

## OBITUARIES

### Elvis Offenbacher 1928 - 2010



Elvis Offenbacher

My dad, Elvis Leon Offenbacher, was born on February 13, 1928, in an old farmhouse on the Applegate River. He died in the Applegate on May 13, 2010. Upon his passing our immediate family didn't have the opportunity to get together with other family and friends to celebrate his life. So even though it has been a few years, I don't think it's ever too late to remember a life, especially my dad's.

My dad was raised on a cattle ranch in the Applegate Valley. The ranch had been in our family since about 1850. His childhood memories included stories of a lot of hard work, cattle drives, hypnotizing chickens, and torturing his younger brother, Dutch. Although it was a little hard to see at times, my dad took pride in his role as the older brother. I think that the bond they shared was the kind you couldn't always see with your eyes, but you could feel in your heart.

My granddad was a cowboy, but my dad was not. He was destined for a different life and it was not on the farm. I don't know why for sure, but maybe it was his allergy to hay or knowing that he could not have made the type of living he wanted if he stayed on the ranch. So, just after my mom and dad graduated from Jacksonville High School, they married and began their life's journey away from the Applegate. They were married over 30 years and raised three kids, which included paying for two college degrees, a start-up business, cars for each of us, and braces for all three. We never looked like we had a lot of money but, because my dad worked so hard, I always had that sense of security. He started his career changing tires, worked hard his whole life, and ended his career by digging holes all over the Applegate with his backhoe. He never did retire.

You would never ask him what he thought unless you wanted to hear what

was on his mind. Dad was really good at being straightforward. And so many times his quick response would bring about a one-liner or a comment that would ignite a belly laugh from the crowd. He loved the Applegate; he knew that he was a part of something bigger, and he was proud of the roots that reached deep into the soil.

Dad had some very good friends in the Applegate. Quite a few of his relationships were tied to his backhoe work, but some of those folks were more than just work buddies. He was involved in the local historical society (he called it the "Hysterical Society") and other Applegate community meetings, where I am sure he shared what was on his mind. He loved to dismantle and reconstruct an idea and then offer a better way. Hearing stories from people who knew my dad has led me to wonder what people really thought of him...and I am still not sure. But I think nearly everyone had respect for my dad. And I bet everyone who called the house and heard the big and somewhat loud "hello" on the other end would surely have to start that conversation with a smile.

I must have been eight years old when my dad showed me what a good handshake should feel like. It's firm and strong, but not so strong as to crush a knuckle. He went on to explain why you don't want a mushy handshake, and I still use that as a telltale sign to judge people's character. Once in a while, he would aim his index finger between my shoulder blades and poke me pretty hard and say, "Get them shoulders back." He wanted me to know how important it was to stand up straight.

My dad was built just like any good German. He was stout and about five feet nine inches tall. What he lacked in height he made up for with his sense of humor, which was quick and sharp. His analogies and descriptions of how he saw the world were just damn funny at times (some of which I cannot repeat). He and I loved to yak it up about politics (thank god we agreed—others were not so lucky). I miss our phone chats very much. I couldn't get away with very much because he could see right through me. It really didn't bother me too much because even though he was direct at times, I knew that I needed only to be myself with him; that's who he wanted me to be.

Writing down a few things about Dad has helped rekindle some of my memories. It has felt good to remember his life. And for those of you who knew him, I hope that a thought was sparked, making you smile at your own memories of Elvis Offenbacher.

Lori Stone

thedustyspur@gorge.net

### Beth Bliss 1951 - 2013

#### Riding with Bliss

Applegate Valley resident Beth Bliss died Saturday, July 13, as a result of injuries sustained when her horse fell during an endurance ride east of Prineville. Beth was 61 and is survived by her husband Barry, daughters Sarah and Autumn, and granddaughter Madelyn.

Beth was one of my best riding buddies. She was a passionate equestrian and endurance rider and was active in numerous local equestrian and trail organizations, serving on the board of directors for several of them.

Her energy and joy of life were contagious. She always had a smile and positive words for everyone. I was honored



Annette Parsons and Beth Bliss (right) near Moab, Utah, during a three-day endurance ride in 2010.

to call her my friend. We shared many joys on the trail and around the campfire. She lived up to her name, and to the bumper sticker on her horse trailer that read "Follow Your Bliss."

Beth and Barry moved to the Applegate Valley from the Midwest in 2001. Beth discovered endurance riding and competed successfully in many rides locally and throughout the region. In 2004 she completed the difficult and rugged 100-mile, one-day Tevis Cup ride from Squaw Valley to Auburn, California on a gelding she had bred and trained.

Beth had told me about her "Earth Mother" days, when she and Barry were raising their daughters on rural property in Iowa in the 1970s and 80s. Beth grew and preserved most of their food. Her daughter Sarah told me, "As children, we were required to do an hour a day in the garden. Our least favorite part was the weeding. We made homemade applesauce and mom canned a lot of food for us. We also raised goats, chickens, rabbits, and an occasional runt pig and cow. My mom and dad butchered the rabbits and chickens themselves. I still have a pillow Mom made me from rabbit hide that she tanned herself. We collected our own eggs and pasteurized our own milk and made our own yogurt. Mom belonged to a co-

op and we grew up on Knudsen juices and carob chips. We were true hippie children; we just didn't know it."

Beth received her associate degree in nursing from Iowa Western Community College in 1994 and worked as an emergency-room nurse for over ten years. After moving to Oregon she worked in the emergency room at Three Rivers Community Hospital. Last year she took a year off to pursue her passion, riding her endurance horse. Recently she returned to work at Three Rivers part time as an on-call nurse.

Beth was always willing to help a new endurance rider learn about the sport and was as competent and sensible a rider as I have ever known. Beth was competitive and tried to be the best she could be at whatever she did, but would never hesitate to stop and help someone in need. She and her little part-Arabian mare, Ivy, were always a welcome addition to any riding group or campout.

Her first horse was a wild mustang adopted from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 1983. Beth gentled and trained her Wild Dream Lady herself. In Beth's own words in 2011:

*I have owned and worked with horses for 27 years. My first was a wild nine-year old mustang mare adopted from the BLM.*

*I have completed over 1,750 miles of competitive trail ride miles in NATRC, including the Championship Challenge ride in 2000. I won the Region 6 top novice horse of 1991 on Lady's son, Corduroy Knickers when he was four years old. After moving from Iowa to Oregon, I started endurance riding with "Roy." In 2004, I accomplished the goal I had dreamed of when I picked his sire. Together we completed the Tevis 100-mile, one-day race placing 84<sup>th</sup> of 129 finishers. We earned a buckle in that 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ride. Roy was 17 years old. I was 52.*

*My little mare Ivy and I began competing in endurance in 2010. She is also trained to be my packhorse and all-around trail horse. I hope to complete the Tevis ride one more time with Ivy as my partner when I am 62.*

*I can't imagine a world without horses. They complete my universe."*

Beth lived her life helping and inspiring others, and doing what she loved. She went out doing what she loved most of all, riding fast.

Ride on forever, girlfriend, I'll miss you. I'll see you down the trail, if I can catch you!

Annette Parsons • aparsons@apbb.net

**OFFICE OUTSOURCE**  
Bookkeeping  
Jobs Large or Small  
In Office or Outsource

yourhelp4office@gmail.com  
541/890-4019

In the Applegate Community  
for over 20 years

**Bella Union**  
Restaurant & Saloon  
Jacksonville Oregon 541 899-1770

**LEHI PUMP SERVICE, INC.**  
Pump Sales & Service Flow Tests  
Filtration System Installations & Repair

Family owned & operated since 1976  
**846-6662 or 474-0752**  
Ron, Jody and Dustin Hill lehipump@gmail.com

**EYE CARE FOR YOU**  
1  
2  
3  
4

**Jacksonville Vision Clinic**  
Julie D. Danielson, O.D.  
**(541) 899-2020**  
950 North Fifth Street  
Jacksonville, OR 97530

ORL #000130  
**Nancy S. Fleischman**  
Residential Real Estate Appraiser  
Specializing in Urban to Rural  
1-4 Units Residences  
Land, Manufactured Homes  
P.O. Box 3274 • Applegate, OR. 97530  
**(541) 846-0230 • Fax (541) 846-0339**

Small Ditching and Excavating Specialist  
"A Little Dirt Never Hurts!"  
541-660-0896  
**P & D SMALL EXCAVATING**  
Phil Niedermeyer  
juphi@oigp.net • CCB# 150965