

Good eggs

Logan Clark, 7, opens the plastic eggs he collected during the Tribe's annual Easter egg hunt held at Tribal Housing on Saturday, March 26. Behind him is his sister Arya Clark, 3.



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Talon Vanecek, 1, waits for the Tribe's annual Easter egg hunt held at Tribal Housing to begin on Saturday, March 26.



Ray explains his nickname

ELDER FEATURE continued
from front page

Charlotte Wittlinger.

And if by good you mean living life to the fullest, Ray did just that starting at an early age.

"I was a little hooligan," Ray recalls of his youth. "I got in trouble just like anybody else, but I always had to go help with the Elders. That has always been."

He sits back in the bed and closes his eyes in the memory.

"He is very spiritual," says Kathryn. "We carry with us a huge heart. We spent a good share of our lives with the traditional sun dance and vision quest camps, and we would go for weeks. He was the security there."

Kathryn says the two of them traveled with family members throughout Oregon, Washington and California to the sun dances and the vision quest camps.

Mushy's quest began when he was born in June 1947 in Willamina, where he spent his early years in a house with his grandmother, Thelma Dinehart. And although Mushy started out there, he didn't establish a presence in Willamina until his teenage years.

"We've been friends since the mid-1960s and we kind of hit it off right out of the gate," says Tribal Elder Steve Bobb Sr. "We both liked cars. We both thought we were cool, you know, and we figured the chicks all liked us. We were just kids. I think we both always had that rebellious sort of attitude. We both had tattoos way before they were trendy – decades before they were trendy. We kind of hit it off that way and we were always good friends."

"I had slicked-back hair and painted-on pants," recalls Mushy of his teenage years. "He (Bobb) had a tractor. He'd drive my motorcycle



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Elder Richard "Mushy" Ray, front, with his siblings and Tribal Elders, back from left, Donna Lux, Shelly Kent, Arnell Houck and Terry Houck at a Celebration of Life held at the Elders Activity Center on Saturday, March, 5.

and I'd drive his grandpa's tractor. We became friends and I ran around with him."

Mushy spent time in the woods like most everyone else in the West Valley during his younger years, but he spent his time behind the wheel. He drove log trucks for Zimbrick Logging. When that business went under, he started his own trucking company called Richard Ray Trucking.

At one point, his company had five trucks after starting with just two.

"When Zimbrick's actually went out of business, Mushy went on his own in his mobile home towing business," says Tribal Elder Bob Mercier. "We were both truck drivers and so we had a lot in common, and we used to in our business complement each other by he would help me and when I could I would help him and it just went that way. He is just an all-around good guy. We've been super friends for years." "We hauled oversized loads," re-

calls Mushy. "Mostly mobile homes and we had quite a few deliveries."

Mushy, who started driving log trucks when he was 16, shared the origins of the well-known nickname when he talks about his early days of driving.

"It was actually my CB handle," says Mushy. "I drove truck for over 50 years. It derived from when I had a really bad radio and I would have to talk on one channel and answer on the other. Everybody said it sounded like I had a mouth full of mush and the name stuck."

Tribal Elder and Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno says he remembers working with Mushy, hooking up his truck for him at Zimbrick Logging.

"I was a chaser," Leno recalls. "I would always be hooking up his truck and doing things like that so I knew Mushy way back. He would be there at 3 or 4 in the morning and he would be the last guy coming back and he would be trying to

get that last load. He was always going and laughing and having a good time. He loved driving truck. There was no doubt in my mind he was happy when he was sitting in the seat of the truck."

Leno says he was sad to hear of Mushy's current battle with terminal cancer.

"He was one of those that being Tribal and having the (federal) recognition back really meant a lot to him," says Leno. "He was just always Mushy."

Mushy gave back to his Tribe over the years, serving on the Timber and Elders committees.

But being Mushy these days means being in pain. He looks back on days of working in the woods, driving trucks, riding motorcycles and racing cars, and realizes he has lived a good life as he prepares to walk on surrounded by his family.

If we each create a family legend in our lifetime, then Mushy's legend came at one of the sun dances he was working when he made a choice to accept the pain of battling cancer.

Kathryn says there was a young boy dancing outside the circle at this particular sun dance. Because of his age, he was not allowed to dance.

"His name was Paul," says Kathryn. "He had cerebral palsy. Just walking caused him so much pain. Mushy saw him and sat down nearby. He (Mushy) was asking Creator to please take away the pain from Paul. Let me handle the pain. Let me carry it for him."

When the ceremony concluded, Mushy needed help walking while Paul walked away seemingly pain-free.

"I prayed to take the pain away from Paul," says Mushy. "It works. It really works."

Like in the rest of his life, Mushy volunteered to carry one last load. ■