

# 'My way was to get it done'

ELDERS FEATURE continued  
from front page

School and became a logger and log truck driver like most everybody else his age. Like many other Grand Ronde Tribal members, he started working alongside his father at an early age.

"I started riding with my dad in the log truck when I was 8, 9 years old," says Larsen during an interview at the Elders Activity Center in Grand Ronde. "I would get out and open the gates and put the chains up. I set chokers when I was a sophomore in high school when my dad had logging jobs.

"My dad was Chinook and French Canadian. He passed away in 1964. I started driving truck right after that."

Ed's mother was Verna Larsen (Riggs) and her mother was Lena Bobb (Norwest). Lena's parents were Frank and Mary Norwest. Verna's father was Lewis Riggs and Lewis's parents were Solomon and Jennie Riggs.

Ed is the eldest of Verna and Ed Larsen Sr.'s six children. His sister, Jeanne Larsen, passed away in 2012, and his other sisters are Carol Larsen, who lives in Salem, and Susan "Susie" Gilliam, who lives in Dallas. His brother, Mike Larsen, passed away in 2013 and his other brother, Kenny Larsen, lives in Grand Ronde.

Ed has always taken great pride in being Native American and he said it was something he picked up from being around his father.

"He used to joke about it," says Ed of his father. "When he played ball there was a pitcher named 'Lefty' Johnson – a Swede guy. He told the old man, 'I got a dead Indian buried under the mound out here.' My old man shot back, 'When you



Courtesy photos

**An old family photo of Tribal Elder Ed Larsen's family. Members at the time, from left, are his sister Carol, mother Verna, brother Mike, front, Ed, his father Ed and sister Jeanne.**

throw that ball you better duck because there will be a dead Swede laying right on top of him.' He was pretty witty. Mike and I used to joke that we got our mouth from the old man and our strength and perseverance from our mom. He was really strong."

Ed says working with his father taught him a lot and that he has carried those teachings with him throughout life. He said he learned how to operate a cat and a yarder as well during his time working in the woods.

He continued to drive log trucks for Siletz Trucking part-time even when he owned the store. His late wife, Shirley, ran the store while he drove and took care of the business.

Ed spent more than 21 years dedicated to driving truck and 35 years dedicated to Shirley.

When the Tribe started the process of establishing Spirit Mountain Casino back in the 1990s when Ed was on Tribal Council, he was acknowledged as a key figure in the effort to win over West Valley residents and business owners.

He was nominated for his first run for Tribal Council by Tribal Elder John Mercier, who at the time was in his 20s.

"I remember it quite clearly because we used to go and visit him at the store," Mercier says. "I didn't even give it a second thought. Now, all these years later, I would definitely give it a second, third, 10th

thought before I would ever nominate anybody. He was a thoughtful person and he showed me he could pull it off."

Ed served as the Tribal Council secretary from 1994-95 and reached the vice chairman position in September 1996. He served as vice chairman off and on until 2000.

Ed might be as well known for his memory as his kindness. He remembers names and details of conversations and events years past. He has become a walking book of Grand Ronde Tribal knowledge.

"In many respects that is a good description," Tribal Attorney Rob Greene says. "The thing that has always impressed me about Ed and continues to impress me about him is his phenomenal memory. He can remember the smallest details from so many years back, it's incredible. Whether he was on the council or the board (Spirit Mountain Casino Board of Directors) he brought that same sharpness of mind to the issues and he would report back to the council the various things the board was considering."

Greene said he first met Ed when he was on the board of directors at the casino and the property was opening.

"I think one of the things about Ed is he was comfortable in any situation in terms of his ability to communicate with people," Greene says. "I attended a number of meetings with Ed and he was always very comfortable and I think made people who he was talking with feel very much at ease. He was a wonderful ambassador for the Tribe. He was excellent at that."

Ed's style of leadership was to bring everyone together.

**Ed Larsen, front row second from right, was selected for the second team of the 1960 Oregon A-2 High School All-Star team while playing for Willamina High School.**



Photo courtesy of Gary Littlejohn