

THEY LIVE AMONG US

# Jesse Applegate descendant pens authoritative tome

BY MARY MARTIN

Leta Neiderheiser is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Jesse Applegate and the researcher and author of *Jesse Applegate, A Dialogue with Destiny*. A now retired fifth-grade schoolteacher for 20 years, Leta was taking a class about the Applegate Trail and her passion was awakened. She then spent ten years researching this famous and prominent figure in Oregon history and two years writing her book.

Mrs. Neiderheiser's journey followed the Applegate Trail from Berkeley and Yale libraries all the way to Portland through libraries, museums, university archives and historical societies' dusty storage. Her inquiring mind led libraries to open aged boxes that had long been hidden away and forgotten. At first Leta was not given access to original documents because she was neither a professor nor a published author. She told them, "I will be back." If you know Leta, you know this was not a deterrent. It was after she returned three and four times that professionals began taking Leta seriously and decided to be more helpful. She relentlessly persisted with the fortitude and determination of her ancestor.

This research was laborious; back then these materials were not readily available on computer. Leta had to physically search through materials to find what she needed.

In the attic of the Knight Library at the University of Oregon, there were drawers and boxes of "stuff" that nobody had ever looked at or catalogued. People in the 1800s were more prolific letter writers than our generation, so much of the material was discovered in this form. But not all the material was identified with her ancestor. Leta not only read through papers having to do with Jesse Applegate, but also about the innumerable people and events related to him.

One of the events Leta researched was the Modoc War in the 1880s between the Klamath and Modoc Indians. This led to research of Ranger Johnson's files near the Lava Caves. Jesse Applegate had a ranch near Lakeview around the time the US government rounded up the Klamath and Modoc Indians, who had always been enemies, and foolishly put them on the same reservation that was originally Klamath land. Jesse made efforts with the support of Indian agent Alfred B. Meacham to negotiate with the US government to give the Modocs a small reservation on Lost River where they originally lived, but his efforts were fruitless with politicians in Washington. In the end, this war was the most expensive Indian war and the only one where a US general was killed. This is just one situation

where Jesse Applegate's leadership and respected reputation were employed in Oregon politics.

When Leta's book was finished, she sought out publishers—a difficult task if you are an unproven author.

One publisher wanted to alter the truth, but Leta would not compromise. This also was a quality of Jesse Applegate's, one that not only would build him a reputation as it did for Abe Lincoln, but also be tested to the point of losing his wealth and becoming destitute (at one time he was among the richest men in Oregon).

This book is a story of the exceptional commitment and character that built our state. Jesse wrote the first Oregon Constitution as well as carved the first trail from Oregon City down through California. He even lost one of his sons to drowning on the way. Our valley, as well as this publication, is named after this tenacious and well-respected man.

*Jesse Applegate* is the second book Leta Neiderheiser has penned. The first was about her mother, another noteworthy personality. The first printing of this book sold out at 1,500 copies. Oregon



Leta Neiderheiser, Jesse Applegate descendant and author.

Books would like more copies, and I would love to read it after hearing about this resilient woman who was an example of strength and inspiration. I encouraged Leta to have more copies printed for all of us to read.

Leta Neiderheiser not only researches and writes, but also is mother, grandmother and wife to Joe Neiderheiser. She also

volunteers with the Gospel Rescue Mission in Grants Pass, has pioneered a local Christian after-school program called Good News Club, and attends a women's Bible study.

I find it interesting how qualities of our ancestors can be perpetuated far beyond a particular generation. Leta and her husband both have appetites for adventure. In her youth, Leta worked at a lighthouse where she was once struck by lightning and survived. Her husband is active in search and rescue, hiking into wilderness areas to save the lost and injured. Anyone who knows this couple knows they have the integrity and determination of their line.

If you haven't read *Jesse Applegate, A Dialogue with Destiny*, you can obtain a copy from Oregon Books or contact the author at letan41@frontier.com.

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BUTTERFLIES

FROM PAGE 1

The Great Purple Hairstreak can be found in southern Oregon and throughout the U.S. The parasitized insect uses American mistletoe (*Phoradendron flavescens*) found on oaks as its larval food plant, and as a butterfly feeds on nectar of the flower family composites. Some males may live up to 24 days.

Great Purple Hairstreaks can be seen as adults in flight from early April to early October. We have seen them from spring to fall at Applegate School, where we have many oak trees. Some years we have observed three or four flying in the same area, which creates great excitement. A spectacular sight is this butterfly!

**Mourning Cloak**

The Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis*

*antiopa*), of the butterfly family Nymphalidae, is found throughout the U.S. and other countries. The adult butterfly winters over in bark crevices or woody leafy piles, mating in spring. They have a variety of host plants, including willows, alders, birch, maple, and many other trees and shrubs. As adults, Mourning Cloaks nectar on sap from trees, fruits, and asters, and sometimes puddle in damp areas.

In early spring they look faded and worn from overwintering, but with a new brood comes the velvety maroon-brown color on the open upper wings with a unique creamy yellow border and rows of blue spots. On closed wing, the Mourning Cloak blends with its habitat while still showing its yellowish border.

With a wingspan of up to three inches, Mourning Cloaks will command your attention as they glide through the woods, waterways and roads just out of reach. The male guards mating areas by aggressively chasing other butterflies away.

They begin to fly in late winter to early spring while snow is still melting, coming out on slightly warm sunny days. This butterfly also goes into aestivation (hibernating during hot mid summer), and returns to feed and fly through mid-October before finding a safe place to spend the winter months.

The Mourning Cloak is the longest-lived of North American butterflies, some living up to 10 months. Starting very early this past spring, there were many

Mourning Cloaks on wing. They do seem to be in summer hibernation as of this writing, and we can look forward to seeing them again in the fall gliding through the sun-dappled forests.

Linda Kappen

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**Ed. Note:** Linda Kappen is a schoolwide education assistant at Applegate School, where she started the school's butterfly garden 12 years ago. Linda earned a naturalist certification from Siskiyou Field Institute (SFI) and hosted a two-day butterfly/moth course at SFI.



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