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THE AGATE

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The White Buffalo



The Voice of MHS

The White Buffalo

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THE VOICE OF
MADRAS HIGH
SCHOOL

THE WHITE BUFFALO

White Buffalo

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October 19, 2006

WHITE BUFFALO

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White Buffalo

MADRAS UNION HIGH SCHOOL, MADRAS, ORE. September 26, 1991

WHITE BUFFALO

MADRAS HIGH SCHOOL

WHITE BUFFALO

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Dear Agate Readers,

YOU'RE HOLDING THE TENTH ISSUE of THE AGATE, a journal of local (Jefferson County and Central Oregon) history for (mainly) local readers. Supported by the Jefferson County Historical Society and distributed by the Madras *Pioneer* to its readership, THE AGATE is the only publication of its kind in Central Oregon.

There's nothing essentially magical about the number ten, but we're proud of carrying on twice a year for five years now, a run capped earlier this year by the Oregon Heritage Commission giving THE AGATE its "Award for Excellence"—the only Oregon publication so honored.

We're especially keen on this issue, with its focus on the extraordinary history of the Madras High School newspaper, *the White Buffalo*, and its peerless adviser E. Howard Hillis. The "WB" attained and held national recognition, including 22 "All American" ratings between 1958 and 1971; and we are thrilled and honored to be publishing here the essay by Margaret McBride Lehrman, who went from working on the "WB" with Howard Hillis to becoming an Emmy-winning director of NBC national news. Perhaps no one ever thought of seriously covering the history of a high school newspaper until now—but then it's likely that there has never been a school paper quite like *the White Buffalo* in its prime years. At any rate, Margie Lehrman's meticulously-researched essay makes very clear what an amazing set of personal, academic, and professional opportunities the "WB" provided its editors, writers, ad-salesmen, and printers. With high school papers now virtually extinct, one wonders if there are equivalent opportunities open to bright kids in Madras and elsewhere--?

Also in this issue, we take a close, localized look at the much-acclaimed Netflix documentary *Wild, Wild Country* on the Rajneeshee era in Jefferson and Wasco counties in the 1980s.

On Homecoming Day, Sept. 28, Madras High School celebrated its third annual "Distinguished Alumni" program by honoring five MHS graduates for their outstanding achievements in a variety of fields and professions. This year's honorees are: Elaine Henderson, '52, long-time Jefferson County Clerk and prominent community volunteer and leader (JCHS President 1999-2006); Pat Courtney Gold, '57, internationally-recognized Native American basketry and fiber artist; Joel Neilson PhD, '92, Professor of Molecular Physiology at Baylor University and Director of the Neilson Laboratory there, and a leader in gene sequencing and transcription research; Glenn Rodriguez MD, '72, Program Director of family medicine at Providence Milwaukie Hospital (ret.) and a widely recognized authority on family medicine; and Alan Watts, '78, internationally-known innovator and promoter of sport climbing, through his *Climber's Guide to Smith Rock* and his own outstanding record of climbs there, a key figure in putting Smith Rock State Park on the world rock-climbing map.

It's no exaggeration to say that each of these achievements by Madras graduates has its own historic significance. Likewise with those honored in 2017—Ken Smith, Dallas Stovall, Juanita Kurtin, Margaret McBride Lehrman, Erin Olson, and Tom Norton Sr.—and those in 2016—Rev. Jacob DeShazer, Lillian Pitt, William Ramsey, Rick Allen, and Porfirio Pena, Jr. Congratulations to all of them—and congratulations to Madras High School for highlighting the accomplishments of its graduates, and thereby exemplifying to today's *White Buffalos* what's possible for kids from Madras!



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The mission of the Society is to research, gather and preserve the history of Jefferson County and Central Oregon for public education through the display of artifacts and archives.

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Cover: collage of *White Buffalo* banners

The White Buffalo: A School Newspaper for the Ages

By Margaret (Margie) McBride Lehrman, MUHS '62

When E. Howard Hillis arrived in 1948 to teach journalism at Madras Union High School (MUHS), enrollment 160, he inherited a small four-page newspaper called the *White Buffalo*.

The little paper, which was printed by the *Madras Pioneer*, published only eight times a year and received no financial help from the school district. (WB, Feb. 7, 1974)

Hillis, however, arrived with a vision.

Twenty-seven years later, when Hillis retired, the *White Buffalo* had grown into a behemoth in the world of high school journalism. It was known throughout the nation and internationally for its excellence, and had received every national award of distinction available to a high school newspaper – some awards, for many years.

At its height the *White Buffalo* was publishing 18 pages every two weeks, and had a distribution of nearly 1,500. In the '60s, some around town even said the *White Buffalo* was a better read than the local paper. This is the story of what happened to the *White Buffalo*.

Preparing for the Job—Hillis' Life before Madras

When Hillis moved to Madras, he already was familiar with Central Oregon. As the child of a minister – indeed, generations of ministers -- Hillis had spent much of his boyhood in Redmond, Terrebonne, Tumalo and Madras, in addition to stints in Washington state, Idaho, and Montana.

After so much moving around as a child, Hillis wanted to put down roots, according to his son Stephen, who also advised the *White Buffalo* 1974-89 and still resides in Madras. "He wanted a home, a place for his family."

As a young man, Hillis spent his summers working on farms and ranches. "He was something of a prankster in high school," according to a former *White Buffalo* editor who heard this story from Hillis:

Hillis and his friend Sid Elliott at Redmond High made a dummy and hanged it off the Crooked River railroad bridge one night, "causing a great stir the next day when it was spotted," the story goes.

While still in high school, but after leaving Central Oregon, Hillis started working on the Hillsboro *Argus* in 1926 as a printer's devil and copy boy.

He worked on *The Argus* for 20 years, including while he attended Pacific University in Forest Grove. At Pacific, Hillis was editor of The



A. E. Howard Hillis

Index, the university newspaper; a member of Blue Key national honor fraternity; president of Alpha Zeta social fraternity; and was listed in *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*.

Hillis' wife Dorothy also attended Pacific, where she majored in psychology and was named May Queen her senior year.

Before he received his degree, however, Hillis – at age 33, married and the father of son Stephen -- joined the Navy and fought in the South Pacific during WWII. "He never talked about it," recalled Stephen.

What is known is that, while overseas, Hillis contracted an infection in both eyes. "The doctor wanted to treat both eyes," said Stephen, but his dad insisted on treating just one eye – the right eye. The treatment didn't work. Hillis lost that eye. "My dad would have been blind," said Stephen, if he'd allowed both eyes to be treated.

After the war, Hillis returned to Pacific University, majoring in journalism on the G.I. Bill, and continued to work on the *Argus*. He also became a correspondent for the *Oregonian* and *Journal*.

In 1947 with his B.S. degree in hand, Hillis attended the University of Oregon for four terms to get his teaching credentials.

When Hillis left Eugene in 1948 for his first teaching job at MUHS, the job included advising a little four-page newspaper with a spotty history.

"I don't know when the first paper or yearbook was published," explained Hillis to the *White Buffalo* in 1958 (Nov. 10). "They have been either lost or thrown away, because we haven't been able to find them. Also, the papers weren't published regularly up until 1946; they were published off and on and not too many of them had dates on them."

The Golden M

The first Madras High newspaper in the archives dates to 1922 and was called by a vote of the student body *The Golden M* because school colors then were black and gold. (WB, Jan. 18, 1960)

The Golden M debuted Feb. 13, 1922, four pages edited by Earle L. Tucker, published once a month by the *Madras Pioneer* for a high school student body of 66.

"In presenting The Goldfen [sic] M we are begining [sic] an experiment," wrote Tucker in his first editorial.

"There is much news around the school that is valuable to the community...but the news has never been gathered and presented. We hope that the students will support this paper with news items and other material. If they will do this *The Golden M* is sure to fill a long felt need."

Tucker cautioned, "Our advertisers are watching our experiment and

will support us temporarily. Our success lies with the students of the High School. What will they do?"

Indeed, advertisers lined up to support the Golden M. They included the *Madras Pioneer*, Main Street Barber Shop, The Workingman's Store, Madras Trading Co., Tum-a-Lum Lumber Co., Madras Picture House [movie theater], and even one ad for a Wardrop [sic] Hood Dodge Sedan, reduced \$345 to \$1440.

The ad from the *Pioneer* read simply: "Geo. T. Pearce, Owner; J.L. Tucker, Earle Tucker, Wendell Gray."

The men of the *Pioneer* wrote enthusiastically in that week's newspaper: "*The Golden M* . . . has made its appearance. To say that it is an excellent sheet is only doing it fair justice. (MP, Feb. 16, 1922)

"The *Madras Pioneer* . . . [has] taken a great deal of interest in the 'Golden M' for several reasons," the paper went on. "Earle Tucker, son of the foreman of our mechanical department and himself an employee out of study hours, conceived the idea and as editor of the 'M' has caused it to be the success it is . . . The *Pioneer* is proud of the fact that one of 'our' boys has been able to utilize his training in our plant to such an end," concluded the *Pioneer*.

So *The Golden M* was off to its start.

The *Golden M's* fifth issue, published June 1, 1922, was double in size, eight pages, perhaps because it was the "senior edition," marking the end of the school year, and the end of high school for seven graduates: Elizabeth Babcock, Nathan Young, Ionella Culp, Arthur Dizney, Wayne Jones, Anton Poulsen, and Kenneth Binder.

It also seemed to mark the end of *The Golden M* because no further issues have been located.

High School Burns Down

On Jan. 31, 1937, the Madras high school built in 1920 for \$44,000 burned down.

The community stepped up to deal with this disaster. Students attended classes temporarily in four rooms reconfigured in the basement of the New Madras Hotel. Other businesses offered facilities for sports and extracurricular activities.

In February, the *Madras Pioneer* started



The Golden M, 1922, JCHS Archives



Madras Union High School, late 1950s

publishing a "High School Activities" column.

In March, the *Pioneer* published a double-column feature that appeared under the title "the *White Buffalo* of Madras Union High School" with a "News Staff" of four, headed by editor Mona Grant.

The *Pioneer* published the *White Buffalo* through the end of the 1936-37 school year. Then, whether because of editor changes at the *Pioneer* or at the high school, or both, we find nothing further of the *White Buffalo* even after the new high school opened Sept. 13, 1938.

In the early 1940s, some high school newspapers came out a couple times a year, put together by English classes or a group of students. They had names like the *Fighting Buffalo*, *White Buffaloes*, *Madras White Buffalo*, and the *Green Buffalo*.

It seemed the color of the buffalo was "decided upon by the color of the paper cover of each publication" explained then-reporter Stephen Hillis in the *White Buffalo*. (Jan. 18, 1960)

Some early *Buffalo* papers were hand-written at first; later, they were mimeographed.

During this time the *White Buffalo* name was permanently adopted and the newspaper became a project of the senior English class, a four-page paper with three editors, printed at the *Pioneer*.

In the 1945-46 school year, Mary Frances Mattison (later Mrs. William Mehlenbeck) became the first *White Buffalo* adviser. The editor was Eddie Hart. In 1947, the adviser was a Miss Holmes, and the editor was Edythe Spafford (Mrs. Robert Casselbier).

With this history, the little four-page *White Buffalo* awaited Hillis in 1948.

During his first year at MUHS, Hillis taught journalism, and five classes of English, in addition to advising both the *White Buffalo* newspaper and the *Hi-Sage* yearbook. He also directed the school plays for four years.

"Dad couldn't sit still," admits Hillis' son Stephen. Even when the family went camping for two weeks every summer at Little Cultus Lake, according to Stephen, "Dad was always busy, building a raft, or building a dock."

At home, Hillis enjoyed carpentry, music,

reading, and “We always had a garden,” said Stephen. “We lived off the garden in the summer.”

In his role as adviser for the *White Buffalo*, Hillis went to work hunting down a used 12x18 Platen printing press and “other necessary equipment including two type cabinets with 45 cases of type,” for \$1200 that would get a typography department off the ground. (WB, Oct. 1, 1951)

According to Hillis, “The school board agreed to pay \$650, the price of the press, and furnish a room for the equipment. The newspaper was to pay the balance.” (*Quill & Scroll Mag*, F-Ma, 1954)

Hillis also started teaching typography in 1949, first as an extracurricular activity, then as one class. Soon he formed a service club for the department, the Pied Typers, which raised money by selling program advertising and other printed products. (WB, Jan. 22, 1971)

(By 1971, Hillis’ typography department had expanded to five classes with 47 students. Today, according to a Jan. 27, 2018 article in the *Bend Bulletin*, “Students in advanced printing can earn credits at Mt. Hood Community College, and they are learning valuable skills applicable to a job after high school.”)

“Hillis soon acquired the support of the local merchants, and advertising [became] the main support of the paper,” reported the *White Buffalo* in 1974 (Feb. 7).

Local merchants were enthusiastic supporters, for years. At one point, more than 90 percent of the businesses in Madras advertised in the *White Buffalo*. (EHH, Q&S, F-Ma 1954)

The *Madras Pioneer*, which for years set type for the *White Buffalo*, provided photographs, and printed the newspaper, only once strayed from full-on support of its junior paper.

In the late ’50s, according to a well-placed source, the editor of the *Pioneer* filed a formal complaint with the school board because, he charged, the *White Buffalo* was drawing away readers and advertisers. The students were doing a good job. The complaint went nowhere.

In 1949, Hillis enrolled MUHS in Quill and Scroll, an international journalism honor society founded in 1926 by George H. Gallup, the originator of the Gallup Poll, at Iowa State University (now University of Iowa).

To join Quill and Scroll at MUHS, a student had to be a junior or senior, rank in the upper third of his or her class, and be active in journalism work.

The new Quill and Scroll club went to work holding fundraisers to help finance student publications and to send students on educational trips to journalism conferences.

First Paper Printed at High School

With the addition of the Platen printing press and a group of typographers, MUHS printed its first *White Buffalo* entirely in-house on Sept. 17, 1951.

“The journalism and printing classes are now able to do the entire printing operation, with the exception of the straight matter, which will be set on the Linotype at the Madras Pioneer. In the past, all printing was done by the Pioneer,” reported the paper.

(For 18 years, the *White Buffalo* was printed at the high school. Then it went to Bend to be printed by offset press, and later to Prineville, to be printed at the *Central Oregonian*.)

Now, with the new equipment, the *White Buffalo* began publishing twice a month instead of once a month, and the annual subscription rate doubled to \$1.50 because readers were getting twice as many papers.

“We of the paper staff realize that this, our first paper, is not all that it could be,” said the *White Buffalo*’s editor Birdella “Birdie” Nance (Mrs. Earl McDowell). “If you will bear with us for the first few issues, we hope to publish a progressively better paper.”

Always, that was the *White Buffalo*’s aim: To be better. To be excellent.

“Get it right,” Hillis would lecture. The Number One rule in journalism, he emphasized, is “Get it right.”

To help “get it right,” the journalism students had access to cards filled out by each student that listed, among other things, name, birthdate, parents’ names, siblings, and year in school.

With these cards as reference, there was no excuse for misspelling a student’s name. “Get it right.”

Never-never-ever misspell someone’s name, admonished Hillis. If you misspell someone’s name in the newspaper, that person knows it, that person’s family knows it, that person’s friends know it, and all of them will question what else you got wrong. You’ve damaged your credibility.

Likewise, never get someone’s age wrong.

(Check it against the student’s card.)
Credibility.

Never confuse two students with the same name. Always write, “Tom Brown, sophomore,” or “Tom Brown, son of xxx,” so you’ve identified the correct Tom Brown. “Get it right.”

Another basic: Get dates right. A large calendar hung on the wall in the journalism class so reporters never would write Monday, May 3, when they meant Monday, May 4. “Look at the calendar,” Hillis instructed.

Again, credibility. “Get it right.”

Every two weeks, the day after the *White Buffalo* came out, Hillis would stand in front of the journalism class, holding up the latest issue, which was covered in bold red circles he’d drawn around various items. Each of those red circles was a “teachable moment.”

Hillis would start on page one and ask, “What is the source of this information?” “What’s wrong with this headline?” “Periods always go inside quotation marks.” “How do you really spell ‘liaison’?”

Hillis was tough, but fair. “Get it right.”

We students cringed at our errors and vowed never to make that mistake again.

“Howard had a reputation as being a good teacher,” noted Joe Piedmont, *White Buffalo* editor from 1960-61, in an interview this summer. “I always thought he was ten times smarter than people gave him credit for,” added Piedmont.

“He was not a slap-you-on-the-back” kind of man, but I figured he had to take some “joy, some pleasure” when the *White Buffalo* got awards, or “when students won at competitions,” said Joe.

“I remember him with his white shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbows,” Piedmont added. “And I remember ‘Get it right.’”

Piedmont, who graduated in journalism from the University of Oregon, went on to co-found the Gallatin Group (now Gallatin Public Affairs), one of the most respected communications firms in the Northwest.

Jerry Ramsey, *White Buffalo* editor 1954-55, remembers Hillis as “stern but encouraging.” Ramsey took his journalism background to the UO where he worked on the *Oregon Daily Emerald* four years and was editor his senior year.

After earning a PhD at the U. of Washington, Ramsey taught literature and writing at the University of Rochester for 35 years. He’s had

numerous books published and now has “come full circle,” as he puts it, back in Madras as publisher of The AGATE.

Hillis had a “wry sense of humor,” observed Dave Wiles in an August interview. Wiles, who came to MUHS in 1964, taught the first Journalism I classes plus English, and was a coach and yearbook adviser for 19 years.

“He was funny,” stated Wiles. “When he redlined the paper, I just loved to go in and see him [perform] . . . He was a terrific guy.”

Hillis, in his first 10 years at MUHS, hadn’t missed a single day of school, noted the *White Buffalo* in 1959. (Mar. 9)

To study journalism with Hillis at MUHS, a sophomore had to be recommended by teachers. Juniors and seniors could take journalism as an elective. In the early years, students all sat together and worked together in one classroom.

In later years students enrolled in journalism received credit for Journalism 1 their first year (whether sophomore, junior or senior), Journalism 2 their second year, and Journalism 3 their third year.

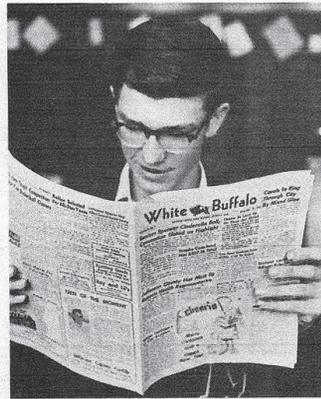
The thinking was, explained Stephen Hillis, “You can’t get credit three years for the same class.” Except it never was the same.

Students Wrote and Edited

Generally, the newspaper had three key editors—news, features and sports – and an editor-in-chief overall who also wrote editorials. Other staff and editors were added through the years with titles like alumni editor, news bureau editor, business manager, circulation, photographer, and typist.

(Yes, typist. Through the years, manual typewriters made way for electric typewriters, and eventually computers and desktop publishing.)

The three editors and the reporters would come up with story ideas,

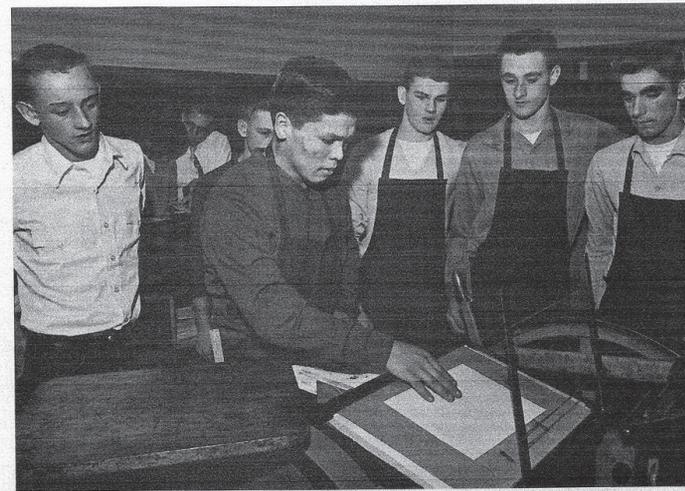


Each issue of the *White Buffalo* is eagerly read by the students.



A student gets instruction in type setting from Howard Hillis, right, typography and journalism instructor.

The typography class watching the press run.



White Buffalo staffers, late 1950s

and the editors would post their assignment sheets. A reporter could sign up for any story not already assigned to someone, and also could suggest a story he or she wanted to write.

Students did not lack ideas for stories. For example, the *White Buffalo* of May 18, 1959, contained 132 stories and pictures. (Bend Bulletin, 1959)

Students wrote and edited all stories. The editor-in-chief had final say over all copy. Some years the editor-in-chief was selected by the class; most often, he or she was chosen by Hillis or a subsequent adviser.

One of the paper’s most enduring features began Sept. 17, 1954, with the first “Teen of the Moment” (Larry Fivecoat), which was sponsored for decades by the Jefferson County Co-op.

“Teen of the Moment” profiled a student who had done something notable lately, and was a constant feature along with other student profiles like “Junior of the Month,” “This Is Your Life,” and “Who Am I” (the latter two, accompanied by a childhood photo).

The ever-popular “Birthday Box,” which listed student birthdays each month, meant every student could be named in the newspaper.

Other popular features included “Alumnews,” “Know Your Advertisers,” “Meet the Faculty,” “Buff Buggies”

(student cars), “Meet the Ministers,” “It Happened This Month” (events in history), “Know Your Office Staff,” “Heard of Buffaloes” (sports commentary) and “News of Other Schools.”

“News of Other Schools” often was written by the circulation editor who, by the early ’60s, managed the exchange of papers with more than 300 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, plus more than a dozen colleges, and a few foreign countries.

“The main idea of the program is the exchange of ideas and spreading of good will among the various schools,” pointed out Hillis. (WB, Mar. 26, 1956)

“Exchange papers are used to illustrate various styles of writing

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throughout the country and to inform students about other schools' activities and fads," noted the *White Buffalo* (Feb. 13, 1961)

In addition, the *White Buffalo* was mailed to subscribers and out-of-town advertisers. Some were put on stands around town for sale. The remaining papers were distributed to the student body, local schools, the school district, town advertisers, and a few kept for the files.

Regular columns included "Around Town" (what's in local stores), "Platter Chatter" (the latest music and Top Ten), "Just About Everything," and a column written in the early '60s by Larry Calica about Indian customs and lore.

Cited for Merit

Given this drive for excellence under Hillis, the *White Buffalo* received its first recognition for journalistic merit in 1951-52, under editor Birdie Nance.

The Pacific Slope School Press at the University of Washington gave the paper one of only 15 citations for "doing an outstanding job in the school publications field."

The paper was judged against 370 other high school newspapers from eight western states, large city schools as well as small schools like Madras (enrollment then around 225). The only other winners in Oregon were Salem High and Oregon City High. (WB, May 19, 1952)

The citation said, "the *White Buffalo* would be a credit to a much larger school."

As noted in the *White Buffalo*, 1951-52 was a year of several "firsts" for the newspaper: the first time it received recognition; the first time it was printed at the school (thanks to the new printing press); the first time it was printed bi-monthly instead of monthly; and the first eight-page printed paper at MUHS. (May 19, 1952)

Others started taking note of the *White Buffalo* as well.

One journalism instructor at the University of Oregon wrote to Hillis to ask for copies of the *White Buffalo* to use in her teaching that summer. (WB, May 19, 1952)

Meantime, the *White Buffalo* promised its readers in May 1951: "The journalism staff hopes to be able to publish an even better paper next year. Finances allowing, they hope to have more pictures and other special features."

That fall, September 1952, Quill and Scroll purchased a camera for the *White Buffalo* and yearbook pictures. "Money for the camera

was obtained by selling programs at the 1953 basketball tournament held at Prineville," reported the *White Buffalo*.

That fall, the *White Buffalo* added a photographer to its staff, with "hopes this will result in better pictorial coverage of the school activities," said editor Shirley Cunningham (Mrs. Bud Reynolds). Also, photography was added to the journalism curriculum.

Newspaper Goals

Cunningham also took the opportunity of a new school year to lay out the goals of the *White Buffalo* in an editorial that read: "The goal of 'the *White Buffalo*' staff for the coming school year is to print news and happenings of MUHS which are of interest to the readers...in an unprejudiced and fair way and to reflect the spirit of the school...news which will be of help to the students, school and community and not necessarily that news which is sensational." (Sept. 29, 1952)

Cunningham followed up with a bylined article the following spring, Mar. 2, 1952, titled "Staff Approves Code of Ethics."

In it, she explained that the high schools of Indiana have been following a press code of ethics for 27 years. "It sums up the policy of this paper so closely," she wrote, "that we have taken the liberty of reprinting it."

The Code

1. To co-operate with the faculty in supporting all school projects and in giving only constructive criticisms to such projects.
2. To maintain at all times a high standard of sportsmanship by avoiding personal enmity and jealousy both within the school and in inter-school relations.
3. To refrain from publishing articles concerning the school that convey the wrong impression to those not familiar with every phase of the situation.
4. To avoid unkind personal jokes, criticisms, and caricatures.
5. To be truthful in reporting news, not sacrificing accuracy to make a good story.
6. To give full credit for any material which is not original.
7. To acknowledge mistakes by frankly correcting all errors which are brought to the attention of the staff.

8. To use correct English and to strive for the best style of expression.

9. To work as a team, not for individual glory.

10. To exemplify the fact that the purpose of the paper is to be a spokesman of the school which it represents, to give accurate information, and to reflect good sportsmanship.

Cunningham's editorials were the first of many in the *White Buffalo* to declare the newspaper's policy and principles.

As a result, students, their families, indeed the entire community, learned what the role of a newspaper is, and how that newspaper's staff hoped to fulfill it. This was a genuine community service.

With a firm grip on newspaper policy and a desire for excellence, the MUHS journalism department in 1952 joined the Oregon Scholastic Press, headquartered since 1921 in the University of Oregon Journalism Department.

"The purpose of this club," explained the *White Buffalo*, "is to create interest in journalism and to help solve problems that might arise." (Sept. 15, 1952)

The article continued: "Each year this organization holds a high school press conference at which staff members of school papers from all over the state meet. Although no definite plans have been made Hillis... would like to take several members of the class to the meetings."

Have Pen, Will Travel

That November, three girls and one boy traveled to the UO for the OSP conference, escorted by an MUHS English teacher whose family lived in Eugene.

For the first time, Madras journalism students were meeting with hundreds of other journalism students and advisers from around the state, learning about the problems at other school papers, and approaches to solving them.

Hillis promoted this, and many other, journalism trips because he felt these conferences were "very beneficial to those attending and will help the staff in improving the *White Buffalo*." (WB, Oct. 17, 1960)

As one student described his trip in 1982: "It was a terrific experience...it was really neat to see what kids in other parts of the state are doing with their newspapers. It makes you realize that Madras isn't the center of the

universe when you see that many kids from all over the state together at one time..." (WB, Oct. 18, 1982)

The OSP relationship proved beneficial immediately. In May 1953, the OSP sent *White Buffalo* editor Cunningham a "letter of acknowledgement for outstanding journalistic work." It also recognized Birdella Nance for outstanding yearbook editorship.

Two more pieces of good news arrived at the *White Buffalo* in May 1954, under editor L.E. Crecelius.

First, the Pacific Slope School Press, with nearly 400 member schools from eight western states, awarded the *White Buffalo* its Two-Star Citation, an award given to only six schools in six years.

"the *White Buffalo*, because of its impressive appearance, continues to be one of the outstanding publications on the West Coast," asserted the judges. "Printing a 12-page, four-column newspaper in a high school with 300 to 400 students is an amazing accomplishment." (WB, May 10, 1954)

The second piece of good news: Pacific University awarded the *White Buffalo* its Harvey Scott Editorial Trophy for first place in editorial excellence judged on "quality of writing, consistency of policy, evidence of a definite program, reader appeal, worthiness of project supported, value to school administration, originality of approach, fair-mindedness, good taste and constructive criticism." (WB, May 10, 1954)

The trophy, sponsored by Pi Delta Epsilon, national journalism honor society, became the permanent property of MUHS.

Now the *White Buffalo* and its staff were getting not only statewide recognition, but also regional recognition. National recognition wasn't far behind.

National Honors

In 1954, the *White Buffalo*, under editors Jan Luelling and L.E. Crecelius, earned its first nation-wide competitive honor, 1st Class, from the National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA) headquartered at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

In competition with U.S. high schools up to 1,400 enrollment that printed their own school news, the *White Buffalo* was judged "an unusual paper in many ways – your rapport with the business community is the best I've seen in any school paper. Not only that; coverage of off-beat local incidents make the Buffalo exceptional." (WB, Apr. 13, 1954)

First Class awards were given only to outstanding newspapers that show high-quality work in all areas.

Later that year, again under editor Crecelius, the *White Buffalo* earned a second 1st Class rating for its second-semester issues from the NSPA. (WB, Oct. 18, 1954)

On top of that, the Quill and Scroll rating service awarded the *White Buffalo* an International First Place award, which is given only to outstanding papers that show high-quality work in all categories.

"Definitely a leader in scholastic fourth estate," wrote one judge. "the *White Buffalo* is doing a remarkable job in providing a full coverage newspaper in school and community."

The icing on the cake, though, came when the *White Buffalo* learned the Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) based at Columbia University in New York City had bestowed its coveted Medalist award on the 1954 issues of the *White Buffalo* under editors L.E. Crecelius and Jerry Ramsey. (WB, Apr. 19, 1955).

The judges gave the *White Buffalo* 948 points of a possible 1,000,

and wrote, "A splendid paper. Excellent coverage...Congratulations to a hard-working staff and adviser."

No more than 10 percent of the publications entered nation-wide received the rank of Medalist.

With the next two editors, Jerry Ramsey and Jane Palin, the *White Buffalo* received two more International Honor Ratings from Quill and Scroll, plus their coveted "A" Award, reserved for newspapers showing sustained leadership through the years.

"the *White Buffalo* is unique in scholastic journalism. You are providing outstanding service to school and community," Quill and Scroll judges wrote.

Ramsey and Palin also won another 1st Place from the CSPA, and racked up four more 1st Class honors from the NSPA.

NSPA's 1st Class Award was good, but it was not good enough for the *White Buffalo*.

Palin wrote in her farewell editorial to staff April 30, "...may you continue to keep the high standard of the *White Buffalo* by working toward that precious goal All-American."

All-American. That was better than 1st Class.

Up until then, the *White Buffalo* had stacked up six 1st Class honors from the NSPA, but still no All-American. All-American was "superior" and was reserved for only the top publications.

Palin, who went on to share another Medalist rating from the CSPA (one of only two awarded in the state of Oregon) wouldn't have to wait long.

The Elusive All-American Rating

That spring, April 1957, editor Bonita Nance and her staff learned the *White Buffalo* received its first All-American rating for first-semester issues from the NSPA.

"This is one award we've been working so hard for and I couldn't have been happier when we received it," editor Nance exclaimed. (WB, Apr. 15, 1957)

Judges rated the *White Buffalo* excellent in leads, news sources and stories, sports coverage, writing, typography and printing.

Imagine. All-American. Superior. Madras Union High School. After six 1st Class awards in succession, the *White Buffalo*, at long last, earned the elusive All-American.

Commented Hillis: "We've now received all top awards but there is plenty of work to maintain these standards. This doesn't mean we can sit back and relax; there is room for improvement on the *White Buffalo*." (WB, Apr. 15, 1957)

No one sat back and relaxed on Hillis' watch.

In 1957-58, under editor Bill Davis, the *White Buffalo* received its first George H. Gallup Award from Quill and Scroll. To earn the Gallup Award, a newspaper had to be judged "superior" in each of four areas.

"You and your staff are to be commended," wrote one judge. "There are many features I wish other staffs would adopt." (WB, Oct. 6, 1958)

Many more Gallup Awards arrived in the following years. By now, the *White Buffalo* had taken the national stage. It also had grown from 16 to 18 pages per issue.

In April 1959, *The Student Publisher*, a magazine published for high school journalists, asked: "How can a school the size of Madras Union High continue to publish a 16-page paper, chuck full of news, and made up with a skill that matches many small weeklies? The solution, get an adviser like Howard Hillis and a school board that will go for a purchase

of a printing press, type and other equipment.

"Madras has its own printing plant and the students who work on the *White Buffalo* staff get a quality of training not found in all high schools."

"When Mr. Hillis was shown the article," according to the *White Buffalo*, he said, "There is one thing they did not mention and that is a sharp group of students who want to have the best paper possible and are willing to put in extra time to get it." (Apr. 16, 1959)

Indeed, students – both the *White Buffalo* staff and the typography class – put in extra time. So did Hillis.

At Hillis' retirement party in 1974, fellow teacher Robert Duke noted: "Many of you do not know it but, for too many years, Howard put in 18-20 hours every other weekend to bring that paper to where it [needed to] be."

Other *White Buffalo* advisers agree. "It was my social life," laughed Colleen Sullivan Fletcher, *White Buffalo* adviser 1989-2000, recalling a lot of late nights and weekends working at the school, and grateful she was single when she began.

Hard work. Dedication. Determination.

National Awards Tally

By the time Hillis withdrew as *White Buffalo* adviser in 1968, the little-paper-that-could had amassed, as best we can tally:

- 20+ All-American Awards, NSPA (in 1961, one of only three school newspapers in the U.S., in its class) (WB, Apr. 17, 1961)
- 15+ Medalist Awards, CSPA (sometimes the only Oregon school cited)
- 14 International Honor Awards, Quill & Scroll
- 13 First-Class Awards, NSPA
- 9 George H. Gallup Awards, Quill and Scroll
- 5 "A" Awards, Quill and Scroll
- 4 First-Place Awards, CSPA
- 2 First-Place Typographical Excellence Awards, CSPA
- 1 All-Columbian in News Award, CSPA
- 1 Best in Sports Writing, CSPA (the only paper in the junior- senior high school division to achieve this honor in 1963)
- 1 First-Place Overall Excellence Award, CSPA

Through the years, award judges lauded the *White Buffalo*.

"Your paper can be easily recognized as a school press leader in every respect...The business, editorial and technological opportunities offered your staff [are] exceptional." (Quill and Scroll)

"Your paper is true quality! Could well be a college or trade publication

both in content and quality of writing." (CSPA)

"Your sources for features appear unlimited. I'm amazed that your paper is produced by high school students." (NSPA)

"By this time the *White Buffalo* has probably become immune to superlatives so we'll applaud your continued efforts to serve your school and community. It is particularly gratifying to note how well it competes with other activities for student participation." (Quill and Scroll)

All these awards and accolades, however, don't even touch on the many regional awards the *White Buffalo* continued to win, nor the recognition and honors its staff was winning at regional journalism conferences and competitions.

Additionally, the most widely-used journalism textbook in American

public schools, *High School Journalism*, featured a two-page spread about the *White Buffalo*, and another textbook praised the paper as "an excellent example of high school journalism." (WB, Jan. 21, 1957 and WB, Oct. 6, 1958)

The Student Journalist and Layout displayed the front page of the Feb. 27, 1971, *White Buffalo* as an example of "what a good high school paper was supposed to look like." (WB, Nov. 8, 1993)

Madras eighth graders were so inspired by the *White Buffalo* in 1957 that they started publishing the *Junior Buff*, eight mimeographed pages dealing with grade school news, sports and features. (WB, Feb. 18, 1957)

UO Tries to Hire Hillis

As the *White Buffalo* gained fame and respect, the University of Oregon tried to lure Hillis away to teach journalism. "We tried to be supportive," said daughter Kathleen Hillis, then going into her senior year at Madras, "but we were so relieved" when he didn't accept the job.

Kathleen believes Hillis turned down the UO job because he had moved around so much as a child, he wanted his own children to start and finish school in one place.

Kathleen, who learned printing from her dad at his "hobby print shop" at home, became co-founder of Aaron Graphics in Redmond. She lives in the family home in Madras.

As the *White Buffalo* gained fame and respect, horizons also expanded for its staff. Student journalists vied to go on trips, and usually students were selected as a reward for their work and efforts in journalism class.

Most often kids would pile into Hillis' sturdy station wagon, and Hillis, with his one good eye, would drive everyone to Eugene or Forest Grove, or Seattle, and students would be on their best behavior because they were traveling with a man they respected.

Jerry Ramsey tells a story about coming home from one conference in Seattle around 1955 with Hillis and a small group of journalists. Ramsey



White Buffalo, Page One, March 17, 1961, Ken Stewart, Editor

and another student, Harold Moore, were taking turns driving and Hillis was sleeping in the back seat.

Weather was so bad over Mt. Hood, Ramsey recalled, the group decided to come back by way of the Columbia River Gorge and Biggs Junction.

Ramsey said he was at the wheel coming down Cow Canyon when he hit a patch of black ice. "The car spun around two times and came to a stop headed the opposite direction," Ramsey recounted.

"Mr. Hillis came to in the back seat, and asked 'What happened,'" Ramsey recounted. "We told him I'd spun out and Hillis asked, 'Is everyone OK?' We assured him we were. 'Then carry on,' Hillis instructed, and went back to sleep."

Clearly, Hillis had seen worse in WWII.

When attending these journalism conferences, MUHS students would split up in order to attend as many lectures or panels as they could. Then they would return to school and share what they learned with the rest of the newspaper and yearbook staffs.

Over time, MUHS students were invited to assume key roles at the conferences, such as student chairmen, panelists, and leaders of sectional meetings, taking on topics as wide-ranging as "Financing the School Paper," "How to Produce an All-American Paper," and "Improving the Feature Page."

Also at these conferences, Hillis always was invited to speak, and his sessions were well-attended, whether the topic was "A Big Paper in a Small Town," "Sports Coverage," or "The Making of a Reporter."

In 1957 at a Seattle conference, MUHS journalists heard from William Randolph Hearst, Jr., who had just won a Pulitzer Prize in '56 for distinguished international reporting.

A second Pulitzer Prize winner and a best-selling author also spoke that year. (One year, Earle Stanley Gardner of Perry Mason fame was featured, and another year, George H. Gallup.)

"Seldom do high school students have the opportunity to meet such widely acclaimed individuals," noted the *White Buffalo*, adding, "Many of them also experienced their first trip to a large city and were awed." (Mar. 4, 1957)

In the early '70s, *White Buffalo* staff traveled all the way to San Francisco twice for the NSPA and Journalism Education Association West Coast conference that drew students from nearly 20 states. The group raised money for the trips by sponsoring a Donkey basketball game, a bake sale, and car wash.

For the trip in '74, during the gasoline crisis, *White Buffalo* adviser Chris Luehring (1969-74) recalled, she had to write ahead to gas stations along the route and get confirmation the group could buy gas en route before she was allowed to drive the school district's van.

Were these trips valuable?

"Absolutely!" Luehring told the *White Buffalo*. "They were not only beneficial in the journalism field, but also in a social way, in that students could see how other people live. The kids also learned a lot about each other and as a result were able to work together more as a unit." (Mar. 15, 1974)

In 1989, two Madras students were selected for the granddaddy of all trips, to join 160 others from 24 states at the Washington Journalism Conference in Washington, DC.

The \$2,000 trip was financed by a cake raffle, money from Buff Boosters, and larger donations made by Bright Wood Corp., Mt. View

Hospital, Jefferson County Auto, Madras Medical Clinic, and Madras Printing Office. (WB, Oct. 16, 1989)

"It was neat meeting people from that many different states and comparing lifestyles as well as accents," wrote Marly Schmith.

Schmith noted she and Jan Osborn toured the *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, *Newsweek*, and *USA Today*. They also met with ambassadors, U.S. Senators, press spokesmen for the president, vice president, and Supreme Court, and heard from veteran journalists.

We learned to "challenge the speakers when questioning politicians and other political figures," Schmith wrote. We learned about "going to many sources for a story," about the "increase of minorities and women in journalism," and "differences between print and broadcast journalism."

"We left the conference with a better understanding of the political-journalistic world of Washington, DC, new friends, a broader view of today's issues, and an incentive to continue careers in the journalism field," Schmith concluded.

Northwest High School Journalism Competition

Beginning around 1945, schools from all over Washington and Oregon convened at Pacific University in Forest Grove for the Northwest High School Journalism Competition.

Pacific was Hillis' alma mater and he, in fact, MC'ed the first competition at the school where he also had been president of the journalism fraternity.

Each high school, no matter the size, could send five students to the annual two-day competition. One student per school could compete for awards in the fields of editorial writing, news, sports, features, and speech reporting.

MUHS students were chosen based on their journalistic ability and their grades. They slept in dorms on campus. First prize in each field was a trophy and a \$1,000 scholarship (that grew as the years went by) to attend Pacific, to major in journalism. The competition also gave certificates for 2nd place, 3rd place and honorable mention in each category.

Over the next two decades, MUHS students placed nearly every year, including 1956 when Bonita Nance, in competition with 43 high schools, won 1st place in speech reporting. Nance used her scholarship to attend Pacific, where she became an editor on the college newspaper. (WB, Apr. 16, 1956)

Based on the records available, MUHS journalists brought home from the Northwest High School Journalism Competition at least five 1st-place trophies, five 2nd-place honors, five 3rd-place awards, and a dozen or more honorable mentions.

"When you consider that schools of all sizes compete and that they pick their best writers in each field, Madras can be proud of the journalists who placed from the *White Buffalo*," remarked Hillis. (WB, Apr. 16, 1962)

In 1968, MHS placed in all five categories, in a tie with South Eugene High School for the sweepstakes trophy, a new award given to the high school team with the most points. (WB, Apr. 16, 1968)

"I believe it was the first time a school has placed in every category," proudly commented Hillis.

It was also Hillis' last year as *White Buffalo* adviser. In 1968, when he stepped down as newspaper adviser after 20 years, Hillis continued teaching at Madras High, but focused his energy on typography.

Already Hillis had been the first speech, typography, psychology and college-prep English teacher at Madras.

Hi-Sage Honors Hillis

That same year, the 1968-69 *Hi-Sage* yearbook dedicated itself to E. Howard Hillis in acknowledgement of his “continued interest in the pursuit of excellence [which] has brought fame and honors to MHS and its publications.” (1968-69 Hi-Sage)

Others, including Dave Bottemiller, came in to teach journalism and to advise the *White Buffalo* over the next year or two, until 1969 when Chris Luehring arrived at Madras High School (MHS). (MUHS changed to MHS when students moved into the new building Sept. 10, 1965.)

“I never had a class in journalism, and I never worked on a newspaper,” laughed Luehring in an interview this summer. “I did not know I was going in behind Howard Hillis, the legend.”

This was Luehring’s first teaching job out of college, she said, and “I didn’t know anything” about the *White Buffalo*.

Luehring, who was hired to teach sophomore English and journalism, said she was reading from a journalism textbook in order to prepare for her class.

Fortunately, Hillis still was in the building and Luehring said she would go to him when she had questions. “He was the most wonderful man ever.”

Also, the kids were so well-trained under Hillis, said Luehring, that the *White Buffalo* continued to receive Medalist awards from CSPA, and 1st-Class awards from NSPA (but not All-American).

Luehring, who left MHS after five years, spent another 28 years teaching at Pleasant Hill High School where she was newspaper adviser for five or six years before she retired in 2002.

By 1974, when Chris Luehring decided to leave, Stephen Hillis had been teaching journalism and English in Eagle Grove, Iowa, for seven years.

“Dad said the English and journalism teacher is about to leave,” remembered Stephen. “So I applied for the job.”

Luehring recalled news of Stephen’s hiring with amusement. “I felt I was the place-holder between father and son,” she joked.

Stephen Hillis grew up in Madras, had worked on the *White Buffalo* in high school, and attended his father’s alma mater, Pacific University, where he graduated in speech

therapy.

Now, back in Madras, Stephen overlapped with his dad at MHS for half a year before the elder Hillis retired. “He was teaching strictly typography then,” Stephen explained.

What was it like working with his dad? “Kinda neat,” Stephen responded in an interview in June. “He was just down the hall... We had to be careful because of possible nepotism...but it was fun.” Stephen went on to advise the *White Buffalo* for 15 years, and taught at MHS for 28 years before he retired in 2002.

50 Years of Hillis

Noted Stephen, “Between Dad and me, we spent 50 years at Madras High School.”

Three years after becoming adviser to the *White Buffalo*, Stephen saw the newspaper win its first NSPA All-American award in 10 years.

“Kids were interested in big issues,” explained Stephen. “Young people have ideas, concerns, interests,” he said, “so why not let them talk about it?”

the *White Buffalo* op-ed pages featured Pro/Con on current issues like the Equal Rights Amendment, motorcycle helmets, should parents be punished for truancy, should students and teachers with AIDS be in school, is Robert Bork a good choice for the Supreme Court, and more.

In 1983, the *White Buffalo* featured a two-page center spread under the headline “Few things hurt family and friends as much as growing trend of suicide.” The pages, replete with graphics, discussed types of suicide, symptoms, misconceptions, and where to get help. Clearly, students were interested in more than just the latest sports scores.

“I was told many times [by school administrators] we couldn’t publish,” remembered Stephen, “but I wouldn’t be intimidated.” “Sure, there was some talk but it never went anywhere.”

Under Stephen, the *White Buffalo* labeled its pages clearly so readers were not confused about the difference between news and opinion. [TV news could take a lesson here.] Sections were labeled “Features,” “Sports,” “News,” and “Opinion,” a practice that carried forward many years, much to the benefit of readers.

Awards Dwindle

During Stephen’s tenure at the *White Buffalo*, the newspaper regained its All-American status for a few years, and was getting 1st-Place (but not Medalist) awards from CSPA.

“We applied [for awards] for a few years,” related Stephen, “and then quit.” The judging “wasn’t really helpful.”

“The judges weren’t saying what’s good, or bad, or what kept you from a higher award,” he explained. Plus, “The requirements for entering were daunting,” and the process “was getting more expensive,” Stephen added.

After 15 years advising the *White Buffalo*, Stephen turned over the reins to Colleen Sullivan (now Fletcher).

Fletcher began in 1989, fresh out of Western Oregon University, hired to teach English, but “journalism came with the job,” she recalled in a June interview.

“It was hard on the kids,” Fletcher observed, because their tendency was to go to Stephen with questions (he still was teaching in the building). “But Stephen stepped back,” Fletcher said, and was “very good” about letting her run the show.

“It was a life-changing experience for me and for the students,” Fletcher related. For the students, “It was a chance to have their voices heard...feel ownership...police their own ranks...take pride in their work.”

Fletcher said the *White Buffalo* “never applied for major awards” during her 11 years as adviser, because she didn’t know about them. The newspaper did win regional awards though, she said.

White Buffalo Publishes Once a Month

“I was new,” Fletcher explained. “We didn’t have enough people on the staff,” and we went to publishing once a month instead of every two weeks because the workload “was killing us.”

The newspaper stopped publishing student birthdays “because I was told it was not news,” recounted Fletcher. Also, stories were going through three layers of editors – the section editor, the editor-in-chief, and the adviser – before appearing in the newspaper.

This was different from the early years of student-assigned and student-edited stories under Hillis. Also, “The administration started reading the paper before it came out,” said Fletcher.

The newspaper also switched over to computer-production, using Macs, Pagemaker, and a laser printer purchased for \$3,500 with a loan from the student council.

Students couldn’t leave campus “in their own vehicles” to go downtown to sell ads, recalled Fletcher. And, although one-quarter of the *White Buffalo* operation was supported

by student-body funds, the rest came from advertising.

Further, Fletcher pointed out, "Newsprint got expensive," and "we weren't making a profit."

After 11 years, "I wanted to go more tech," Fletcher says of her decision to leave the *White Buffalo*. Now, coming up on her 30th year at MHS, Fletcher teaches mainly computer classes and programs including: Intro to Multi-Media, Advanced Computer Tech, Digital Media and Video, Advanced Digital Media and Video, Web Design and Advanced Web Design.

Following Fletcher, several others advised the *White Buffalo* – Jason Brown, Cody Kollen, Ted Viramonte, and Kristi Taylor. After Stephen Hillis, however, the *White Buffalo* stopped winning national awards.

Over time, the *White Buffalo* became a shadow of its once-dominant self. The paper was publishing 12-20 pages per issue, but only six times a year (one year, only three times). Subscriptions rose from \$4 a year to \$10 a year. Photos and some ads were in color, but the ads were fewer. Toward the end, a crossword puzzle took up one entire page, and a notice to buy the yearbook took up another half-page. News was sparse.

"It was such a big job [to be *White Buffalo* adviser], no one was willing to take it on," observed Fletcher. Newcomers were not eager to sign up for "so much work."

"Dad spent every other weekend for 20 years," working on the *White Buffalo*, concurred daughter Kathleen Hillis.

"It was a chore," agreed Dave Wiles. "It was too much for most people."

End of *White Buffalo*, Journalism

Finally, in 2007, MHS decided not to offer journalism and the *White Buffalo* ceased to publish altogether.

"It was gone before anyone realized it," said Wiles sadly. Students had "no interest" in taking journalism nor working on the newspaper, he explained.

For Madras High to drop journalism was ground-shaking. After all, this had been the home of the mighty *White Buffalo* newspaper.

Upon hearing the news, "I was distressed... upset...disappointed," offered Ramsey. "How desperately we need" good journalists, good writers, good thinkers, Ramsey noted.

"I was very disturbed when I learned the *White Buffalo* is not publishing anymore,"

Luehring lamented.

Added Fletcher, "It's really important for kids to write to be read. They write better, more meaningful" material, she observed.

Should journalism be taught in every U.S. high school?

"Absolutely!" responded Stephen Hillis. "It's hands-on learning of the American English language...its grammar, its structure."

Journalism, continued Hillis, helps students "evaluate current events," helps them "analyze truth," helps them "organize their time and discover their areas of interest." Stephen emphasized, "Journalism takes English and makes it into a real thing. Students WILL use it."

"It [makes] them better citizens," stated Ed Sullivan, executive director of the CSPA.

Hillis, the Legend

When E. Howard Hillis retired in 1974, the *White Buffalo* honored him with a two-page center spread headlined "E.H. Hillis retires after 27 years of service to Madras." (WB, Feb. 7, 1974)

At his retirement party, the paper reported, Hillis was lauded with letters from colleagues in the education and journalism worlds about the "pleasure of knowing and working with him" and remarking on "the way he put his heart and soul into his work as a printer and educator."

Some letters told how, through his efforts, Hillis "made the *White Buffalo* a textbook example that was studied in classrooms around the country."

Responded Hillis, with his quick wit and sense of humor, "If I had known all that was in my file, maybe I could have [bargained for] higher wages."

Perhaps one of the most memorable retirement gifts Hillis received was a metal sculpture made from parts of one of the first presses from the high school.

Hillis' bio also ran in the *White Buffalo* that day. It noted, during his 27 years at MHS, Hillis was *White Buffalo* adviser 20 years, yearbook adviser 17 years; he started the Madras Quill and Scroll chapter and the nation's first Pied Typers Club.

In 1962, the University of Oregon and the Oregon Scholastic Press presented Hillis a Merit Award and established a journalism scholarship in his name at the UO.

In 1963, Columbia University's CSPA honored Hillis with a Gold Key "in recognition

of outstanding devotion to the cause of the school press, encouragement to the student editors in their several endeavors, service above and beyond the call of delegated duty, leadership in the field of education, and support of the high ideals from which the Association has drawn its strength and inspiration." <http://cspa.columbia.edu/honoring-people/gold-keys>

In 1968, Hillis received the Senior Citizen Award by the Madras Jaycees, and Madras Kiwanis gave him a plaque for outstanding achievement in the community.

Hillis was a longtime member of Toast Masters and served as president of the Oregon Association of Journalism Directors.

So after a career as a newsman, printer, educator, home-builder, baker, sailor, and farmer, Hillis retired to his home in Madras where he enjoyed carpentry, gardening, genealogy and writing. (WB, Nov. 15, 1954)

In retirement, Hillis wrote and published his father's, mother's, and mother-in-law's genealogy, and published a book of his mother's poetry.

Two mysteries remained about Hillis, however, according to a "Meet the Faculty" column in 1959: (1) what the "E" stood for, and (2) his age. (WB, Mar. 9, 1959)

According to daughter Kathleen, the "E" stood for Ernest, after his preacher father Ernest Ward Hillis. "Going from preacher to teacher is just fine," Kathleen said of her dad's choice of career.

When he died of natural causes June 9, 2005, Hillis was 95. Hillis died in the home he built for his family in Madras next door to the house where he lived as a child from 1912-13.

Hillis' obituary notes he was married to the former Dorothy McKern for 59 years. They raised five children: Stephen Hillis, Laura Lee Samples and Kathleen Hillis, all of Madras; and Barron and Cynthia Hillis of Portland. Together they had seven grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

Hillis also was father to the *White Buffalo* newspaper, taking it from its infancy into its glory days and keeping it there for years.

Fellow faculty member Robert Duke proclaimed at Hillis' retirement, "Through the *White Buffalo* he did his greatest work."

Many former students would agree, including Joe Piedmont who concluded: "He was the right man at the right time."

“The White Buffalo-Hillis Legacy”

Given Howard Hillis’s prowess and generosity as a teacher, and given the unusual opportunities in journalism he helped to establish at Madras High School, it’s not surprising that many MHS students followed their *White Buffalo* experiences into careers in journalism, advertising, public relations, and writing—some initially, in their first jobs, others permanently and prominently. What follows is an incomplete but illustrative inventory of *White Buffalo* protégés from the ‘50’s, ‘60’s, and ‘70’s who went on into professional journalistic, PR, writing, and related careers.

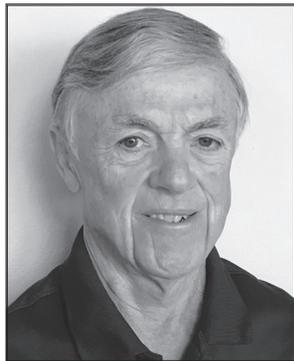
THE FIFTIES

Al (Alan) Green—with Cole and Weber advertising and other ad agencies in Portland; directed ad campaigns for various State of Oregon departments and State initiatives.

Sharon Landreth Nesbit—wrote for *the White Buffalo* before moving to Sandy midway in her sophomore year; went to work for the *Sandy Post* at 16, and had a remarkable long-term career as a reporter and columnist for the *Gresham Outlook* and Pamplin media. She won an Oregon Heritage Commission “Excellence Award” in 2018 for her journalistic and Metro-area conservation work.

Jarold (Jerry) Ramsey—went on to serve as editor of the *University of Oregon Daily Emerald*. Rochester University professor of literature and writing; author/editor of numerous books—poetry, American Indian literature, Central Oregon history. Recipient of the C.E.S. Wood Award for Lifetime Literary Achievement in 2017; currently publisher of THE AGATE.

Carolyn Forman Wood—wrote for *the White Buffalo* for three years, and was editor of the *Hi Sage* (yearbook). Prominent in the insurance business and civic affairs in The Dalles (City Council, Columbia River Discovery Center, Columbia Gorge Community College, etc.)



Tom C. Brown

THE SIXTIES

Tom C. Brown—Editor, *Oregon State Barometer*, 1968-9; MA from Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University; reporter for and editor of newspapers in Montana: Editor and Publisher of the *Daily Missoulian*; editor and publisher of the *Concord (NH) Monitor*; President and CEO of Newspapers of New England, Inc. After retirement, served as interim editor of the *East Oregonian* (Pendleton).

Stephen Hillis—taught English and journalism at Madras High 1974-2002; *White Buffalo* adviser 1974-1989; revered long-time mentor to MHS students; community volunteer and leader in Madras.

Mike Chamness—Editor, *OSU Daily Barometer*, 1970-1; reporter for *Corvallis Gazette-Times*; career insurance broker and executive.

Joe Piedmont Jr.—Journalism major at University of Oregon; public relations manager for Kaiser Aluminum; VP for public affairs and public relations for Washington Water Power; co-founder of Gallatin Public Affairs, major NW PR firm.

Margaret (Margie) McBride Lehrman—MS in Journalism from Columbia University; 30-year career with NBC News, as producer

of national news broadcasts; deputy Washington DC bureau chief for NBC under Tim Russert; two national news Emmys for her work with NBC News.

Susan Conlee Shepard—University of Oregon journalism graduate; wrote for the *Eugene Register-Guard*, *Yakima Herald-Republican*; KEZI-TV; public relations officer for Lane Community College, and more than twenty years in public relations with Pacific NW Bell and Verizon.



Margaret McBride Lehrman

Don McManman—Editor, *Portland State Vanguard*, 1970-1; reporting and editing for *Bellingham Herald*, *Tri-Cities Herald*, and *Tillamook Lighthouse*; PR officer, Washington Public Power; Editor, *Pacific Fishing Magazine*.

THE SEVENTIES

Julie Ramsey Talbot—advertising writer for Cole and Weber and other agencies in Portland and Eugene; currently Project Editor for Timber Publishing Co. in Portland.



Susan Conlee Shepard

Daryle Rico—*Oregon State Daily Barometer*; advertising in Portland, with clients such as Boise Cascade, Danner Boots, Goodwill, United Health Care, etc.; currently head of “Daryle Rico Creative Services” (website design and social media consulting).

Tony Ahern—*White Buffalo* writer for four years, sports editor for two; journalism degree from University of Oregon; at age 30 became publisher of the *Madras Pioneer* and is now publisher of both the *Pioneer* and the *Prineville Central Oregonian*. Winner of the Beth Crow Award for his devotion to local history.

These are some of the Madras High students who made their way from working on a high quality student newspaper into professional careers in journalism and related fields. But if you talk to Madras “old grads” about their *White Buffalo* experience and its impact on them, you’ll quickly learn that it provided them with educational lessons and incentives beyond just journalistic knowhow. They agree that it made them aware of the meaning of *community*, the value of using clear language, reporting fairly, and above all “getting it right” factually and verbally.

Carolyn Forman Wood, who went on to own and manage a successful insurance company, says: “Though I did not follow journalism as a career, what I learned from Mr. Hillis guided me in business and in my volunteer work. Learning the difference between fact and opinion and where each is appropriate was just a bit of his influence.” And although Mike Chamness also eventually went into the insurance business and became a stakeholder in a national insurance marketing firm, he is convinced that his success in business was “is due in large part to what I learned beginning in journalism at Madras High about condensing facts and communicating in writing.”

REVIEW: *Wild Wild Country* NETFLIX DOCUMENTARY, 2018

By Jerry Ramsey

It's been thirty-seven years since the brief but momentous episode of the Rajneeshes came to Madras and Central Oregon—but the new six-part Netflix documentary, *Wild Wild Country*, will stir up local memories aplenty.

Written and directed by brothers Chapman and Maclain Way, and available through Netflix “streaming” (the JCHS has been able to

acquire a DVD of it for its archives), the video is in most (but not all) respects an admirably fair, serious, revealing treatment of a moment in our recent local history that might well have lent itself to a sensationalized video treatment, but didn't here.

Visually and cinematically, *Wild Wild Country* is riveting all the way through its over-seven-hours length. What's especially engrossing is the extensive use of actual Rajneesh video footage on and off the ex-Muddy Ranch from its raw beginnings in 1981 through the bizarre yearly celebrations of the Bhagwan's birthdays to the ragged end-days of 1984-5. Old-timers here will remember that the sannyasin took videos of *everything*, sometimes it seemed as a form of intimidation; but how the Ways were able to get hold of so much of this footage, and managed to use it so effectively, is remarkable. As is their unobtrusive but very effective use of an eclectic musical score, involving a variety of artists.

The heart of the show is their concentration on three central surviving figures—“Ma Prem Sheela,” of course; Philip Toelkes (“Swami Prem Niren”), the Bhagwan's chief lawyer and Mayor of the commune; and Jane Stork (“Ma Shanti Bhadra”) an early convert from Australia, who like Sheela ended up serving a prison term for attempted homicide. All three, now well into middle age, appear frequently in footage from the '80s, and freely hold forth on



the rise and fall of Rajneeshpuram and their parts in its strange history.

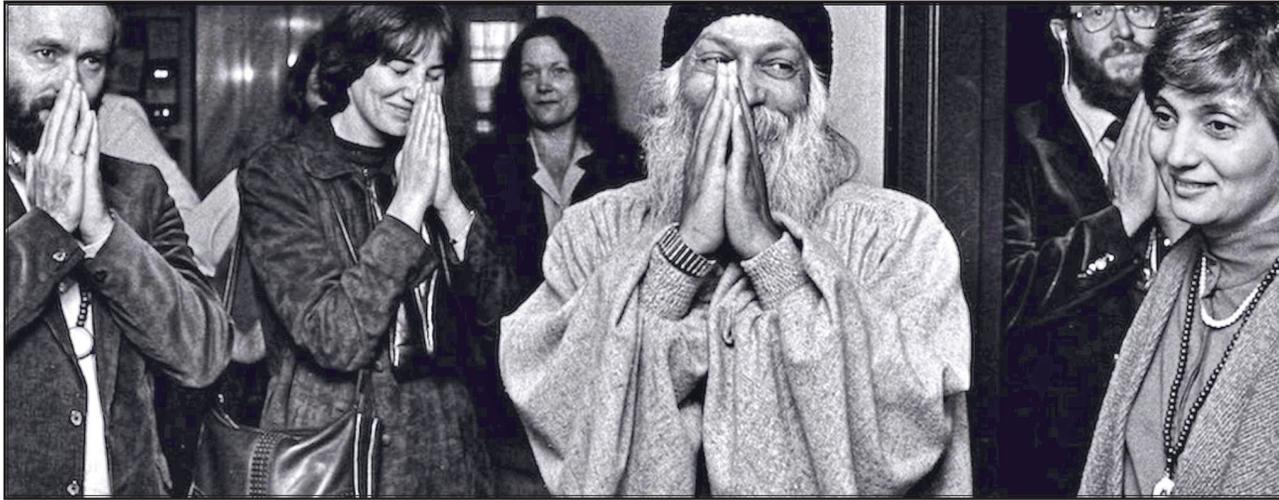
Sheela—now improbably working in Switzerland in a home for physically-impaired and elderly people—seems at first matronly and congenial in contrast to interspersed footage of her vicious attacks on neighbors, officials, and everybody in her

way in the '80s. Any thought that now with gray hair and over three decades after the fact she has mellowed, maybe has come to a critical judgment of her actions in Oregon, evaporates at the end of the first installment when she declares, with her old rancor and contempt, “People of Oregon, you should count yourselves lucky that we were there!” Through the whole program, she belabors her enemies both outside the commune and in, admits nothing—and professes her lifelong love for the Bhagwan.

Toelkes, rail-thin, red-suited, and intense in the archival footage, now comes across initially as an affable, talkative, ruminative retiree. Whether his legal career ended with the commune's collapse is not revealed. But on the state and federal actions that precipitated that collapse, he is indignantly still in opposition—dismissing the State of Oregon's claim that as a legal entity the Rajneeshpuram violated the constitutional concept of the separation of church and government, and rejecting the Justice Department's charge that the Bhagwan's operation was a massive and systematic violation of U.S. immigration laws. What's most surprising in Toelkes's monologues are his frequent and apparently sincere expressions of devotion to the tenets of Rajneeshism—a True Believer still, it seems. In his last appearance in the documentary he reveals that he is writing a book, with the aim of “clearing my name in America.” So, stay tuned . . .

The most compelling of these three main personages is someone most of us never heard of at the time—Jane Stork, aka “Ma Shanti Bhadra.” In her candid, often painfully self-revealing narrative, she seems to lay bare how so many young, naïve (if well educated) spiritual seekers like herself were drawn into the Bhagwan’s orbit (she joined his ashram in Poona, India, before his move to Oregon), and how, once in, she became capable of doing whatever had to be done to defend the commune and protect the Bhagwan. She openly confesses to volunteering for a plot to murder U.S. Attorney Charles Turner, and later, with rumors flying that the Bhagwan’s life was in danger from within, that she attempted to kill his personal physician, “Swami Deveraj,” with a hypodermic loaded with poison. (He survived.)

Such revelations make Stork’s recollections intensely dramatic. Very clearly, she has over the years of her jail term and afterward struggled to understand how her passionate spiritual commitment to the Bhagwan and the commune led to such unhappy consequences. That this struggle has brought her to a measure of insight and acceptance is movingly clear in her final remarks. (Her



The Bhagwan, Sheela (right), and friends

memoir, *Breaking the Spell: My Life as a Rajneeshee*, came out in 2009.)

Wild Wild Country includes an array of secondary players, some of them Central Oregonians: lawyer and sage John Silvertooth, still living and holding forth in Antelope; the late Margaret Hill, Mayor of the town when the Rajneeshees arrived; and (speaking for their embattled ranching neighbors), Jay Bowerman and Rosemary and Kelly McGreer. (The McGreers’ libel suit against Sheela and Co. was the

historical episode, it comes up short in the way it engages local history—that is, what happened in Madras and Jefferson County. You could view all six installments and come away without knowing that, in fact, the Rajneeshee occupation was initially focused, not on The Dalles and Wasco County, but on Madras and Jefferson County. To complain about this omission is not indulging in a provincial gripe: it’s to say that the video’s historical coverage has for some reason

been left seriously incomplete.

Did the Brothers Way bother to read Frances FitzGerald’s excellent chapter on the Rajneeshpuram in her *Cities on a Hill* (originally serialized in the *New Yorker* in 1986)? There they would have found a detailed account of how a brief “era of good feeling” began in the county with the arrival of the commune’s advance guard in 1981—much local excitement and curiosity, an economic boom in and around Madras because of all the building materials, machinery, vehicles,



Rolls Royce promenade on the Rajneeshpuram

agricultural supplies etc., they were buying; with sannyasin-doctors and nurses offering to help out in the hospital; with Sheela herself as guest of honor and featured speaker at a Madras Kiwanis meeting in the old Stag restaurant!

A year or so later—by fall 1982—the county and city welcome mats were being withdrawn. By then the county court had wisely seen fit to reject a proposal to incorporate “Rajneeshpuram” as a city in Jefferson County; county residents were increasingly revulsed by the brazen takeover of Antelope and its school; the unauthorized weekend “borrowing” of the hospital’s new mobile X-Ray machine by sannyasin medics had been discovered and acted on, terminally; sympathy was widespread for the McGreers (well-known in Madras) in reaction to the public vilification of them by Sheela and others on Jack Faust’s “Town Hall” KATU-TV program and elsewhere; confrontations at the “Y” just north of Madras involving the Bhagwan on his daily Rolls Royce “constitutional” and the Rev. Jimenez and his congregation had grown more

dangerous, until County DA Mike Sullivan mediated a settlement. For which services, after what seemed to be a friendly county court visit to the ranch in January 1983, Sullivan became dangerously ill, and very nearly died of acute capillary shock—probably the first use of the unidentified toxin allegedly concocted by “Ma Prem Puja” that later nearly killed Wasco County Commissioner William Hulse, and later yet, “Swami Deveraj,” at the hands of sannyasin Jane Stork, as noted above.

By summer 1983, a poster showing the Bhagwan with a bullseye superimposed on his head appeared at businesses in Madras, notably Madras Builders, erstwhile a cheerful supplier of building supplies to the feverish construction going on at the commune. There were growing problems in getting bills paid, and some merchants reacted by refusing to deal with the Rajneesh Corporation. In the face of this response, and mounting local hostility in general, the corporation took its epic purchasing (and its increasingly dark political purposes) to The Dalles and Wasco County, with momentous—and infamous—

consequences for them.

These included, remember, the importation of thousands of “street people” from around the nation to vote in Rajneesh candidates for Wasco County office, and then, when that scheme failed, callously turning them out (many landed in Madras, destitute, for a time, as shown in the video); and of course the “rehearsal” of a monstrous scheme to infect the population of The Dalles with salmonella, which sickened over 700 people, in order to control the upcoming election.

We might well ask, “What if?” All this could have happened in Jefferson County, instead of Wasco, if locals had played along with Sheela and her cohorts past 1981-2. Again, the fact that this crucial early chapter of the Rajneeshee story is mostly missing from *Wild Wild Country* seriously diminishes its otherwise considerable value. It’s a salient example of how historical writers with national topics in view do need to pay attention to the details of *local* history. The Ways did not, and their entertaining and thoughtful documentary suffers accordingly.

STATE AWARD FOR THE AGATE

At the Oregon Heritage Commission’s Awards Banquet last April at Sunriver, Jerry Ramsey, Jane Ahern, and Tom Culbertson received the OHC “Award for Excellence” for THE AGATE. Ramsey, showing publication, is the publisher; Ahern the editor, and Culbertson was the graphic designer, for issues I-IX.



HARVEST FESTIVAL THRESHING BEE 2018



Guests enjoy a hearty harvest supper, behind the Farrell Homestead House, Fairgrounds, August 11.

(photo by Katherine Smith)



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Progress on Westside CC and the JCHS Museum: a Report

It's going on six years since the Jefferson County Historical Society closed its museum and moved the collection into temporary storage at Westside Elementary. So it's good to be able to report at the end of summer 2018 that significant progress on the initiative to create "Westside Community Campus" is being made, and that prospects for a new county historical museum in the south wing of Westside are looking brighter.

A working group, "Westside Partners," has been created, consisting of representatives of the organizations and local governments crucially involved in the Westside project— the Bean Foundation, Kids Club, the Madras Aquatic Center, the Historical Society, School District 509J, the City of Madras, Jefferson County, the county library (the library because it is considering a new facility near Westside, which would need to be closely coordinated with planning for Westside). The partners group has been meeting monthly with George Neilson and Clint Jacks of the Bean Foundation, Lu Cavanaugh, Westside Campaign Director, and Teresa Hogue, who is working on business and operation planning for the WCC. The Group has been dealing with basic organizational,

administrative, and operational/financial issues.

Campaign Director Cavanaugh, a campaign donor-base data manager soon to be hired, and volunteer staff will soon be working in an office to be set up in Westside, through cooperation with the school district and the Historical Society (which is moving some of its collection to another storage area to open up space for the WCC office). A campaign website is being planned for the near future.



The capital campaign to raise funds to pay for transforming Westside into a full-service, state-of-the-art community center is being organized in two parts. The first part will involve active solicitation of donations and grants from major donors and foundations. Once this highly sensitive work is well along, the second phase will be launched, involving community appeals and public fund-raising activities.

An exact timeline for the Westside Campaign is still being formulated, but it now looks like a period of three to five years. A long wait, especially for the re-opening of our county's historical museum, but if the carefully-worked-out WCC plans are realized, it will be worth the waiting.



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NEW JCHS OFFICE



The Historical Society has a new office, at 169 SE 7th in Madras. JCHS Directors gather for their first board meeting in the new quarters. On hand were, from left Dave Campbell, Jim Carroll, Becky Roberts, Betty Fretheim, Jerry

Ramsey, Lottie Holcomb, Charlene McKelvy, Elaine Henderson, Dan Chamness. Not in photo: Marge O'Brien, Tom Manning, Jennie Smith, Cindy Stanfield.

New Members, Donations, Gifts & Memorials,

New JCHS Members:

Ken Bicart
Seth and Jennifer Burke
Christian Kowaleski
John Campbell
Marie Mallon
Ed Chotard
JoAnn McDaniel
Patricia J. DeHaan
Kelly Simmelink
Nicholas and Courtney Snead
Roger Diddock
Phil Fine
Joe and Cindy Stanfield

Memorial Gifts to JCHS:

In Memory of Wilma Vibbert:
Don and Elaine Henderson
Jerry and Dorothy Ramsey

Donations to JCHS:

Rich Madden/PGE
Mike Loveling

Donations to the Museum and Archives:

Tommy Tucker-- two volumes of Jefferson County obituaries
Shannon and Hal Jordan and Patricia Howard-- books on
Jefferson County and Central Oregon History
Air Force Historical Research Agency-- CDs of Army Air
Force records pertaining to Madras Army Air Field
operations in WWII



The North Unit Irrigation District is located in the Deschutes River Basin and supplies irrigation water to nearly 59,000 acres of farmland in Jefferson County.



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THE OLD AND THE NEW



Eagle Bakery is planning a Grand Opening October 12 of its new location in the extensively remodeled but still “historic” Mud Springs “Pomona” Grange Hall at 2nd and Culver Highway.

Originally the Citizens State Bank in Metolius, the building was moved to Madras in 1938. During renovations, the original 1911 “Citizens Bank” sign was uncovered, on the east façade, and preserved for posterity. An exhibit of local



Grange history and paraphernalia will be on display inside.



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ECLIPSE REVISITED AT LATEST HISTORY PUB



History buffs gathered at “Wild Bleu” for a JCHS History Pub Sept. 21, featuring Kelly Simmelink who spoke about the 2017 solar eclipse and “what’s next” for the community.

RECENT JCHS HISTORICAL TOURS AND HIKES



Dave Campbell and his Model T passengers survey the scenery in Hay Creek country—JCHS tour, June 2018
(Photo by Katherine Smith)



Hikers approach old Glover homestead house—JCHS “History Hike” to Grandview and Canadian Bench, June 30, 2018.

THE AGATE

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 647, Madras, Oregon 97741

THE AGATE • JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PLEASE JOIN US!

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MEMBERSHIP DUES 2018:

(Individual: \$25 Family: \$50 Patron: \$150 Benefactor: \$500)

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Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership (please check box):

- New Renewal Individual
 Family Patron Benefactor

(Make check out to JCHS; mail to address at left)

- Yes, I'm interested in becoming a History Volunteer
- Yes, I would like to make a donation to the JCHS (the Society is a registered non-profit organization; donations and gifts to it are tax-deductible)
- I have artifacts, photos, written material I would like to donate to the JCHS Museum