

Dottie attended Chemawa Indian School in 1936

ELDER FEATURE
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"My dad was very strict," she says.

Former Tribal Elder Alexander Gus LaBonte — an Army veteran and lifelong logger; a longtime tree topper who moved his family time and again to stay close to his work — could be pretty tough when it came to boys wanting to entertain his daughters.

And the boys knew it.

Joe LaBonte and Tommy Dowd, both Tribal members, tried to teach Dottie how to drive one time. "I was having trouble with Tommy," says Dottie. "He kept putting his arms around my neck and kissing me on the cheek."

"If her dad ever catches you," warned Dottie's cousin, Joe LaBonte.

Dottie draws a picture of her dad as a man with a temper who was strict in almost every way and wrong "about three-quarters of the time."

Still, she says, she has always loved him and that there was plenty to admire about him.

"I've always realized one thing," she says. "There's not anybody perfect but the Lord, our Savior."

Her mother, Edna Katherine Miller LaBonte, used to say, "No matter who it is, there's a little good in there someplace."

Her dad was strict in his way, and her mom was strict in hers.

"She took me to church all the time. If the snow was six feet deep, she didn't care. I'd cry, but she'd say, 'You better straighten up. You're going anyway.'"

For all that, Dottie remembers a childhood filled with adventures, often pride in her parents and always wanting to please them. She said her father always worked hard, and remembers her mother at their home by Salt Creek, where the bottom of the house was wood and the top a tent.

"Mother kept her floors looking almost like glass. I can still see her on her knees ... not like her daughter here," she laughs at her own housekeeping skills.

Her father was a great hunter, she says, often going out with Tribal Elder Dean Mercier's father, Arthur, also a member of the Tribe. Together, they brought back deer, elk, pheasant, grouse and ducks. All of them were improved by her mother's skills in the kitchen.

Edna came from Irish and Pennsylvania Dutch families and turned the spoils into stews and soups, along with breads and cinnamon rolls and pies that Dottie loved then and still loves today.

She grew up with two younger brothers, Tribal Elders Eugene Russell LaBonte and Victor Byron LaBonte, both now living in Sheridan, and two younger sisters, former Tribal Elders Sylvia Eva Fuller and Janet Ruth (Mickey) Fogel, both who have walked on.

They always looked sharp in clothes their mother often made,



Photo courtesy of Cultural Resources Department
Tribal Elder Dorothy Greene displays the first basket she ever made during a basket making class at the Cultural Resources Department a few years ago.

washed and starched when they went out the door, but not always so clean and crisp on the way back in.

During her one year (her seventh grade) at the Pleasantdale School in Dayton, Dottie fell for a boy, David Dorsey, who she describes as having black hair and dark blue eyes.

"Mother had bought me a red crepe dress," says Dottie. David sat behind her at one of those desks

with the hole for the ink bottle, which in those days really held ink.

"He was teasing me with the pen, and the ink came out all over my dress."

To avoid having to show her mother what happened to the dress, Dottie hid in the hay mount for two days, she says.

At other times, at the Cloverleaf School on Hebo Road in Grand Ronde, the kids played, "Crack the whip" in the school yard. Dottie often was "the end of the whip," she recalls.

Her principal friends, though, for many early years were her brothers and sisters.

Like so many in Grand Ronde, Dottie's teacher at Cloverleaf was Tribal Elder Eula Hudson,

put on a pan of water. She asked me if I wanted to help pluck the chicken. I started doing that when I was 6 years old, and I was good at getting the feathers off. That day, my mother had sent over a loaf of bread, so we had that, too."

It was Eula who presented Dottie with her eighth-grade diploma.

Dottie was born in the house of her grandmother, Tribal Elder Caroline LaBonte Jeffries. To this day, she has a black-and-white photograph on her wall of Jeffries feeding chickens.

Jeffries was her father's mom, on the same genetic line as Dottie's great-great-great-grandfather Louis LaBonte, "the first to shake hands with Lewis and Clark."

As Dottie remembers it, Grand Ronde was a rough town in those days and her grandmother advised her parents to send Dottie to Chemawa Indian School for high school.

"You don't want to have your daughter stay around Grand Ronde," Jeffries had said. Things were too wild here, I guess," says Dottie.

And so it was that in the eighth grade, the family sent Dottie to Chemawa Indian School in Salem.

The Chemawa years, 1936-1940, were "very good" in Dottie's memory.

"I learned how to cook there. Mom and dad would not let us cook. They didn't want to take the chance that we'd ruin something."

She also learned sewing, she says, and home economics. She remembers building a frame and putting a photograph of crooner Bing Crosby in it.

With the skills she learned at Chemawa, she found work as a housekeeper and cook at a succession of homes in Oregon and beyond.

In 1942, she married a man who would later become a character actor in the movies. Chief Reid

with Eula's sister, Ila Dowd, also a Tribal Elder, substituting from time to time. "Both were very good teachers," says Dottie.

She remembers one day in particular, when "Eula was wondering what we would have for lunch. About that time, a big truck came by and it killed a chicken crossing the road."

"Kids," said Eula, 'we're gonna have chicken soup for lunch.' There was a small burner in the room. She



Photo courtesy of Dorothy Greene
Tribal Elder Dorothy Greene, right, with her daughter, Tribal member Shelley Greene Bertolucci, left, granddaughter, Tribal member Heather Rasmussen, middle, and great-granddaughter, Tribal descendant Holly Rasmussen, on Heather's lap, during Christmas a few years ago.

Sharkey David, a Klamath Indian, appeared in 45 movies, she says, including "Canyon Passage" with Dana Andrews and Susan Hayward. In the movie "Sundown," filmed at Crater Lake, Reid jumped off a horse 27 times.

They lived on the Klamath Reservation and their daughter, Ilene Aloma David, was soon born. The night before she was born, Reid and Dottie watched the movie, "Aloma of the South Seas."

They traveled together for Reid's film work. Day to day, though, he paid the bills as an orderly at the Klamath Agency Hospital.

Her daughter was born there but not before hospital staff had bounced Dottie off the gurney once; and Reid had gotten his head stuck in a window once; and during the birth, Reid had fainted; and afterwards, the baby had gone for a few harrowing moments to the wrong mother.

"I spent 10 full days in the hospital," says Dottie.

She remembers Ilene at 4 years old: "She had the most beautiful black curls on her. And those brown eyes. She could have been in the movies."

The year the marriage ended, Reid took Dottie for dinner with actor Anthony Quinn.

The marriage lasted only seven years, but the two were always in touch, always friendly, and when doctors said Ilene needed a warmer climate, Reid gladly raised Ilene for five years in the warmer city of Santa Monica, Calif.

Dottie married Ray Lloyd Greene in 1950, but Ray "hated Oregon weather." After a short stay in The Dalles, the couple moved to Bakersfield, Calif.

They arrived in Bakersfield, she says, with a minimal stake. She had seven quarts of fruit that she sold for \$1 each, and he had \$3 in his pocket. It lasted them through 41 years of marriage.

She remembers riding after work in their 1948 yellow-and-white Mercury convertible with the top down.

"It was nice and warm," she says.

And she remembers that "he made the best leg of lamb you ever had in your life," and that "everybody in his family was a natural musician." There wasn't anything Ray couldn't play on a guitar or a piano. "He played by ear," says Dottie. "He mostly played church hymns because that's the way he was brought up."

Ray supplemented their stake as a mechanic and Dottie did her part as a housekeeper and nurses' aide for some 30 years in two local hospitals: Moss Gardens and Mercy Hospital's convalescent section.

Together, they had a daughter, Tribal member Shelley Greene Bertolucci, now of Bakersfield. They lost boy/girl twins before birth.

Shelley gave Dottie two grand-children, both Tribal members, Heather, of Salt Lake City, and Joe, who lives in Independence.



Photo courtesy of Dorothy Greene

Tribal Elder Dorothy Greene participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center in 1996 when she was a member of the Tribal Health Committee.



Tribal Elder Dorothy Greene's portrait from when she served on Tribal Council in late 1980s.

Photo courtesy of Cultural Resources Department

It helped her identify a huge cougar in the hills without the cougar ever showing its face. Her father and Arthur Mercier tracked it down the next day and shot it, earning each of them \$75 for the hide.

On the other hand, she lived through earthquake after earthquake in Bakersfield without ever seeing one coming. After one early morning tremor, however, she said she looked out the window and "I never saw so many bare bottoms in my life."

Dottie retired from Mercy Hospital in 1984 after stories of a living patient being brought, mistakenly, to the morgue, and of getting locked in there herself.

"It's lucky there was a phone to the outside in there," she says, "because inside, there sure was nobody to talk to."

Her mother always knew that Dottie would take care of people.

"Mom said when I was a little girl, I was out there patching up my dolls, so she always knew what 'my Dot was going to do.'"

In 1985, she returned to the Tribe, where she served on the Health Committee for 10 years, applying all that she had learned working in hospitals. She served on the Powwow Committee for eight years and on Tribal Council in the late 1980s.

Ilene suffered with cirrhosis of the liver. Sitting with her first daughter "day and night" during that time before she died in 1994 made up one of the saddest chapters of her life, Dottie says.

"How she suffered. I didn't know anybody could suffer that much."

Dottie has always been involved in crafts, including crocheting and making jewelry. She is crazy about jewelry, she says, and is herself an ongoing work of art. She regularly has her fingernails and toenails brightened up and her hair styled. She still dresses, she says, the way her mother taught her.

Perhaps her best skills remain in the storytelling department. Dottie remembers so many important moments of her life as if they were scenes in a movie.

Picture Dot, as she was called at 2 years of age, sitting in a chair on the front porch of their home by Salt Creek, near Salem.

"My mom's standing in the doorway watching me when this bull knocked down the fence and came charging the porch. Mom had her heart in her mouth," says Dottie, from the vantage of nearly 90 years, safely sitting in her living room in Tribal Elder Housing on Beaver Court. "It came that close," she said, meaning about eight feet, "and then turned around and went back over the fence."

Or this: Picture Dot and a boy named Riley Porter (4 and 5 years old) sitting on stumps, their faces covered with chocolate and doughnuts. That was when the family lived at the Holtz (logging) camp and Dot ran around with Riley.

They used to take off together for the loggers' bunkhouse that was maybe a third of a mile away. Imagine how her mother felt about them having to crawl under a railroad box car to get to the camp, when she found out.

"Those box cars," said Dottie. "They often broke free."

"The men would sit us up on stumps and give us doughnuts and chocolate and things."

The time they were discovered, Dottie's mother and her friend, Celia Sorenson, "looked around and wondered where us kids were." They tracked them to the camp.

"They were so angry they wanted to spank us, but our faces were all chocolate and doughnut crumbs and the loggers said, 'No don't spank them. They're just having fun,' and Dottie's mom was saying, 'but they're not supposed to sneak off.'"

The lesson was not lost on Dot: "Riley and I, we were no dummies." ■