

**Curtis** *from A1*

life seemed closer to nature give it an almost biblical quality.

Curtis was born Marjorie Ann Broszio on May 24, 1934 in Roseburg, Ore., but grew up in Oakland and Umpqua, attending Oakland High School before settling in Yoncalla in the early 1950s with her first husband, Lyle Lee.

In her humble, handwritten autobiography, Curtis details stories of rationing food and trading stamps for wares during the Great Depression and World War II.

There are brief memories of helping her father in the logging industry, heading out into the forest to help buck and load timber. In the 1930s and 1940s, her family “worked in prunes” and she describes her mother as a “prune boss.”

Her jotted-down memories jump and dance from early childhood to her teenage years and back again, as if to remind its reader that all things in the past are passed; a perfect timeline doesn’t always matter when it comes to remembering.

“The things I remember doing may not be in line with time, but I have wrote them down as I remembered them now,” she writes.

Like many people of the time — and even still now — Curtis helped her mother raise rabbits, which they would butch-

er for meat and trading resources. As a girl, she had a pet raccoon named Geo that would accompany her to school “until manhood came,” which is to say the wild animal became too independent to tolerate domestication any longer. There are numerous recollections of living through extreme weather, epic storms and freezes that seem to render last year’s snow a mere light dusting.

“I remember a time of lots of snow,” she writes vaguely as one of her earliest memories, likely a reference to a blizzard that hit Oregon in the winter of 1937 and reportedly dumped up to 3 feet of snow in certain areas west of the Cascades.

Most notable, however, in her many pages of writings are the genealogies she shares. There are names upon names — of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of her own — and of all manner of people that have come and gone through Douglas County over the more than half-century.

It is a clue to how Curtis has lived her life. As a mother, grandmother and great grandmother, her maternal instinct is a part of her DNA and the legacy of her 85 years is one of connection to the people in her community.

Curtis worked at the Yoncalla post office for 23 years after rearing her own two children, Karl and Lila, into adulthood. As anyone who was alive

before email can say, working in a post office in a small town like Yoncalla in that day and age was an efficient way to get to know just about

everyone. It was here that her role as town matriarch truly began.

**“I’ve been here so long now that the kids that are in school and that play basketball, some of their grandparents are the ones that came to my house as kids.”**

— Marge Curtis

“Kids would come in and we always had a dish of candy ... and there was one boy that was special to me. He had different houses he would sleep at — grand-

ma’s house, mom’s house — and he was a handful. So, as I got to know him, I did what I could to help out,” Curtis said.

While Curtis is sometimes light on detail, it is clear that for decades her natural inclination has been to become the living embodiment of the phrase “It takes a village.” Years later, a meeting with the same boy solidified the power and effect of her approach.

“We went to a funeral after [the boy] had been in the service and came home,” Curtis said. “It was some of his relatives and I went to the funeral. He came over and said, ‘I wan’na thank you for raising me. For helping mom.’”

“school bus” (her own, small pickup truck) for years, helping students get to school who would otherwise not have a ride. Her door is ever open to the children of town, whether for a cookie, a quick bathroom break after a short walk up from the football field or simply for the company of a kind, familiar soul.

One of Curtis’ favorite ways to stay involved and connected is to attend Yoncalla sporting events, something she has been doing dating back decades to the very earliest days of the school.

“I like sports,” Curtis said. “I’ve always liked sports myself and I played baseball and volleyball. I didn’t play basketball because they didn’t have basketball for girls at my school, really.”

It’s clear that even without memories of her own time on the basketball court due to lack of access — another illustration of a past un-

familiar to kids of today — Curtis is a fan of the game. She can usually be seen sitting near the baseline at most Yoncalla basketball games.

the 19-year-old mayor of Yoncalla. She doesn’t appear prepared to stop any time soon, either.

“Some people collect all kinds of stuff, you know,” Curtis said. “I collect kids. That’s what I do.”

Curtis’ first husband, Lyle, passed after a motorcycle accident in 1977 and her second husband, Everett Curtis, followed in 2002. Her children are grandparents of their own now and some of them and their families like many, have emigrated out into other parts of the state and country.

However, as if the situation were ever any different, Curtis looks out into all the familiar faces of her town and sees plenty of family left.

Human life often seems to move at incredible speed, a rate that grows exponentially with ever-increasing technology. When someone like Marge Curtis talks, things seem to slow down as the conversation ebbs and flows through her decades of experiences.

There’s no need to multitask; no need to check your notifications. Just ask and listen.

Things have changed. Yoncalla has changed. The kids, in some ways, have changed. But through it all, there is Curtis — living a life that shows history touches all things, past, present and future.

And she, perched there above the school grounds, is living history.

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