

Stories of Southern Oregon: Hear the stories. Meet the storytellers.

BY MAUREEN BATTISTELLA AND THALIA TRUESDELL

The Stories of Southern Oregon folks will be back in the Applegate this spring. Join them for a preview of video interviews and to honor the Applegate storytellers at Ruch Library on Saturday, May 5, from 2 to 4 pm, and at the 2018 McKee Bridge Celebration on Saturday, June 9. Both events are free and open to the public.

The Stories of Southern Oregon is a project that organized community forums about the region's agricultural, timber, and mining heritage. Thanks to funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the project has digitized family photos and artifacts and collected more than 175 video interviews. All this represents a rich historical and contemporary archive available for public use through the Southern Oregon University Hannon Library's digital collections, the Southern Oregon Digital Archives (SODA). The archive increases awareness of heritage work life and enhances the importance of preserving and sharing community values because history is now and history is everywhere.

The Applegate stories

Stories of hardships, connections, and successes abounded. Some pioneers had the foresight to record their experiences and struggles in journals and letters. Poems, quilts, photographs, and headstones in overgrown cemeteries also tell stories, some from over one hundred years ago, some more recent.

"We are creating history now," said poet Paul Tipton, "with this storytelling project and the unique stories, which are part of local history, that people will ponder in the future."

The Stories of Southern Oregon project began to document the history of the people in the Applegate Valley in June 2017 at the McKee Bridge Centennial Celebration. Huddled under a canopy while the rhythm of the rain kept time with the Old-Time Fiddlers, folks began sharing their stories, recording their histories, and scanning precious photographs.

Unsure if they qualified to assume a place in the history of the Applegate, some curious residents approached cautiously and were drawn in and encouraged to relate their relatively recent experiences of the last 40 or 50 years, assured that their contributions are valuable to local history. One resident recited poetry and another sang an old spiritual as the camera rolled. Environmental activist Chris Bratt spoke of his growing interest in preventing logging, mining, and herbicide use and the success that local groups have achieved in that area. Ryan Rabjohn talked about what it was like to live in the 1940s. Diana Coogler told tales about living in the woods and writing about what that life was like.

Two weeks later, the story project continued at Ruch Library. The library's community room is a busy place, and many patrons are there daily to use the computers. It is the perfect place to share



Vern Arnold (above) is videotaped as he tells his story at the McKee Bridge Centennial Celebration in 2017. Ryan Rabjohn (right), in old-time attire, adds his story to the growing Stories of Southern Oregon project.



stories, jokes, and zucchini (!), and the librarians hear it all. They knew whom to talk with, whom to call, and whom to encourage to share their stories.

At the Ruch Story Days, the environmentalists' point of view was balanced with stories of mining for gold in the 1980s and 1990s. Gold miner Glenn Wadstein was pleased with the work he accomplished in leveling the tailings piles at the old Sterling Mine, improving the land, and bolstering the local economy. He brought with him videos showing his crew of men and women operating equipment to retrieve the gold overlooked by earlier miners. He drew satisfaction from his research into mining and working in the community. "Thank you for encouraging me," said Glenn Wadstein. "Now I know my life's work will not be forgotten."

Residents understand the importance of heritage documentation and are eager to participate. "I am grateful we can all be recognized as valuable to future generations," commented Paul, "and that they will have access to our tales and the history of the Applegate Valley in our libraries through the Stories of Southern Oregon project."

See the stories

See the Stories of Southern Oregon on YouTube and in the Southern Oregon Digital Archives at soda.sou.edu, and join the storytellers for a reception at Ruch Library on May 5 and at the McKee Bridge Celebration on June 9. If you contributed a story or photographs, you'll be able to pick up a CD/DVD of your video and images at either event.

For more information, contact Maureen Flanagan Battistella at 541-552-0743 and battistem@sou.edu or Thalia Truesdell at 541-899-7438 and ttruesdell@jcls.org.

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A geranium you don't want

BY BARBARA MUMBLO

Shiny geranium (*Geranium lucidum*), a noxious weed new to the Applegate, was recently found in the vicinity of Forest Creek on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. You may have read Suzie Savoie's article about it in the Fall 2017 *Applegater*. This plant is fairly small, is a non-native annual, and spreads very aggressively. It's on list B ("a weed of economic importance that is regionally abundant") of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA's) noxious weed list. (Visit oregon.gov/oda/programs/weeds/oregonnoxiousweeds/pages/aboutoregonweeds.aspx for more information.) The infestation of shiny geranium is estimated to be about 40 acres.

So far, the shiny geranium is known only at the Forest Creek location, a small site on private land that is being worked on, and a few small sites upstream of Gold Hill along the Rogue River. It is easily transported by soil movement since its seeds are tiny. I heard that a friend of mine accidentally brought it home, probably having picked it up on his boots while fishing.

Two other non-native geraniums commonly found in the Applegate are Dovesfoot or Crane's Bill (*Geranium molle*) and Cut-leaved Crane's Bill (*Geranium dissectum*). However, these two geraniums are not the pests that shiny geranium is since they don't spread as rapidly. One of the features to look for to distinguish shiny geranium from these species is its red stem. Also, the leaf is not hairy and has a waxy appearance, so it seems shiny compared to the other two.

There may be more shiny geraniums out there than we know. We are planning to contact private landowners near this site to see if the plant might have moved onto their property. We would also appreciate your help in keeping an eye out for it as you travel around the valley.

The plan is to start control efforts for this infestation this spring. Participating in this plan are the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council, the Medford District BLM (Ashland Area), ODA, Jackson and Josephine Cooperative Weed Management Areas, and Applegaters. This plant can make a monoculture, as has been seen in the Willamette Valley. We hope to keep it from becoming more widespread in southwest Oregon, especially in the Applegate Valley.



Be on the lookout for the shiny geranium, a noxious weed recently found in the Applegate. Photo: Bruce Newhouse.



The Dovesfoot geranium is non-native but is not considered a pest. Photo: Steve Matson.



The Cut-leaved Crane's Bill is another non-native geranium that is not considered a pest. Photo: en.wikipedia.org.

Leave me a message if you think you've found this plant, and I'll come check it out.
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