

Elder's Feature

A Family Love Story Wrapped In A Haircut, A Square Dance And Eighteen Holes of Golf

HUDSON continued from front page

somewhere for an appointment. He's always visiting Elders or Tribal members in the hospital, at rest homes or wherever."

Herman K. Hudson is the son of Herman A. and Ella Hudson. To some, he will always be Junior, but "most still call me Herman," he said. He was born in Grand Ronde, but "I grew up, you might say, at Chemawa (the Indian School in Salem)." He lived there for many years while his dad worked there — "as a bus driver, a truck driver, everything for them" — but children of employees were not eligible to attend the school. So he went to school in Keizer and Salem until his junior year at Salem's North High School, when he joined the Navy.

"It was during the war, you know, and that was what you did, I guess," he said. "My uncles that I was closest to went into the service, so I did, too."

But he remembers his time at Chemawa with the most fondness. "I knew lots of people and you don't have time for all the things I'd get in trouble for."

"When I was small, going to the hop yards was fun. It was a big thing for the Indians of Grand Ronde. You'd pick hops, play and get in trouble."

"My grandpa, Tribal Elder Abe Hudson, since passed on, was always the field boss, and he used me for an example. He'd tell me

come bedtime, his sisters were the bosses of the tents because the parents didn't stay there. And he wasn't crazy about their bossing techniques.

And then there were the visits to Grand Ronde from Chemawa. "Up until I went in the service," he said, "we'd come back and forth to Grand Ronde (visiting relatives). It was a major thing. Sometimes it took half a day. Sometimes, we wouldn't even get here. Maybe we'd have a couple flats. Maybe the radiator would boil over."

"I remember little things at home," said his younger sister, Tribal Elder Gloria Hudson, "like the Sunday meals and community hall meetings and we'd have dances and all the little children around. Just that we were family-wise and everything was really neat."

"I remember eating dinner and my dad went to take a bite of chicken, and there was a bee on it, and it stung him on the lips, and his lips swole up. We still laugh about that."

The Navy took her brother to the South Pacific, 1942-45, where he said he was on "the deck force." He scrubbed decks.

In the service, he also learned to cut hair. The ship's regular barber was shipping out, so he taught Hudson to cut hair and the Navy was a good proving ground. "Out in the South Pacific," he said, "they didn't care much about how their hair looked."

"Pretty soon," he said, "I got to be a pretty good barber."

At the time, his ship was escorting fleet oilers. "We'd tie up alongside that oiler, and I took my (hair cutting) box out and put a can out if they wanted to throw something in."

"The thing that I most remember when we lived at Chemawa," said his younger sister, Gloria, "he was in the Navy. I remember when he came home, it was wonderful for me because when he went in I was in first grade or so. I remember how proud and happy I was when I had my picture taken

with him in his sailor suit." For many of the years since, Hudson made a living at cutting hair, and he did it in many places, from Colorado to Coos Bay and Yoncalla in Oregon to Puyallup, Washington.



Generations — Tribal Elder Herman K. holds his oldest son, Tim and on the right is Tribal Elder Abe Hudson, and Herman's dad, Herman A. Hudson, both passed on.

After the service, his dad, who has walked on, was logging in Yoncalla and Drain, not too far off the Umpqua River, "and that's where I went," Hudson said.

He worked in the woods, he worked at sawmills, "wherever I could get a job," he said. "I worked out in the brush on a rigging crew. A lot of the time I was chasing landing, unhooking chokers, bucking logs. I was never on a cutting crew, but I probably cut as much in the woods."

"Logging was good money," he said, "but you were always broke down, or there was a shortage of box cars. You were always laid off for something."

That's also where he met his wife, Joyce Miller. "She was going to school with my sister."

"He married my best friend," said sister Gloria. "I thought that was so neat that my brother was going with Joyce, but then I didn't think it was so great because she didn't want to spend time with me anymore."

When Joyce was very young, four or five, said Hudson, she was adopted by a Depression-era family that left her with severe malnutrition. "It was tough times in the early 30s for her and her brother. She had a couple strikes against her before she got into a good family," said Hudson.

In 1950, Oregon Veterans got a bonus, and Hudson told his wife that he wanted to use the money to go to barber school, "and that's what I did. Her folks and my dad helped me when they could and in six months, I was a barber. That's when I went to Coos Bay. I worked in one chair for ten years," he said.

The couple was in Coos Bay in 1954 when Termination came.

But after Termination, there was not much to hang on to in Oregon, and the Hudsons headed to Colorado where Joyce's family

lived, and stayed for "more than 20 years, off and on."

"I took off from hair cutting and went to work for three years helping drill the Ruedi Reservoir." It sits along the Frying Pan River. "It was a good job and good money."

With some money in his pocket, he built his own barber shop in a little Colorado town called Carbondale.

"The funniest memory I have of my dad is when we went to Grand Junction (Colorado) and went into a store," said son Tim Hudson. "My dad saw this lady carrying two bags of groceries in her arms. He ran up to her and said, 'Let me help you.' He went for the door, didn't realize it was open already, and he kept going out into the parking lot."

It was 1980 before he returned to the Northwest, this time to Puyallup, Washington. It was five hours from Joyce's mom in Yoncalla,



in southern Oregon. It also was nearby the Hudsons' daughter, Kathryn, who lived in Puyallup. In time, the Hudsons bought a barbershop there and ended up staying for 17 years.

Joyce worked at the post office nearby to make sure the family had benefits and kept at it for all the time they were in Puyallup. She finally had to take early retirement because of her health. And she did not have an easy time of it.

"I know she found her peace with God," said son Steve, "because I found her Bible in the RV (after she died), and her bookmark was in the Book of Jobe."

But with Joyce's health failing, "we bought a motor home and went on the road," said Hudson. "She worked hard all her life and only had a few years of retirement. Damn it."

After two years traveling, Joyce passed on and Hudson counted the months on his fingers. "Four more months and we would have had 50 years together."

Hudson lost his wife in 1998. And then came back to Grand Ronde.

His children remember emphatically how their dad took care of their mom in her last years.

"I think the thing I find to be the true proof of what Dad is made of is when Mom started getting sick," wrote Kathryn. "For the many years that her health was deteriorating, he was nothing but nurturing, attentive and completely devoted to her care. I am sure there were many hours of frustration for him, but I know he never showed it to her or to us. He was always there for her no matter what. Mom and Dad were never much for organized religion but I think they both, especially Dad during that time and since her death, are the true examples of giving and caring and what a true Christian spirit is about. Dad is always there to help someone. I have seen his gentle soul have

a calming effect on children, animals and adults. I can only hope that if I ever become as ill as my mother was for as many years as she struggled that I will have someone at my side that is as devoted as he was to her."

"The main thing that sticks out in my head about my dad is the way he took care of my mom," said Tim. "He took the best care of her and showed me the true meaning of love and caring that will stick with me the rest of my life."

"I admire him more than anybody in my life because of the way he took care of her when she was sick," said Tribal member Steve Hudson, the Hudsons' youngest child.

"We used to say, 'If big hearts and true love get you into heaven, then they'll be together again.'"

Hudson continues to make the most of that motor home and the memories it holds. He takes it each winter to Yuma, Arizona, where spends his time playing golf and square dancing, exactly what he does up here the rest of the year.

"Every time he sees you, Herman makes you feel like you're the most special person," said his cousin, Eleanor Anders of Eugene. "He's got that ability to make you feel very very special. He just loves life to the fullest. He's a good good man."

"As my grandfather Abraham Hudson, used to say, he had 'a sterling character.'"

Steve had a special lesson from his father:

"He followed my music career," said Steve. "He was probably the biggest supporter of my music. He would always be reading the paper to see what bands were doing, and one day he told me, 'Son you've got to find out who these guys' agents are. This one band, Ka-roki, is playing everywhere.' That's how he pronounced it: Ka-roki."

"Through all my problems, self-induced and otherwise (see *Smoke Signals*, 4/1/02 issue), he was always supportive of me. He loved me when I didn't love myself."

"As in all families," wrote Kathryn by email, "there were rocky times and good times, but I somehow always felt that Mom and Dad were doing the best they could at all times and no matter what we did or what circumstances were surrounding us, there was never one moment of doubt that we were completely loved and cared for."

"He also taught me that it's ok to show some affection," said Steve, "and it's ok to hug. He's the most hugginist Indian I ever knew. When he would come in the room, (Tribal Elder) Val Grout would stand up and say, 'I may as well get this (hug) over with.'"

In the last week in February, Hudson heads for Sun City in the Phoenix area to watch the Seattle Mariners and the San Diego Padres warm up for the coming baseball season.

"I like that hot weather," he said.

Now back in Grand Ronde, Hudson plays golf with any number of friends, but frequently with Tribal Elder Leonard Langley. Langley tells the story: "It was at Battle Creek (golf course), on the third hole, where there's a big tree with a hole in it on the right side of the fairway. I told Herman, 'Go ahead and hit, just aim for that big tree, you won't hit it.' And he hit it and it went right in that hole."



Herman K. and his beloved wife, Joyce

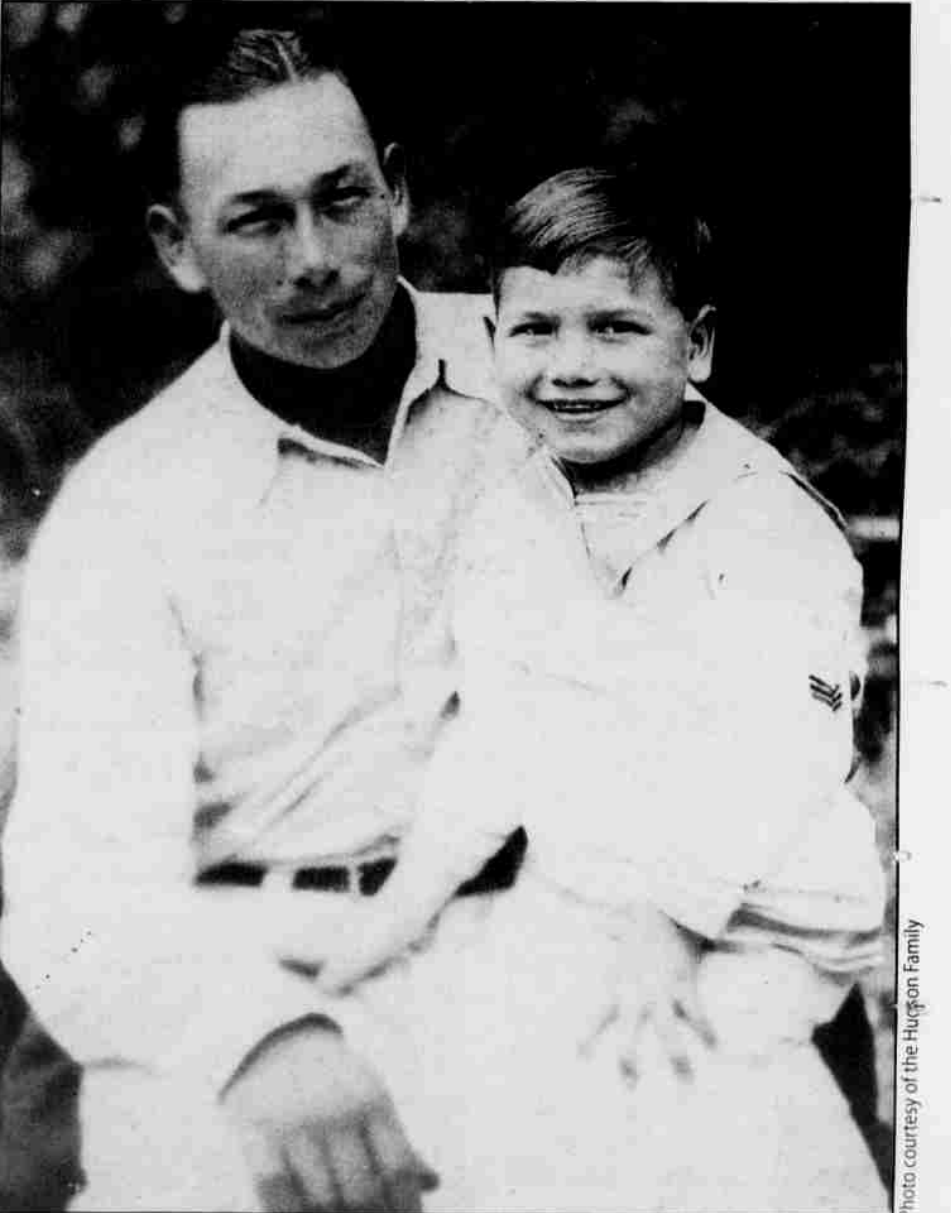
"When he messes up (on the course), he says, 'I don't know why I play this game.' Then he does good and he's happy again."

For many years, Herman and Joyce were a long way from family and friends in Grand Ronde. Today, he is back.

"His dad coached my dad in baseball," said Langley, "but I didn't even know Herman until he came to the Elder's place. He's a wonderful guy. Never a mean thing to say

about anybody." Today, Herman is living in Elder Housing, a few houses down from his sister, Gloria, who lived much of her life in La Grande, Oregon.

"We go to lunch together most of the time," she said. "We do a lot together. We're going to the rodeo together. We started out together," and it was with mostly joy and maybe a little sorrow that she added, "and now we're going to end our lives together." ■



Herman K. as a boy with his father, Herman A. Hudson.



He Makes It Look Easy — Tribal Elder Herman K. Hudson enjoys a good golf game. Here at the Cross Creek Golf Club on Highway 22, he shows his great form at age 81.

to put the bags down and pick the leaves out. He said I was 'a dirty picker.'"

The kids stayed in tents during the picking season, and from the time we quit picking until bedtime was "time to fool around." But

Photo by Toby McClary

Photo courtesy of the Hudson Family

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