

'Mom raised me to believe in myself'



Above, Tribal Elder Gladys Hobbs peels willow bark, which will be used for Elders' weaving projects, at the Elders' Activity Center on Tuesday, April 9. In the background is fellow Elder Connie Graves.

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Americans. It was very important to her."

In addition, Gladys says, "Mom raised me to believe in myself. I always knew who I was."

When Vivian moved to Grand Ronde, she was only 14 or 15, but she was accepted totally.

"This was the first place, she said, that she ever felt at home," Gladys recalls.

And Gladys found the same experience when she returned in 2005 after 50 years gone. When she returned, she says, "I started going to the meal site and felt like I'd never been away."

The Petite family grew up at the base of Spirit Mountain. They moved quite often in the area, including to the former logging community of Valsetz, Dallas, where she graduated high school, and after Termination to Salem.

Growing up, she remembers, "Our paydays were always white navy beans, homemade bread and fried potatoes."

Her mother was "an excellent cook," she says, with that bread and a goulash as Gladys's favorite meals.

Gladys remembers paper dolls that Vivian made out of catalogue pages and the clothes she made for the dolls. She also made all the children's clothes; smocked dresses, in particular. Like many in Grand Ronde, "She made most of our clothes out of flower sacks and dish towels," materials she never threw away.

"Everybody saved their flower sacks and dish towels for clothes," Gladys says. "Mother never had a store-bought pattern."

Of her father, she says that his influence was not as great. "When



Photo courtesy of Gladys Hobbs
Tribal Elders and sisters Violet Folden, left, at age 5, and Gladys Hobbs at age 3.

he was sober, he was the sweetest man in the world," but every weekend, "he had his drinking buddies, like everybody else."

It was "the only entertainment they had," Gladys says, "except church. So they got drunk on Saturday night and went to church on Sunday. Their wives would hit them in the ribs when they started snoring."

In Grand Ronde, the church was St. Michael's Catholic at the corner of Grand Ronde and Hebo roads. "Everything revolved around the church," she says, "like the Elders' Activity Center today."

"They always had some kind of function going on," said Gladys' older sister, Violet Folden. "Gladys and I know the sink over there like the back of our hand. We couldn't

pay for the events, but we could (attend and) wash dishes."

Their mother told them, "If you can't pay for it, you can work for it." And they did.

"Gladys and I spent hours doing dishes while the other kids played," Violet remembers.

But it was not all that bad, Gladys adds. "We were not abused in any way, shape or form."

They got plenty of playing time, the sisters remember.

When they lived by Spirit Mountain, they had a pet deer, Geena, Gladys remembers with some glee.

"She had a bell and she roamed free. She was even allowed in the house."

Then a local hunter shot the deer, not realizing that it was the Petite family pet. "He came back crying that he'd shot her," says Gladys.

Another year, the family started building a new house up on the hill at Spirit Mountain. With only the shell up, the family decided to spend the night in the open air project. Early on, they heard a cougar calling from somewhere nearby.

"It scared us to death," says Gladys, "and that was the last night we spent in that house."

It was never completed; the family moved away.

The sisters remember "a lot of baby-sitting" for three younger brothers, Raymond, Ernie and James Petite. Raymond now lives in Dallas, Ernie in Kansas and James is still in the area, work-

ing as a cage supervisor at Spirit Mountain Casino.

They remember playing with neighbor children, including Esther Shackman, who later married the former Lewis Leo Riggs. The Petite children also played with the children of the neighboring Bean family, including Donna, Ellen, Frank and Tommy.

Gladys remembers crawdad fishing with Peachie (Petite) Ham. "She was showing us how safe it was and it grabbed on to her and drew blood. And drama (over that bite)? Peachie was Sarah Bernhardt personified."

Gladys remembers Peachie and a battery operated radio. Gladys was just a young girl and she remembers Peachie sitting down in front of it and having the sisters believe that she, Peachie, was actually talking to the voices in the radio.

When Gladys's daughter, Tauni McCammon, was growing up, Tauni remembers spending summers in the 1970s with her grandmother in Falls City. She had cousins and friends in Falls City and Dallas then. Many were the children of the friends that her mother and aunt used to pass the time with in Grand Ronde.

Tauni named Aunt Peachie's children, Khani, Julie, Kevin, Shelly and Melvin Shultz, along with Aunt Violet's kids: Lani, Tony and Rodney Folden and her mother's youngest brother, Jim.

Gladys remembers traveling to the basement of a school in Dayton for weekly dances. She was 12 or 13 and was a little reticent to get out on the dance floor. "I would always turn them down," she says.

"If you don't start dancing," her mother said at one point, "I'm going to stop giving you a dollar to come."

"So, boy I danced. I started dancing with anyone who asked. I'd come home with whisker burns on my cheeks," Gladys says.

The sisters also traveled to Cottonwood, between Sweet Home and Lebanon, and then to the Aumsville Pavilion to dance, and with good reason. Violet's future husband, Clint Folden, played with the Larry and Rose Hendricks band that performed all over.

All through their childhood, the Petite children lived off and on with their father's mom, Ethel Petite. She was married to Ernie Petite, a wood cutter.

"Mostly on," says Violet, "and she had a big influence on us."

"She was there all the time," says Gladys.

"She done a lot of cooking," says Violet.

"She was a very inventive cook," says Gladys.

She also cooked a lot of fish heads, Violet says.

"I said she was a creative cook, and that covered it," says Gladys. "One time, we picked up the lid and fish eyes were staring at us," says Violet.

"I'm a terrible Indian," says Glad-

ys. "I hate seafood."

When the family moved to Salem, St. Joseph Catholic Church was not nearly as friendly to the family as the St. Michael's community had been in Grand Ronde.

"It was not that we were Indian," Gladys says. "It was because we were poor."

Memorial Day, always big in Grand Ronde because so many members of the Tribe and community served in the military, was a day to remember for the Petite family in particular. Though they moved often and sometimes far from the community, the Petite sisters liked to return for Memorial Day memories.

"Grandma always made crepe paper roses for Memorial Day," says Violet. And the roses were dipped in wax. "We used to sit and make roses by the hour."

The girls also picked ferns to go with the roses.

"We used to go up all the logging roads and pick wild rhodies, too." They put an old washtub in the back of the car, filled it part way with cold water and put the flowers in the tub to keep them fresh.

"It was our bathtub, too!" says Violet.

Together, the sisters tell many stories of what fun they had growing up. "We made our own fun," says Gladys.

Violet remembers berry picking with her grandmother and fishing at the river with her grandfather.

They remember one particular berry picking day in a pasture that they shared uncomfortably with some horses.

"I was terrified of horses," says Violet, "and they drove us out. Probably," she adds, "they just wanted us to pet their noses, but we weren't waiting around to see."

A lot of times they went wood cutting with their grandfather.

"He had these huge army trucks, and he'd toss the wood up and

we'd stack it. Then, we'd have a picnic."

Sometimes, the grandparents would load all the kids into the car, drive up gravel roads and everybody went swimming.

"We'd get up there, and they'd spread out a picnic," Violet recalls.

"We had a ball."

The sisters remember the time that that visiting relatives were taken with the novelty of their out-house, at least enough to start tipping it when the girls were inside.

She remembers adult family members speaking a lot of jargon "when they didn't want us to know what they were talking about."

Still, the girls picked up a lot of jargon along the way. Today, husband Rusty uses jargon he continues to learn from a Chinuk jargon book.

"He keeps saying things to me," said Gladys. "Some I know; some I have to think about it."

After high school, in 1965, Gladys earned a licensed practical nurse degree at Salem Technical Vocational Community College, now Chemeketa, in Salem, but did not use it for five more years. She moved down to California to be near her mother and worked as a waitress at a bowling alley.

She did her nurse training at Salem Memorial Hospital, at a tuberculosis facility on the campus of what is now Corban University and at the Oregon State Hospital on Center Street. She also studied public health nursing.

In 1966, she met and married Rusty Hobbs, who worked in the propane industry for 40 years. "I was very fortunate marrying the person I did. He's always been very understanding." They each brought children to the marriage (Rusty, two, and Gladys her daughter, Tauni.) He always thought of Gladys's daughter as his own. "His life

revolved around her," Gladys said, "and we very seldom had a baby-sitter."

The family went to Disneyland from time to time, on day trips that came to include Tauni's children, now grown, Geoffrey, 30, Hauli, 26, and Hauli's son, Morgan. In addition, Rusty's son, Alan, now 61 and a fireman in Washington state, also was part of the family.

"My mother was always my best friend when I was growing up," Tauni recalls from her office at the Tribe's Health Clinic, where she is a Contract Health specialist. "I was the only child she had, and my stepbrother and sister were quite a bit older than I was, so it was just me."

"Mom worked full time and I think she felt a little guilty about that, because I spent all my vacations up in Falls City with my grandma and hanging out with my cousins that lived up here."

"I remember she was 28 years old for about four years in a row because everyone forgot her birthday. It's in July and I spent all my summers away. As I got older I realized she gave up a lot for me. She never said anything, but I am sure she missed me."

Those were among the 35 years when Gladys had her nursing degree dusted off and worked at the Grants Pass Clinic. She worked principally in the OB-GYN department, but remembers many assignments working with children and the aged in the pediatric and geriatric departments.

There were eight doctors on staff when she arrived, 32 when she retired in 2005.

Today, Gladys is back home, living in a new place on the old Delbert Croy property. It took her months of traveling back and forth on weekends from Grants Pass to acquire the property, put it back in shape and bring up the family's stuff, but since she's been back, she has blossomed anew.

"I am glad things are different for her now and that she is involved in the Tribe," says Tauni. "I can tell you that she has come into her own since moving up here. She was kind of quiet when I was growing up and not very social. Mom, Dad and I spent weekends just driving around the countryside going to yard sales or spending the day at the beach. I think it's good for her to be surrounded by family and friends. For that matter, I think it's good for all of us to be around family and friends here."

Gladys stops to consider all the projects she is working on. "I'm just a goer," she says. ■



In this photo taken in 1944, Tribal Elder Gladys Hobbs, at about 4 months old, is held by her mother Vivian Petite. Her sister, Elder Violet Folden, at age 2, is standing next to them.

building, but there is no shelving for storage. We've had to scrounge. Procurement saves us anything that might help!"

She is a member of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, which she describes as a "go-between" for the Tribal membership and the clinic.

"We provide information to the council to try and help with issues that come up," she says. "Now, we're trying to keep abreast of federal issues like the sequester."

Gladys says her work on the Indian Health Board has given her a different perspective on Grand Ronde.

"Grand Ronde is highly thought of everywhere I go," she says. "We have so much more than any other Tribe. I always feel so blessed at these meetings because of what the Tribe does for us."

"So many Tribes don't have a casino, and they only have IHS (Indian Health Service) funding for health care. Those funds do not even last a full year."

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Tribal Elder Gladys Hobbs picks cut pattern pieces to sew together as she makes bags at the Elders' Activity Center on Tuesday, April 9. The Elders are working on making 250 bags to give away at Elders Honor Day in July.