

# Wink married high school sweetheart

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Council from September 2005 through September 2011, was raised by his mother on his grandfather's dairy farm that was located where the current Grand Ronde Community Water Association office is on Highway 18 near Spirit Mountain Casino.

Wink's mother was Clarinda Maxine Quenelle and her parents were Fabian Frank Quenelle and Matilda "Tillie" Winslow.

Wink's father was William Joseph Soderberg Jr., who bestowed the nickname on him.

"My dad, his sisters used to call him that," Wink says. "That was his nickname. He didn't care for it that much as he got older, so when I was born he stuck it on me. And then later, when I was thinking of getting rid of it, the kids wanted to call me 'Winky' and I said 'No, you can't do it.' ... So they started calling my middle son Wink, but he's out of it now so I'm the only one. Where I go, the name is going with me."

Wink's brother, Arthur Francois Soderberg, walked on in 2007 at the age of 77.

"My mom and my brother and I were always pretty close," Wink says.

Wink's mother was a nurse and a popular barber in Grand Ronde when he was a child.

"My mother was very talented," Wink says. "She used to cut hair on Saturdays and all the loggers would come down. My brother and I were very enterprising. We would go down there with her in the morning and we would get in the line. When she opened up there would be a long line and we would sell our spot in the line for a quarter. A quarter was pretty good money. The loggers thought that was pretty good so they went along with it."

Wink and Arthur were sent to boarding school and they would see their mother when she visited to cut hair for the other school children.

Wink says it was his mother who instilled in him a love for the Tribe and its people, and when he was told about Marvin Kimsey, Merle Holmes, Margaret Provost, Dean Mercier and Darrell Mercier working on getting the Tribe restored, he knew he wanted to join the effort.

Wink says a discussion with Kimsey on what needed to be accomplished prompted him to drive from his Lake Oswego home with his wife Kathy. Wink says they attended every meeting the Tribe held and sometimes they were driving to Grand Ronde as much as three times a week.

"I told him (Kimsey) about my business experience and he said, 'We will find something for you to do,'" Wink says. "And that's how the whole thing started."

Wink says the early days were about raising money for the Tribe's future.

"We had to raise money for anything we wanted," Wink says. "Most of that money was raised through cake sales and raffles. I wanted to



Courtesy photos

**From left, Marvin Kimsey, Wink Soderberg, Merle Holmes and Dean Mercier work on Restoration efforts at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Grand Ronde circa 1975.**

be involved in an Indian organization. My mother kept track of all of our stuff and I thought at least I can be involved."

#### **Surrounded by family**

Wink has been married to Kathy for almost 61 years – they are high school sweethearts who met while Wink was attending prep school in Mount Angel and she was enrolled at a nearby girls' academy — and they have three sons, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Wink's son, Tribal Elder Steven

Soderberg, and his wife Ronnie live next to Wink in Grand Meadows and have five sons and three grandchildren. Steve, 59, works at Spirit Mountain Casino in the Finance Department.

Wink's son Gary lives in Alaska and has two daughters. Gary, 57, was a logger for 20 years and now strings lines for the local power company.

Wink's son and namesake William Joseph "Bill" Soderberg III is 55 and lives in Seattle with his partner Dave and they have two adopted children. He is a psychi-

atrist with a Seattle practice and Dave is the head of an architecture firm.

Steven says he remembers coming to Grand Ronde with his father in the early 1980s to attend meetings at the Tribal Cemetery office.

"I was in my early 20s," Steven says. "We would go over to the cemetery to the little office they had over there. People would bring snacks. I probably went to three or four meetings. Nobody was doing it for any money."

Steven says the tone of the meetings was calm, but there was excitement among the people even though they had nothing yet.

"People were wondering if it could really be done and if restoring the Tribe was even possible," Steven says.

Wink says being part of the Tribe in the days before Restoration was a crucial time for the membership. He says people were motivated to see all their work toward Restoration succeed.

"They were committed," Wink says of the members working on Restoration. "There was one thing that people thought about – you could see it in their eyes when they were in those meetings, you could see the passion. I was always tired going home, but I was kind of exuberant because that carries over."

Wink says he enjoyed being part of something so important.

#### **A Navy veteran**

Wink is a Navy veteran, having served during the Korean War era from 1951-54. He served on two different ships: A refrigeration ship that supplied Navy depots and a survey ship that charted little-known portions of the Caribbean Sea.

After working 26 years for the Postal Service, Wink had several businesses usually involving sales. He spent time as a printing broker, wholesale broker, Amway salesman and he owned a Books Are Fun business before returning to Grand Ronde and eventually running for Tribal Council.

"The post office was my landmark, but I always had other businesses," Wink says. "I read a million books; self-help books, business books and I had a garage full. I would listen to tapes all the time. I just learned."

Wink says it was the book business that eventually prompted him to return to Grand Ronde after living his adult life in Lake Oswego. He and Steven displayed their books in the Education Department and at the health clinic, and at one of the local schools.

Kathy says it was the couple's desire to be closer to Kimsey and his late wife Michelle and Wink's desire to be closer to the Tribe that brought them home to Grand Ronde



**Wink and Kathy Soderberg are high school sweethearts and married in Mount Angel on Oct. 20, 1956.**

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