

Tribal Elder Feature

Peachie Fondly Recalls Father's Love

PEACHIE continued from front page

Some were not loggers, and they had a rough time of it."

Her father, Tribal Elder Ernie Petite (Chinook and Klickitat) was not only a logger, but when he came home, he was a toymaker, too. He also took the children along on his adventures.

"I always enjoyed going up in the woods with my dad," Peachie says. "He'd cut logs for everybody in town and sell it to them. I'd play around and throw wood in the truck. I'd help him load it. I was quite a tomboy."

"We'd go fishing. I played mostly. He'd holler at me for throwing things in the water and scaring the fish."

"We'd get crawdads. Dad had a kind of a net that he made. I love crawdads. They're little but, oh, they're good."

"He had a horse. He used to take that horse with (Tribal Elder) Gus Leno, and they'd take only dried deer meat and biscuits and go hunting on horseback. He always had a flask of whiskey and he always came home with deer. He made

a thing to go behind the horses to carry the deer. And he'd take vinegar to keep the flies off the deer."

"We always had enough to eat." Even today, Peachie says, the only foods she really likes are the ones her father used to bring home for the family.

"We had our own cows, chickens and garden, and mother always canned fruit from a couple of apple trees we had on the place."

"My dad was well-known by other Tribes," she adds, "and they used to invite him to clambakes, to salmon-bakes. I had blond hair and light eyes, and was always fascinated by those in other Tribes."

"I'd go with him to their long-houses and they'd give him gifts."

"When he died, they came from all over and filled the church to overflow."

"Life was simple, not like now. The family wasn't materialistic. We didn't have candy. Dad would bring home a big bag of fruit."

Peachie's father made things rather than bought them. "He was a whittler, and at Christmas, he made us toy trucks and Indian dolls

of wood," she recalls.

"I got into high school before I noticed how other people lived. And that was not always good."

She also remembers prejudice. "White people said we were heathens, devil worshippers, but it was not true. The Great Spirit is the same as God," she says.

"I can remember going through Salem (in the 1950s) when the city still had a statue with a sign on it warning minorities to be in our homes by sunset. The police stopped me and sent me home. A few years later, they got rid of that statue."

The Petite family avoided prejudice by keeping their culture to themselves. "We didn't tell about the cultural things, the sweat lodge on the river. ... You never told about praying and drumming, the boys playing guitar and burning cedar. The eagle was a very special bird to us, especially the feathers. Our belief in the Great Spirit brought us closer together as a family."

Her memories of childhood, though, center on the toys and attention that her father showered on her and the other siblings.

"I had a very happy childhood," Peachie says. "Dad taught us all to shoot a gun. He was very respectful of guns. I used to shoot at bottles. I'd line them up and I got pretty good. I had a dollhouse. It was an old shed as big as this room."

"We had a deer that was a pet. The neighbors shot the mother so we brought the fawn over. Dad made a sled for me and the deer pulled me around the yard."

"When I was real young, we used to go up to Spirit Mountain. I remember a big circle of round rocks, and there used to be beading stuff in the center. There used to be seven graves up there."

"One time, I got a whipping for going up by myself. It was dangerous with wild animals around, but something almost drew me to the mountain."

She remembers that "it was always a surprise when my brother, Raymond, came home on leave."

Her brother was in the Battle of the Bulge, received two Purple Hearts for his service and also was highly decorated by the French.

"When he came home, it was like a big celebration," Peachie recalls. "We'd really have a good time. Mom would fix a big dinner."

In the summers, the family picked hops together. Peachie was young then. "I just played around," she said. But after she married and had children, when the family later moved to Falls City, they'd still pick hops "to make a little money for school clothes."

Peachie went to school at St.



Peachie and great-granddaughter Hannah McCallister during the 2005 Contest Pow-wow.

Michael's through the eighth grade, started junior high in Willamina and finished high school in Salem. For a time, until the children came, she sang in a band at bars on weekends. "You couldn't do it once you had kids," she says.

Friends and relatives remember the good things, the commonplace things of growing up.

She learned to drive in the fields where she took the family car to practice, says Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte.

"We lived next to her and she used to baby-sit for us," says cousin and Tribal Elder Cherie Butler. "She'd tell us stories and play hide



Peachie and brothers Gene (middle) and Melvin Petite in Grand Ronde.

and seek."

Peachie married Maurice Gene Schultz when she was 17 and had her first son, Guy, a year later. "I was so young that I grew up with my kids," she says. "I had a beautiful life and I would do it all again."

Schultz, the father of all her children, worked at the mill at Valseltz, but the mill town was too isolated for Peachie.

"Then he hurt his back at the mill and things got rough for a few years," she recalls. "In 1979, a blood clot by his heart killed him, though he lived with it for eight years."

In 1982, she married her second husband, Richard Hamm.

Peachie filled in as a bartender, working for 10 years in Falls City. "At that time, it was a nice place to raise kids," she says.

Over the years, her children Guy, Melvin, Julie, Khani, Kevin and Shelly have been her pleasure. Today, add to them eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren as sources of pride.

"My life had an empty spot," Peachie says, "until Shelly came home from New York after 22 years."

"I get so mad now," she adds. "I want to do things with my kids but my body won't let me."

While in Falls City, her boys all played football. "Guy and Melvin got honors," she says. "They were all-stars. All my boys and grandsons played football. Khani was in basketball and got her nose broke. Julie went to the University of Oregon for gymnastics."

"I'm real proud of my grandsons," she says. "Melvin's son, Tribal member Tyler Schultz, just graduated from the University of Oregon. Kevin's son just graduated from South Salem and got a two-year scholarship in music." He plays jazz guitar and trumpet.

"Julie's boy, Ryan, came back from Iraq a year ago. He was in Special Forces, the Army Cavalry Unit in communications. Tribal member Ryan has worked at Spirit Mountain Casino and now works for Evergreen Aviation in McMinnville."

"Khani's boy Kyle works for the Tribe in the summer," Peachie says, "and will graduate from Willamina High School in a few years."

The family members, the accomplishments, the pride all seem endless.

"I always taught



Peachie and family, Christmas 2006

my kids that your word is the person you are," she says. "If you tell somebody you'll be there at a certain time, be there and don't make excuses."

"Don't lie," she adds. "Everything (bad) comes after that. 'My boys are big, but I told them, 'Don't be a bully but don't be afraid to stand up for yourself.'"

"You don't have to prove yourself to people. The Creator knows who you are."

"Life isn't a bowl of roses. There's a lot of heartache in life, but you go on. Life is what you make it. I truly believe that."

"That was what my dad always taught us."

The family returned to Salem where Peachie enrolled in public school and for five years after, ending in 1982, she worked as an orthopedic nurse for Salem Memorial Hospital. Then, for 10 years, she worked as a counselor at Chemawa Indian School.

Through it all, culture has always played a big part in the Schultz and Hamm family lives. Peachie has danced in every pow-wow the Tribe has held.

But, until recently, it was tough to be Indian.

"People would say that Grand Ronde has no culture," she says. "Well, maybe it wasn't in their homes. (For many), if they could pass for white, they would. My aunt did that. My father got mad," Peachie remembers. "He told (my aunt), 'We've got the same blood, but you choose not to live like it. I'll never put foot in this house again,' and he never did."

"Many Elders have lived among whites so long that they've started to think like them," she says. "The

key is to live among them and still keep your culture."

"The ones really interested in our culture kept pursuing it. You couldn't deny it to them."

For Peachie, the things of culture ran in the family.

"We come from the line of Tulelah, a real powerful medicine man," she says.

Peachie's grandmother, Tribal Elder Susie LaBonte, was a seer, she says. "She used to go to peoples' homes when they weren't feeling good and work with herbs."

"When I was little, there was a medicine woman, a relative of my

father, who lived in the mountains, and in winter, she came down in the evenings. Dad built her a bed in the shed because she wouldn't come in the house. And she always left early before anyone got up. She was a Chinook medicine woman."

Tribal member and Peachie's great-granddaughter, 6-year-old Hannah McCallister, has been calling Peachie "Gamma Angel" since she could talk. One time, Peachie asked her why. She said, "Gamma, when you drive up in the car, I see angels in the car with you."

"I think she's psychic," Peachie says. ■



Sister Lavonne, Peachie and granddaughter Angella McCallister



Deceased Tribal Elder Ethel Countryman Petite and Peachie