

# Story of Flood Told in Rhyme

(Editor's Note: The following poem, written by the late Charles J. Devin, was furnished to The Gazette-Times by Clair H. Cox of Corvallis, who obtained it from the widow of the author. It is printed in commemoration of the 63th anniversary of the Heppner flood. In supplying it to the paper, Mr. Cox states, "My impression is that Mr. Devin was a brother to Heppner's late city marshal, P. Devin, and an uncle to Harlan Devin, a leading Condon mercantile owner and ex-Heppner lad. Harlan was a classmate of Judge Jones, Terrel Bengel and myself, as well as others in the 1929 Heppner High class.")

## MY HOME TOWN

I have a story I want to tell,  
Of Heppner, my home town, and how it once fell  
It was June the 14th, the Year of 1903,  
That awful picture I still can see

It was a Sunday evening, just about six,  
The skies were darkened with clouds black and thick  
There was thunder and lightning, rain and hail poured down,  
A terrible flood swept thru the town

Trees were uprooted, bridges went out,  
Buildings destroyed and scattered about  
Where the cloudburst fell on the upland farms,  
It took out fences, sheds, and barns

All kinds of debris came floating down,  
Lodging in various parts of the town  
Many kinds of wreckage piled high and wide,  
All around on every side

I am telling you it was an awful spill,  
The water spread from hill to hill  
One thousand eight hundred people composed the town,  
About three hundred of them went down

Injuries were sustained to many more,  
Who miraculously escaped death, and floated ashore  
Matlock and Kelly, two Heppnerites  
Made a daring ride that very night

They were highly commended for not being slow,  
To think of the danger to the people below  
They saddled their horses and took out around,  
To warn the people in the neighboring town

They beat the flood to the city line,  
Warning the people in plenty of time  
They quickly responded to the call,  
But the water had receded and their loss was small

Perhaps it's hard for those to understand,  
Who don't know the lay of the land  
Willow Creek curves thru the town,  
That is where the main flood followed down

The west part of town is not so low,  
The homes out there didn't go  
But most of those along the stream,  
It wiped them out, slick and clean

We gathered up a little crew,  
There were so many things we would have to do  
Soon when the main flood passed thru,  
We started out with our little crew

We made it over to the creek,  
The sight we saw would make you sick  
I took one look and at a glance,  
I knew my friends and schoolmates had no chance

Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives,  
Looking for dear ones who had lost their lives  
Dead animals lying around,  
Where human bodies were being found

Some soaked with water all spattered with mud,  
Clothes torn to pieces and covered with blood  
Others in wreckage jammed in tight,  
Covered all over and out of sight

Some so badly beaten, crushed and bruised,  
Their identification was quite confused  
It was hard for relatives sometimes to tell,  
Only by clothing, or marks they knew so well

Personal belongings here and there,  
Lots of jewelry and silverware  
I mentioned before our crew was small,  
But volunteers soon answered our call

The following day just about ten,  
They poured into town both women and men  
They brought their equipment, tents and supplies,  
And were working next morning before sunrise

When they got their tents all staked down,  
It would make you think of an army town  
Farmers came in and brought their teams,  
To tear down wreckage and heavy beams

Around the morgue was a heart rendering sight,  
Crowds of people day and night  
Watching for a lost one, shedding tears,  
Over someone, they had loved for years

For the worker in the morgue it was a mess,  
So many bodies to clean and dress  
The carpenters, too, had quite a task,  
Bodies were being picked up so fast

It kept them busy night and day,  
Making boxes to lay them away  
The crew at the cemetery worked very hard,  
But never complained of being tired

The hacks and hearses were on the go,  
From the morgue to the cemetery, to and fro  
The sheriff was busy night and day,  
Keeping the looters scared away

Doctors and nurses were on the run,  
Rendering aid to the injured ones  
There are so many miracles a flood can do,  
I can hardly explain them all to you

It would pick up buildings large and tall,  
Break them to pieces and let them fall  
And some of the small ones close around,  
It never moved them off the ground

There was one big drift we tore down,  
Lodged against the depot, at the North end of town  
I will mention some of the things in there we found,  
Scattered all through, from the top to the ground

There lay a Chinaman with a broken neck  
We climbed on top to make a check,  
We pulled off some boards and part of a floor,  
And under them lay two bodies more

I can't recall how many bodies we found,  
As I remember, three in the drift and two on the ground  
Household furniture of most every kind,  
From top to bottom now and then we would find

Farm machinery, both old and new,  
Some good, and some broken in two  
A saddle and harness all tied in a knot,  
Nails and staples washed down from a hardware lot

Money boxes and kiddies' banks,  
In broken up furniture and under planks  
Lots of dead chickens, mice and rats,  
A couple of dogs and several cats

Two barrels of bottled beer had floated down,  
From a wrecked saloon in the main part of town  
That was a miracle how it got through,  
Not a single bottle broken in two

The beer was cold and looked very good,  
But the boss shook his head and we all understood  
Lots of miscellaneous articles large and small,  
Just too many, to name them all

I think I have surely said enough,  
So you can see a flood doesn't bluff  
As I recall it was about a week,  
Before the main search for bodies had reached its peak

Still there were a few around,  
Somewhere yet to be found  
Now with all the wreckage torn down,  
There was lots of work to clean the town

It certainly was an awful scene,  
It took months to get it clean  
The work was slow with team and men,  
There were no trucks and tractors then

Now just before I end,  
Those volunteers I do commend  
So I often thought I would write down,

Some of the things that happened in my home town  
So in the month of July, 1962,  
I fully decided that is what I would do  
So this is my story for those who didn't see.

The Heppner Flood in 1903  
In 1903 I was twenty-four,  
Now I can add fifty more  
So you see I am getting old.

And now I am glad my story is told.

CHAS. DEVIN

## Margaret Marks Writes Of Visit to Fon Compound

(Ed. Note: This is another in a series of articles written by Margaret Marks, Heppner High school graduate, who has been with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Les Marks, in Cameroon, Africa.)

By MARGARET MARKS

One of the most interesting visits that I have made since being in Cameroon was when I visited the Fon of Mankon's compound, Mankon, Bamenda.

A Fon in this country can be compared to a feudal king of a past century. He has hundreds of subjects, owns a great deal of land, wealth, and power. This particular Fon even has his own representative in Parliament.

When we arrived at the compound we were disappointed to hear that the Fon was away but we were welcomed by his chief clerk, Charles. In the inner courtyard were flowers and rock gardens, not quite what one would expect. The first formality was to be introduced to the Fon's mother, a gracious woman in ceremonial dress. Her garb was a long blue robe and around her neck she wore two strings of the porcelain slave beads, which are a symbol of the past. She kept repeating the word "Welcome," as she doesn't speak English only her native Mankon language.

Then we were taken to the Council Room where the elders were seated. Four of them were in their native dress of hand-embroidered robes, with necklaces which symbolized their place in the community. The other three were in slacks and white shirts. They were discussing in Mankon and drinking palm wine from native cups which are hollow cattle horns.

If there are problems to be settled in the compound they are brought before the elders. If the elders deem it important enough to be presented to the Fon, then the person who brought the problem may gain an audience with the Fon upon presentation of a calabash of palm wine. Later we were given a tour of

the remainder of the compound. The Fon's Palace was out-of-bounds but Charles told us of its history.

The palace which stands 15 feet high was constructed in 1918. It is made of bamboo with raffia palm mats for the inner walls. The roof is made of grass and it is the only part of the building that has been added since its original construction. New layers of grass are added every few years and the roof is now over four feet thick.

The outer courtyard has the wives houses. Below them is the fish pond, the plantation, a huge vegetable garden, and a pig farm. Plans are now in progress to start a chicken farm also. The Fon has over 100 wives who do all the work in the compound. However, only the head wives are allowed to prepare his food, enter his palace, and they make the everyday decision of running the compound. The head wives even decide which wife will sleep with the Fon.

This particular Fon is progressive in that he tries to send most of his children at least to primary school and the boys on to secondary school. He has started a library in the compound which is comprised of all American books.

The Fon personally invited our family to come and stay in the guest house on the compound for a week-end. I am looking forward to living in that atmosphere for three days.

# THE GAZETTE-TIMES

Heppner, Oregon 97836, Thursday, June 13, 1968

Sec. 2

## Many Residents Entertain Guests

By FRANCES ROSE WILSON

(Held over from last week)

IRRIGON—Mr. and Mrs. William Graybeal drove to Walla Walla last Wednesday and visited their son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Dale Shingledecker, Ricky and Randy. Mr. Graybeal remained in Walla Walla while Mrs. Graybeal went on to Salem to visit another son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Allen, Larry, Linda and Gayle. The Allens are former Irrigon residents. While in Salem, Mrs. Graybeal attended Larry Jr.'s high school graduation.

Miss Ruth Miller, a missionary nurse from Durbin, South Africa, was an overnight guest of the W. F. Coy family. Miss Miller has been in missionary work for 22 years.

Mr. and Mrs. Gene Berg and Ronnie of Vancouver, Wash., were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Partlow and Sherrill several days the past week.

Mrs. Allyn Hobbs of Rancho Cordova, Calif., visited at the Floyd Hobbs home. While here she attended graduation exercises which included Byron Hobbs. On Sunday the family traveled to The Dalles where Mrs. Hobbs remained to visit an aunt.

The Little League parents are planning a smorgasbord dinner on June 13, at 6 p.m. at the A. C. Houghton cafeteria. Price of \$1.25 for adults, 75c for students and 50c for pre-school children, or \$4.00 a family. There will be a game that day between the Braves and the Indians. The score for Saturday's game was the Braves 26 and the Yankees 8. A game is scheduled for each Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. David Rand, Janet and Nancy were guests of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bette Rand, recently. The Rands live in Portland.

Guests in the home of Mayor and Mrs. Chester Wilson recently included their son and family, Mr. and Mrs. John Wilson, Tommy and Jerri of Seattle. They were en route to Boise, Idaho, to spend several days with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Wittell.

Others visiting were a brother, Joe Wilson with his wife Phyllis and son Steve of Portland, and Mrs. Lois Land.

Kelli Snyder and Leon Wilson of Irrigon and Ronald Baker and Rick Partlow of Boardman received scholarships to 4-H Summer School at Oregon State University at Corvallis this year. They will meet the Heppner bus near Boardman on June 10 and make the trip with other Morrow county young people to Corvallis. The Summer school will be the week of June 10-16.

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Adams and family took a vacation trip to Long Beach, Wash., where

they dug clams. They traveled on to Government Mineral Springs, Wash. They encountered rain at both places. They then toured Horseshoe Lake and visited relatives in The Dalles.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Jones and Tammy of Prineville visited the Pete Richards family.

Mrs. Daniel Creamer joined her husband at Sacramento, Calif., this week where she will seek living quarters for the family in preparation to moving there in the near future.

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### NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

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-LELAND W. ROSS  
Box 429  
Burns, Oregon

## Physical Exams Due for Incoming 1st, 9th Graders

Oregon School Law requires all incoming first and ninth grade students to have a pre-school physical and dental examination, and to present the completed forms at school at the beginning of the school year, according to Mrs. Lowell Chally, R. N., Morrow County Health Department.

Parents are asked to have the required physical and dental examination done promptly, thus allowing ample time for any corrective work, if indicated, before school begins on September 3.

The Oregon Pupil Medical Record of "Goldenrod" forms will be distributed to each school where possible to kindergarten children and eighth graders. Forms will also be available in physicians' offices and the Morrow County Health Department. Birth certificates are required of first graders. Application forms are available in the local health department office and will be mailed upon request. Telephone 676-9911 between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon daily for further information.

## Marine Corporal Serves in Vietnam

Marine Lance Corporal Donald D. Troxell, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Troxell of Spray, Ore., is serving with Force Logistic Command, headquartered at Camp Books, eight miles northwest of Danang, Vietnam.

He is helping to provide logistic support for the 80,000 Marines and other friendly forces fighting in the five northernmost provinces of South Vietnam.

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