

# Blue Mountain Eagle

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## Remembering the hospital in Prairie City

By Angel Carpenter  
Blue Mountain Eagle

When Wilma Boyer started working at the Blue Mountain Hospital in Prairie City in 1959, the facility had about 15 patient beds and a three-bed nursing home ward.

She worked as a nurse's aide.

The doctors at the Prairie City hospital, at that time, were Dr. Ted Merrill and Dr. Howard Newton.

"Back then, things were different as far as the responsibilities," Boyer said.

While there were employees to take care of laundry, it was the floor/nurse's aides who would dust mop the rooms and hallways.

Among Boyer's duties as a nurse's aide were bringing patients their meals, and feeding and bathing them, if needed.

Boyer said it's possible she's now the only living person who worked at the hospital in Prairie City.

The hospital moved to a new home in John Day in December of 1960, and the Prairie City facility became a nursing home. Today, it's known as Blue Mountain Care Center, still located at 112 E. Fifth St.

### Nurse's aide recalls her duties at hospital



Courtesy photo/DeWitt Museum

This building, constructed in 1902, was a school in Prairie City and later became Grant County Hospital.

She continued working at the facility when it became a nursing home, then transferred to the John Day hospital in 1962.

"You were taught by the nurses and nurse's aides that were on duty, and the director of nursing would come around and see that you did what you were instructed," she said. "If

you were assigned to accompany the doctor, they would instruct you on how to take care of the patients."

Boyer's second daughter was born at the Prairie City hospital in 1952, and her son was born there in 1956.

When the hospital closed for a short time in 1957, Boyer's youngest daughter was

born at the office of Martha and Gerold "Jerry" van der Flugt in John Day.

"I always enjoyed working in Prairie City and John Day at the hospital and nursing home," Boyer said. "I enjoyed the fact that I could help them and take care of them."

In 1974, she became a certified surgery technologist.

**"You were taught by the nurses and nurse's aides that were on duty, and the director of nursing would come around and see that you did what you were instructed."**

— Wilma Boyer

She worked in that position until 1994, when she transferred to the purchasing department, retiring in 2003.

She still works at the hospital's gift shop today.

"It's kind of home," she said.

Jessie Lewis of Canyon City recalls when her youngest daughter, Holly, was born June 27, 1960, at Blue Mountain Hospital in Prairie City.

"They took me in and started my labor, because Dr. Newton was getting ready to leave

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Courtesy photo/DeWitt Museum  
Dr. Virgil Belknap practiced at the Grant County Hospital and Blue Mountain Hospital in Prairie City. Photo taken in 1920.



Courtesy photo/DeWitt Museum  
Dr. Thesbian practiced at the Grant County Hospital in Prairie City. Photo taken in 1850.

## Lodging for loggers



Courtesy photo/Adele Cerny

Bear Valley Lodge, Seneca.

### Hines houses workers in two-story 'hotel'

By Cheryl Hoefler  
For the Blue Mountain Eagle

Loggers working for the Edward Hines Lumber Company lived in comfort at the Bear Valley Lodge.

Built in 1939, the two-story facility, sometimes called the "Seneca Hotel," housed single men who worked for the company. It replaced bunkhouses along the logging road, used for several years before.

The lodge had 45 small, simple rooms, each with a bed, table, chair and closet. Residents shared bathrooms and showers on each

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Courtesy photo/Adele Cerny

Lobby of the Bear Valley Lodge, Seneca.



Courtesy photo/Adele Cerny

Bear Valley Lodge, Seneca.

### Growing up in the Bear Valley Lodge

Seneca girl, parents lived with Hines loggers

By Cheryl Hoefler  
For the Blue Mountain Eagle

Few girls can say they grew up in a rooming house for loggers.

Shirley (Rushing) Harrison can.

In 1953, when Harrison was 7, she and her parents moved to the Bear Valley Lodge in Seneca, which was built by Edward Hines Lumber Company to provide housing for its loggers. Her mother, Billie, managed the rooming house while her father, Shade, worked as a master machinist for the Hines Company.

The loggers who lived at the lodge, which Harrison said they called a hotel, were all single men. She and her parents had a separate two-bedroom apartment of their own at one end of the lodge.

While such living arrangements might seem unusual for a young girl, Harrison said she actually wasn't around the men very much and, over all the years there, never experienced an uneasy moment.

"All the men who lived there were very hardworking and mannerly," Harrison said.

She added, "Nowadays, I doubt anyone in

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Courtesy photo/Reiba Carter Smith

Reiba with her sisters, Neila and Neita, and father, Benton, on a huckleberry picking outing in 1947.

### Long life in Long Creek full of innocence and freedom

Fifth-generation resident reminisces about mill days, mud pies, movies

By Cheryl Hoefler  
For the Blue Mountain Eagle

Lifelong Long Creek resident Reiba Carter Smith recalls a childhood of "freedom" and "innocence" in a community she has called "home" her entire life.

Smith, the fifth generation in her family to live in Long Creek, said she is "perfectly satisfied with my life and growing up."

She was raised on a ranch a mile east of town, along with her three younger sisters and younger brother. Their father, Benton, was a registered Herford breeder while their homemaker mother, Lorraine, kept the home front running.

Several other ranching families lived nearby.

"When I was a kid, every

ranch had children," Smith said.

And, except for school, most of their time was spent close to home.

"We romped and played all around the ranch," she said. "We were very innocent and isolated until I turned about 6."

"It was a treat to come to town," she added, which they did once or twice a month. A favorite indulgence for Smith on those trips was an orange pop from the local store.

An extended family, which included 18 first cousins on the Carter side, helped contribute to her rich and happy youth.

Major holidays and other special family days meant big dinners at the home of Smith's grandmother, Martha Carter.

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Courtesy photo/Reiba Carter Smith  
Reiba Carter, 1957-58, Long Creek School.