



2013 – Mark Johnston was named Tribal general manager. Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno announced the news in a staff-wide e-mail. Johnston began working for the Tribe in June 2007 as the executive director of Health Services. Previously, he had worked six years with the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians and six years with the Coquille Tribe. “Given Mark’s management style with the clinic, I have a lot of faith in Mark’s abilities and his leadership to get the best out of his people,” Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. said. “That is exactly what we need in today’s climate, everyone at their best. He has my support and I wish him all the best.”

2008 – Tribal attorney Jennifer Biesack was featured in *Smoke Signals*. The Wisconsin resident began working for the Tribe’s Legal Department a few months before, handling issues involving land, construction and housing. “Jenny is a welcome addition to the Tribal Attorney’s Office,” Tribal Staff Attorney Lisa Bluelake said. “She comes to us with a lot of experience, having previously worked as an in-house attorney for another Tribe. Her experience and personality complement the other attorneys in the office. It is a great fit.”

2003 – The Grand Ronde Tribe’s new residential community was under construction and set to be complete by June. It was funded using federal money provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. “There’s always been a great need for family housing in Indian Country,” said Linda Layden, the Tribe’s Housing director. “And it’s been a long time in coming. So, it’s great to be able to meet that need.” The 36-unit project consisted of mostly duplexes ranging in size from one to five bedrooms for families with “moderate incomes,” meaning a resident’s rent would not exceed 30 percent of their income.



2003 File photo

1998 – The Tribe and Spirit Mountain Development Corp. announced plans to build a \$3.1 million retail and commercial center in Salem at the corner of Fairview Road and Commercial Street. The project was intended to help the Tribe diversify its economic base and gain self-sufficiency for its members. “This project shows our confidence in Salem’s future and by working with Stew Stone, we will produce a high-quality retail center that benefits the entire community,” Tribal Council Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison said. Stone was a Salem real estate agent who worked in commercial development and had completed projects for national chains such as Taco Bell, McDonald’s and Burger King.

1993 – Grand Ronde residents Linda and David Olson were featured as “Entrepreneurs of the Month” for their two businesses, Little Feather Tee’s and Eagle Feather Construction, both of which utilized the Tribe’s Economic Development Department to help further their business ventures. Linda was a Tribal member and past coordinator of the Tribe’s foster care program. She had taken economic development classes in the past, but suggested the Tribe offer small loans to members with a well-planned business idea.

1988 – Enrollment Director Margo George started to enter enrollment records into a computer for more efficient service. She stressed the need for an accurate and current membership roll, as it is the source of documentation used to determine the amount of federal aid allocated to Tribal governments. “It is also the source that determines our Tribal needs for programs,” she said. “I am requested to provide statistics on age groups and residency for the Health, Education, Housing and Social Services programs. If I do not have the correct information to compile, an inaccurate needs assessment could be made.”

Yesteryears is a look back at Tribal history in five-year increments through the pages of Smoke Signals.

Clothes Closet open Friday mornings

The Clothes Closet is open from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. the first and third Fridays of the month and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. all other Fridays on the Tribal campus near the Elders Activity Center at the end of Blacktail Drive.

The Clothes Closet accepts clothing, small appliances, small pieces of furniture, electronics and household goods that are clean and in good condition. It does not accept books, large TVs or large furniture, but there is a community board where people can post those items.

Donations are accepted during regular business hours.

For more information or emergency clothes, contact Lori Walker-Hernandez at 559-847-7565. ■

Tribe loses eldest Elder again

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

For the second time in less than a month, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has seen its eldest Elder walk on.

Opal M. Davidson, who became the Tribe’s eldest Elder upon the passing of 105-year-old Pearl Lyon on Nov. 29, walked on Wednesday, Dec. 27, at the age of 102.

Davidson was born April 19, 1915, in Grand Ronde. According to an April 2015 *Smoke Signals* story written about her at the time of her turning 100, her parents were “One Shot” Harry and Pearl (Hudson) Mercier. She was born after brother Vernon and before siblings Vincent and Blanche.



Opal M. Davidson

She graduated from Taft High School in 1933 and attended beauty school at Chemawa Indian School. She owned Nelscott’s first beauty salon, which is featured in a Lincoln County history book.

She later worked in a beauty salon in McMinnville where the Sage Restaurant is now located.

Opal met her husband, Loran Davidson, when he was living at her aunt Josephine’s boarding house. They married in 1946 and had five children – three sons, Gene, Harry and Loran Jr., and two daughters, Terri and April.

She raised the family in the blue house across from the Butler property on the west side of Grand Ronde Road while Loran worked in the local sawmills. At the time of her 100th birthday, she had 13 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Loran walked on in 1986 after 40 years of marriage.

Opal lived in Grand Ronde at the Tribal assisted living facility Cougar Lodge since July 2008 after residing in a foster care home in Sheridan.

She said she was proud to be the eldest Mercier, descended from Francis Mercier, her grandfather who immigrated to the United States from Belgium.

With Davidson’s passing, the Grand Ronde Tribe no longer has a centenarian among its living membership. The eldest Elders are now 99-year-old Dorothy Greene, who was born Sept. 26, 1918, and 98-year-old Ruby Bigoni, who was born March 18, 1919. ■

Need something notarized?

Tribal Court staff is available at no charge for notaries 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday with the exception of noon to 1 p.m. Please be sure to bring a photo ID with you. If you have any questions, contact the court at 503-879-2303. ■

Food Bank provides boxes, seeks help

The Grand Ronde Food Bank – *iskam mək^hmək haws* – is operated by Marion-Polk Food Share, which has been leading the fight to end hunger since 1987 because no one should be hungry.

Recipients of SNAP, TANF, SSI or LIHEAP assistance automatically qualify for assistance at the Grand Ronde Food Bank, 9675 Grand Ronde Road. No one will be turned away in need of a food box.

“We believe that everyone deserves to have enough to eat,” Food Bank Coordinator Francene Ambrose says. “You are welcome to get a food box at each of our regular weekly distributions. No one will be turned away in need of a food box.”

Upcoming food box distribution dates will be:

- 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, Jan. 19;
- 2 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 24.

Those who are unable to pick up a food box can fill out an authorized representative form and that person can pick up a food box on your behalf. The authorization is good for one year.

The Food Bank continues to seek volunteers to help with repacking food, putting food on the shelves, handing out food boxes and end-of-month inventory.

Call to ensure someone is available to assist. People also can sign up for a monthly e-mail for the Food Bank calendar and events, as well as follow the Food Bank on Facebook.

The Food Bank is an equal opportunity provider.

Call Ambrose at 503-879-3663 or contact her at fambrose@marionpolkfoodshare.org for more information or to volunteer. ■