

Local & State



Submitted photo

Virginia and Erhardt Buchfinck bought the Oregon Trail Cabins in Baker City in 1949.

VIRGINIA

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Cars weren't always part of her life, either.

"My dad had the first car on the hill," she said. "The first time we went to the beach I was 5 years old."

They slept in a tent on the sand. Later, they rented a cabin.

"We never did stay in a modern motel — there wasn't one," she said.

She never rode a bicycle, either.

"Girls did not ride men's bicycles," she said.

Virginia met Erhardt Buchfinck at the Lutheran Church in Oregon City. They married in November of 1942.

Two daughters soon arrived: Kathryn in 1944 and Sherril in 1945.

In 1949, the Buchfincks

"We never did stay in a modern motel — there wasn't one."

— Virginia Buchfinck, born in 1919, recalling childhood vacations with her family

saw a sales advertisement for cabins in Baker City.

"There was an ad in the Portland paper. It sounded really great," she said.

They traveled across the state to look at the Oregon Trail Cabins located on Elm Street along Powder River.

At first, not terribly impressed, they decided to head back west the next day. But they reconsidered, and stayed the weekend.

Baker City became their new home.

"We decided to stay," she said.

They bought the Oregon

Trail Cabins and the adjoining trailer court. The motel first had one story, but the Buchfincks later added a second story right before the filming of the Hollywood musical "Paint Your Wagon" came to town in 1968.

Erhardt did nearly all the construction himself on nights and weekends. At the same time, he was working on building the highway over Dooley Mountain.

The family had a house on the property, and Virginia staffed the motel office most of the time.

"We rented at all hours of the day and night," she said. "I was always up until 11."

During the summer her employees were high school girls. Kathryn and Sherril also learned their way around the motel business.

"They grew up at the motel,

and worked at the motel," she said.

More than 50 units creates a lot of laundry.

During the time of "Paint Your Wagon," the Buchfincks rented all but six rooms to the crew.

"We had all the production crew and secretaries. One fellow came early and stayed a year," she said. "We didn't charge any more for the rooms than we normally did."

Although film star Lee Marvin had his own house during the filming, he still made rounds about town.

One time, Virginia remembers, Erhardt was called to pull Marvin out of a bar and take him home before he got arrested.

Other film stars came to the motel from time to time.

"Jean Seberg came to the motel to swim — they all



Submitted photo

Virginia Buchfinck grew up in Western Oregon and moved to Baker City in 1949.

came to swim," Virginia said.

The Buchfincks owned the motel for about 30 years. They were also a partner in the Sunridge Inn when it came to town.

"Erhardt practically oversaw the building of the Sunridge," she said. "He was out there every single day."

They sold the Oregon Trail Motel several times — resuming ownership twice, and even taking over the nearby restaurant at one point.

"We didn't know anything

about restaurants but we had good help," she said.

She's stayed active at First Lutheran Church since arriving in Baker. For many years she played organ at church services, as well as for both funeral homes in town.

In 1982, she started Kids Club at the church, a Friday outreach for elementary-age children.

"I was with it until three years ago," she said. "I even went on the hayride with them last year."



J. David Ake / Associated Press file photo

Carbon limits could go to voters in 2020 if Legislature doesn't act

■ Three initiative petitions have been filed with the goal of transitioning to a carbon-free economy in Oregon by 2050

SALEM (AP) — If lawmakers again fail to pass a law regulating Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions next year, voters could be called on to do it.

Three initiative petitions

filed with the Oregon Secretary of State's Office Monday would require the state to phase out electricity sources that contribute to global warming, and transition to a carbon-free economy by 2050, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

If they proceed to the November 2020 ballot, the measures would likely usher in a bruising ballot fight. But one of the organizations spearheading the efforts, clean energy coalition Renew Oregon, is hoping the measures instead add urgency to next year's legislative session.

"Our priority will continue to be the cap-and-invest bill," said Brad Reed, a spokesman for Renew Oregon. "We will put all of our energy to that. But we cannot afford for the state and for the people to not have bold climate action next year."

The carbon cap bill has been in the works for over a decade, and was the focus of a tussle in the Legislature this year. The proposal flamed out amid a walkout by Senate Republicans and disunity in Democratic ranks. Opposition to House Bill 2020 was stiff among some business groups and rural voters.

Gov. Kate Brown and legislative leaders have vowed to keep trying to pass a similar proposal.

"This is a classic example of a ballot measure designed to force the legislature to do something," Jim Moore,

"Our priority will continue to be the cap-and-invest bill. But we cannot afford for the state and for the people to not have bold climate action next year."

— Brad Reed, Renew Oregon

a political science professor at Pacific University told The Oregonian/OregonLive. "They see an opening with some kind of compromise that we'll see next year."

The first initiative petition, dubbed 100% Clean Economy, would establish and enforce limits on greenhouse gas emissions in the state, replacing the current soft goals with hard limits that are even more stringent than those contemplated in House Bill 2020. The measure would require the state to reduce greenhouse gas pollution 50% below 1990 levels by 2035 and be 100% carbon-free by 2050.

The second initiative petition filed by Renew Oregon, called 100% Clean Electricity, would require that all electricity used in Oregon be from 100% carbon-free sources by 2045.

Renew Oregon also filed a second version of the clean electricity ballot proposal with additional revisions to state law, removing barriers to electric utilities' investing more aggressively in electric car charging infrastructure and clean building technologies like electric heating.

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