

# 'She was very responsible'

PEARL continued  
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tered goat and, to this day, Pearl attributes the rich goat milk for her longevity.

Phillips thinks some other things might also have contributed to her mother's long life.

"Mom always told us that you have to stay busy," Phillips recalls. "You can't lie around and do nothing. And that's part of the reason she's still here at 100 years. She's always been active. I never remember my mother taking the day off."

"She is as alive and peppy now as when I first met her," says Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison. "That same smile. She has such a happy outlook on life. I can see why she has lived so long. She's nice to have around and nice to be around."

In addition to goats, Pearl's grandfather grew flowers in two greenhouses in Tillamook, and the family is still surrounded by flowers.

"They're in every window," says Pearl. Her son, Tribal Elder Harold Lyon, planted the yard at her Dayton home with irises, tulips and daffodils. "There are flowers everywhere," Pearl says.

Her parents were former Tribal Elder James Hugh Langley and Emma Zuercher, who had a colorful approach to cooking. Phillips calls it "bohemian," by which she means that Emma cooked with caraway seeds and Swiss cheese, and made things like potato dumplings and sauerkraut balls.

Emma also made salmon wieners with a recipe that has long been lost and never duplicated, Phillips says, but in Emma's time local bars couldn't keep them in stock.

Following the tradition, when Pearl's family owned a store in Lafayette, Pearl ran the soda fountain, recalls Phillips. "Her milkshakes were so good that a friend who was running a truck stopped every day for mother to make him a milkshake. And in the meantime, she was taking care of me."

"(Her father) taught the children the ways of the Indians and to always respect Mother Earth," says Phillips.

Father and daughter "were very close," says Phillips. "He taught her to catch fish with wild huckleberries when everybody else was still using salmonberries."

They fished in the ocean, rivers and creeks, everywhere around. They caught and canned and ate clams, oysters, mussels and crab. They ate tuplo (wild celery), fern fronds and berries, and a lot of maich (deer) and wild birds.

Pearl attended Cloverleaf School. She rode with the teacher, Mrs. Pierce, to school every day.

When she was 10, Pearl stuck her foot with pitchfork.

"Nobody could afford a doctor in those days so she got blood poisoning," says Phillips. But a friend of the family, Tribal member Addie Petite, came to the rescue with a Native cure.

"He found wild ginger leaves at the creek, warmed them a little and



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Elders and sisters, from left, Pearl Lyon, Bernice Jensen and Ruby Bigoni came together to celebrate Pearl's 100th birthday during a birthday party at the Elders' Activity Center on Tuesday, Feb. 21.

placed them on her foot, and the next morning the blood poisoning was gone."

When she was 14, Pearl took her younger sisters, then 8 and 6, to Fargo (near Aurora) to camp in the bottom of their Uncle Clint Barker's farm, where they also picked strawberries.

"She was very responsible," Phillips says.

She also was first in her family to graduate from high school, and her son, Harold, says she always emphasized education when he was growing up.

"Not too many people graduated from high school in those days," says Pearl, "so I felt it was quite an accomplishment."

Pearl married Harley Lyon, a farmer and railroad worker from Lafayette, in 1932. Many from the family remember picking beans and strawberries the Lyon family grew.

"I used to go out and stay with her every year to pick strawberries and green beans," says Pearl's niece, Diane Locklear of Portland, who is daughter of Ruby Bigoni. "She is very gracious, very humble. She does nice things for people, but doesn't expect a thank you. She is always thinking of others."

While most in her family think of her as a mother and homemaker, she also worked for 19 years as a nurse at the Oakwood Glenn Nursing Home in McMinnville, better known among many there as "Pearl's Boarding House."

Her cousin's husband, former Tribal Elder Tom McKnight (grandfather to Tribal Elder and Tribal Council Vice Chairman Reyn Leno), would tell people he visited that he couldn't stay long because he had to get back to Pearl's Boarding House.

"I loved to work with people," says Pearl. "You learn a lot about life from all the people." She adds, however, "My husband wasn't too happy with me being gone all the time."

Granddaughter Mary Ann Wilson, says that she is in nursing today because of Pearl. "There are

five or six of us that are nurses because of her," Wilson says. Wilson is a registered nurse and owns a training school for nursing aides in Vancouver.

Mary Ann's daughter, Bobby Sue Wilson, is a licensed practical nurse at a nursing facility in Washington state. Melissa Sue Gullede, Phillips' granddaughter and Pearl's great-granddaughter, is a medical assistant in Vancouver, and yet another of Pearl's great-granddaughters, Dusty Gentry, is almost a registered nurse.

"They're all very compassionate kids," said Phillips, herself a certified nurse aide. "It all started because of Pearl."

She was always supportive, many say. Pearl remembers two pieces of advice she felt comfortable giving: "Have patience, and if you need help, look at the end of your arm!"

With Pearl in the room helping to keep the many events straight, Phillips recounts an early life full of family moves.

Although Pearl has now lived in her doublewide in Dayton for some 41 years, in the early years the family moved time and again to keep up with Harley's many occupations and business interests. He made money every time the family bought and sold a home, Phillips says, making the moves worthwhile for the family.

"He was always making a dollar," she says.

Here's the dizzying list of places they lived in the early years:

- After marrying, Pearl and Harley moved to McMinnville and lived in a small, but new house where the Spruce Goose now sits.
- Then, the Lyons moved to Lafayette on Locks Road across from the Bunn family.
- Then they moved to Parrot Mountain.
- Then they bought the Heidinger Place in Dayton, probably in 1940, as Pearl and Phillips remember.
- They moved from there to Hillsboro, where Harley worked at various jobs until they moved to Amity.

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- They moved into the Smith's house where Harold lived after awhile. Her husband was in the service, so the Lyons rented what is Harold's birth house.
- Then, to the Dayton house across from the old cemetery.
- Then they lived at the Carter place in Dayton. The Reebers live out there now. They raised beans, berries and cucumbers, and all kinds of miscellaneous things.
- Then they moved to McMinnville and bought the James Foster (his old hunting partner) place, another farm.
- Then, they sold that and bought the Alfred White place in Dayton.
- They sold that and moved to the acreage where Pearl now lives at 3600 Ash Road.

"All the moving didn't seem to bother her," says Phillips, "but finally, she put her foot down and said, 'We're not moving anymore.'"

Tribal Council member Jack Giffen Jr. said, "It's an honor to know you," and on behalf of the Tribal Council gifted Lyon with a leather pouch containing 100 gold dollar coins.

Tribal Elder Betty Bly, vice chair of the Culture Committee, gifted Lyon a Pendleton blanket from the committee. Lyon had been a member and honorary member of the committee in recent years.

Tribal Elder Cherie Butler of the Elders Committee gifted Lyon with fresh flowers from the Elders.

With five generations coming up behind her, Pearl now has 37 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

"I used to go to all the trips that the Tribe put on," she says, but even today with a troubling hip, she makes time to get out and enjoy family and friends.

"I have had a wonderful life," Pearl says. ■