

Memories of times gone by

Austin resident recalls life in the old mill town of Bates

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

AUSTIN — Rosalie Averett has seen a lot of change since she moved to Bates in June of 1951 with her six-week-old son in tow.

Now 88, Averett was 16 when she moved to Bates, a company town in eastern Grant County built to house loggers and mill workers for the Oregon Lumber Co. The town ceased to exist after the mill shut down in the 1970s, but Averett didn't wander far, moving with her family to the nearby community of Austin, where she has remained ever since.

She still has fond memories of her time in Bates.

"My husband was part of the woods crew. There was probably 300 people back then, and we had a good school," Averett said.

"They had a principal, Mr. Cardwell, that was very stern and strict, and even the big boys were scared of Mr. Cardwell because he'd whip them. In those days nobody said, 'You hurt my baby' — you know, that's what's wrong with the world today. It was just a good place to raise kids."

Averett's husband, Tom Sr., set chokers on a logging crew to support Rosalie and their growing family. Tom's wage for that work was 35 cents an hour.

One of the funniest things that happened in Bates, according to Averett, involved a half-blue tick hound, half-Labrador dog that would wait behind the store for the meat truck.

"That driver said he knew that dog was going to wind up with something, and Smokey would just sit there," Averett said.

One day Smokey got ahold of a great big bone-in ham and took off with it.

"Every bird and dog and even the store owner were chasing that dog to get that ham back. He ran over to where they had the logs stacked up across the river, and I don't know what Smokey ever did with it," Averett said. "Everybody and the birds and the dogs looked for that ham, and they never did find it. He ate on it for quite a while."

Although it's a well-known landmark now, the Austin House wasn't there back then,

according to Averett. There was a service station with a small lunch counter called "The Y," named after the intersection of Highways 7 and 26.

"They called it The Y because the road cut off of Highway 7 on both sides of the service station and came down into Bates. There was no road through the mountains yet," Averett said.

"Really, none of our kids got in any serious trouble at all," Averett recalled of those early years in Bates. "Things changed, though, when the mill in Baker shut down."

The community was "heart-sick" following the mill closures, Averett recalled.

"We didn't ask for anything from anybody. We had good jobs and we had everything we needed. When Edward Hines took over, that's when it all changed. It was not for the good, either," she said.

The mill in Bates shut down in 1975, a little over a decade after the Edward Hines Lumber Co. had bought the operation — and the town it supported — from Oregon Lumber. The houses in Bates were put up for sale for \$1 apiece, with the requirement that the purchasers find some-

body to move the houses to new locations.

The Averetts paid \$1 for their home and had it moved to Austin following the mill closure.

"They moved some to Sumpter, some to Prairie City and ours out here, but it just wasn't the same," Averett said.

Despite all the change, the Averetts remained in Austin even when everyone else was leaving.

"We just like it here," Averett said. "It's quiet and peaceful. That's all we want is quiet and peace. Once in a while somebody makes a mistake by not giving us peace and quiet."

The changes happening in Averett's town came with life changes that occurred throughout her time in Austin as well. Averett lost her husband, Tom, in 2002. She lost her eldest son almost two decades later, in December of 2021.

Today, Austin continues to shrink. The current residents are all older and no new residents are moving in, creating a situation where all of the town's history is at risk of being lost — a dynamic that isn't unknown to Averett.

When asked if she was worried if the town's history will be lost when community members like herself are no longer around, Averett responded with, "Oh yeah. ... We'll lose the whole thing."



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

Rosalie Averett sits at the kitchen table of her home in Austin on Thursday, Oct 7, 2022. She and her husband bought the house for \$1 and moved it from the old lumber company town of Bates after the mill closed in 1975.

GRANT COUNTY NEIGHBORS

NAME: Rosalie Averett	dogs"; cooking on her 1911 woodstove/oven
AGE: 88	FAMILY: Husband Tom Sr. (passed in 2002), son Tom Jr. (passed in 2021), son Dan (owner of Grant County Building Supply)
RESIDENCE: Austin	
OCCUPATION: Retired	
HOBBIES: Watches neighborhood dogs because she "likes	

No cause found for mill fire

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Oregon State Fire Marshal has found no cause for the Aug. 10 fire that ripped through and destroyed much of the Pendleton flour mill.

Pendleton Fire Chief Jim Critchley in a statement Oct. 5 reported the fire marshal's office completed its investigation of the blazed and classified the fire as "undetermined ... accidental in nature."

During the past eight weeks, Critchley continued, "the Pendleton Fire Department has been aware of the impact this fire has had on the community, and we are sorry we have not been able to extinguish the smoldering."

The fire department has been in contact with the Environmental Protection Agency and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and with Grain Craft, owner of the



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Flames shoot from the Pendleton flour mills the morning of Aug. 10, 2022. Pendleton Fire Chief Jim Critchley on Oct. 5 reported the investigation of the fire could not determine the cause and called it "accidental in nature."

mill, about the plans going forward. "We are looking forward to assisting in any way we can," the chief concluded.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

THURSDAY, OCT. 13

Meet the candidates

• 5 p.m., Squeeze-In Restaurant and Deck, 423 W. Main St., John Day

John Day City Council candidates Ron Phillips and Sherrie Ringer and mayoral candidate Heather Rookstool will hold a "meet and greet" session to introduce themselves to voters and discuss the future of the city.

Triple P Positive Parenting Program

• 5:30-8 p.m., Painted Sky Center for the Arts, 118 Washington St., Canyon City

Free parenting program that combines four evening sessions with personal phone calls to help with individual implementation. Sponsored by Families First, Community Counseling Solutions and Frontier Early Learning Hub. Free dinner and free child care available. Register online at <https://tinyurl.com/bdevzm6s>. For more information, call 541-575-1006.

FRIDAY, OCT. 14

Free pumpkins for kids

• 3 to 6 p.m., John Day Community Garden, Third Street Extension, John Day

Children are invited to stop by the pumpkin patch at the John Day Community Garden to pick up a free pumpkin. There will also be a Grant County Library Foundation Story-Walk, and hot or cold drinks will be available, depending on the weather.

Dayville Fall Festival

• 6 p.m., Dayville Community Hall, Highway 26, Dayville

The town will hold its annual Fall Festival in the newly renovated Dayville Community Hall. Combread, rolls and apple cider

will be provided, and attendees are asked to bring a soup, stew, chili or dessert to share. There will also be a cakewalk and an Anything Pumpkin Contest (bring food, artwork or anything else pumpkin-related to enter). Winners of the Scarecrow Contest will be announced. The community hall's new tile wall will be unveiled, and Dayville student work will be displayed.

SATURDAY, OCT. 15

Free pumpkins for kids

• 3 to 6 p.m., John Day Community Garden, Third Street Extension, John Day

Children are invited to stop by the pumpkin patch at the John Day Community Garden to pick up a free pumpkin. There will also be a Grant County Library Foundation Story-Walk, and hot or cold drinks will be available, depending on the weather.

MONDAY & TUESDAY, OCT. 17 & 18

CyberMill open house

• 4 to 7 p.m., 119 Front St., Prairie City
Grant County CyberMill will celebrate the grand opening of its newest location in Prairie City with tours, refreshments and door prizes. Like the nonprofit's Seneca location, the Prairie City CyberMill will have three public computer terminals, a conference room, a printer working space and free WiFi.

Do you have a community event you'd like to publicize? Email information to editor@bmeagle.com. The deadline is noon Friday for publication the following Wednesday.

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FARMERS INSURANCE

Harvest Festival

Oct 14th 3pm-8pm, Oct 15th 9 am - 2 pm.

Heritage Barn at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

Multiple Food Vendors, Curbside Cravings on Saturday, Hot Dig-Ga-Dy Dogs, hot dogs and sausage dogs with all the fixings on both days. Fire and Ice Ice Cream, multiple dietary options available.

Live Music

Kids activities- face paintings too!

Drawing for a 8 burner grill

Cider Press available, bring your own apples/containers, or both available for purchase.

Autumn mini photo sessions

Pumpkins and winter squash, home canned goods, baked treats & honey for sale

20+ vendors

Sign up to be a vendor:
grantcofarmersmarket@gmail.com
or call 541-620-3152

Morrow & Grant County Off-Highway Vehicle Park

2nd Elk Season

SPIKE ONLY YOUTH HUNT

November 05, 2022
November 13, 2022

Return applications by Oct. 17, 2022 to:
Morrow County Public Works Office
365 West Highway74, P.O. Box 428
Lexington, Oregon 97839
Phone: 541-989-9500
E-Mail: mcparks@co.morrow.or.us

MUST BE A CURRENT MORROW or GRANT COUNTY RESIDENT
Youth 12 - 17 Years old at time of hunt - Valid Hunting License
General 2nd Season Oregon Hunting Tag Required