

MERCANTILLE

FROM PAGE 1

Upper Applegate area and bought a large acreage from pioneer families. Rose's mother always envisioned a large area for a senior park in the Applegate. Rose has carried forward her mother's visions of helping the community. Family lands in the Rogue Valley included the old Gore Ranch and extended into the area of the new U.S. Cellular Community Park and the Southern Oregon Nursery. It is from these lands that the Applegate Valley community has been the recipient of many donations.

Rose and husband Richard (Dick) Leever's background includes a history of working through local organizations to better our community. You may have seen them working in many locations. In the early 1990s, Rose put much effort into starting a local community center and received a Carpenter Foundation Grant to research this project. At that time there wasn't enough community support for a community center. The Leevers volunteered at the Upper Applegate Grange, and were regulars helping the Rural Action Team, which is now staffed by volunteers and used by Search and Rescue and our local, county, state and forest service for strategic command in fire season.

Wherever the Leevers saw a need, they stepped in. Ruch Library and Ruch School both received generous grants of funds or volunteer time. We are appreciative of the Leevers for all their contributions to the Applegate Valley.

It is hoped that the community will enjoy and support this new addition to the McKee Bridge area, especially knowing the benefits it will bring. Visit the McKee Bridge with your family and

guests. Enjoy a summer day browsing McKee Mercantille and learning the history of the bridge. Linger a minute over the cool water of the Applegate River under the wooden beams of the covered bridge. Bring a picnic or enjoy a meal at McKee Bridge Restaurant. Maggie and Preston will take good care of you. Be sure to try a slice of homemade pie!

It is said there was a gas station and repair shop built around the 1950s near the site of the Mercantille, and one up the road owned by Bert Harr. What would be your guess of the price per gallon of gasoline in those days—15 to 20 cents?

Take a trip to the past, too. Imagine walking the area, perhaps with a parasol or straw hat, hearing the distant clang of men at the horseshoe pits, and the excited fun of children at the swimming hole. Races and simple games of skill and camaraderie. And always a watermelon to enjoy, perhaps cooled in the stream. The aroma of cooking at the campgrounds, and later at the picnic shelter. Imagine the happy days of hard-working Applegaters, free from labor and responsibilities for a day, walking over these same lands. Come to the McKee area, eight miles up Upper Applegate Road on the left, and live the old fashioned way for a day. It is one of the closest ways we can return to the past!

The Mercantille Store
9045 Upper Applegate Road
Jacksonville, OR 97530
Hours: 10 am-4 pm - Sat. and Sun.
Hours may increase.
For information, call
Rose Marie Leever at 541-899-7188.
Ruth C. Austin • 541-899-7476

YOUNG

FROM PAGE 12

take. This is a wonderful place to live. God has used his holy paintbrush to decorate and design this beautiful place," added Connie.

But family is calling, so it's off to Aumsville she must go, taking with her sweet memories of a life well spent in the Applegate Valley. You can bet that

this unstoppable woman will stay active in farming somehow, join another church, and sing in another choir. And with lifetime fishing and hunting licenses, she is sure to enjoy the company of her best friend for years to come.

Barbara Holiday
541-218-8606

Pssst!

Mark your calendar!

September 14, 2008 – 2 pm

**APPLEGATER BENEFIT
Afternoon Tea Party & Silent Auction**

Join us at Eve's Garden Café in downtown Applegate for their famous dress up tea parties with all the trimmings.

Prizes for best hat, funniest hat & best tea attire plus many items in our silent auction donated by local merchants.

Help support the *Applegater* and have a fun afternoon with your family or girlfriends.

\$45 per person -
Red Hatters – Get your group together!
Hats for rent!

Call 846-7673 or 846-9019 for tickets or more information. Credit cards accepted.

McKee Mercantille

★ **NOW OPEN** Sat & Sun ~ 10 am to 4 pm ★
★ 541.899.7188 ★

Offering something for everyone ~

- ◆ unusual glassware
- ◆ antique furniture
- ◆ children's corner
- ◆ picture frames
- ◆ large and small furnished doll houses
- ◆ yarn and sewing items
- ◆ and much more

★ A portion of all sales is donated back to the community by proprietors Richard & Rose Marie Leever.

On Upper Applegate Road near historic McKee Bridge
★ 8 miles upriver from Ruch ★

Tales of the
Wild Wild Applegate

Connie Young has some interesting tales to tell about the Applegate—most were passed down by her father, Clif. Some stories took place in Williams, which, by her dad's account, was a known hideout for notorious bank and train robbers in the early 1900s.

Connie and her brother Willy enjoyed a lively phone conversation while recalling the following stories.

Legend has it, according to Clif, that Bill Miner, the "gentleman bandit," hid out in Williams. This is the same Bill Miner about which the 1983 movie, "The Grey Fox," was based.

Clif himself told how he used to camp out with robbers "Tomestone" Jones and his son "Oregon" Jones in a hideout around Williams Highway and Powell Creek in Williams. According to a document on www.mugshots.com, we know that Oregon was arrested at least once for assault and robbery in Josephine County in 1923 (see photo).

Another story involved the local game warden, whose intent was to bust the Swearingen brothers because of their illegal still, but who wound up stripped and tied to a tree for three days. The game warden promptly transferred to Klamath Falls, where he was killed on an Indian reservation. "Something to do with the Chief's daughter," Connie was told.

And then there's Zeke Barnes, a friend of Connie's brother Shorty, who was a known poacher but was never arrested. Seems that everyone knew Zeke was feeding six kids and close to a dozen grandchildren who were living with him. One day while Zeke and Shorty were parked at the Williams Store with a load of "wood" in Zeke's truck, an officer of the law happened to stop by. After inspecting the truck, the officer told Zeke that his "wood was bleeding," and let him go.

—BH

