of this Indian girl's relationship with the man who would become one of the most successful generals in U.S. history still stirs the local imagination here in Grand Ronde.

Maybe the remark of Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Darrell Mercier, 74, who was three-to-five years old when Harriet passed her last years in Grand Ronde, spoke for the com-

munity when he said, "It was just a dream to me."

The story of this woman, Indian by birth, white by the society she lived in, also shows one product of a vanquishing army attempting on some levels to be civilized in the Grand Ronde of the troubled 19th Century.

Harriet's story sparked interest years later across social and political lines.

Pioneer women recalled a young girl very much like Harriet when they gathered to socialize half a century later. Historical fiction writers of the time included a portrait

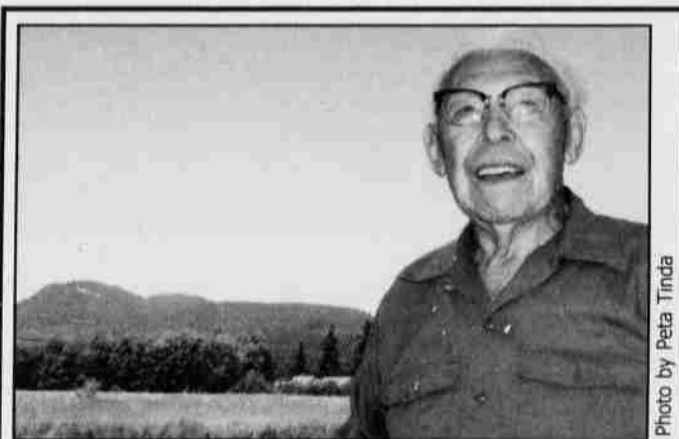


Photo by Peta Tinda

Our Wisdom Comes From Our Elders — In the oral tradition of our ancestors, Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Hubert Mercier, 94, is old enough to remember the legends of Harriet Lindsay and contributed his memories of her to this story.

of a character that seems to be Harriet. Even Oregon Governor Oswald West, who used to camp at David Leno's place in the 1890s, was taken with the story. In correspondence supplied by Sheridan

historian Dick Jordan, the former governor said that "Sheridan did not marry the gal — just had her for a reservation mate."

Harriet, a Rogue River Indian of Chief George's Band, according to source material from the National Archives, has been variously described as the common law wife or Indian wife of Civil War General Philip Sheridan. He kept her during his years as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army stationed at Fort Yamhill in Grand Ronde and Fort Hoskins in rural Benton County. He left her in 1861 when he was called east to help fight the Civil War.

In Grand Ronde, Lindsay is both a fading memory, and yet very much alive in bits and pieces of the historical records and in the memories of Tribal Elders here, very much a celebrity who returned to the community to die.

She was described by Martha E. Gilliam Collins in *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, the magazine of the