

# THE AGATE

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • Fall 2023 N.S. 20

## When the Rajneeshees came to Jefferson County

Tuning in: remembering  
the arrival of television

From Madras to Matera:  
Touching base with romance  
novelist Elizabeth Jennings

Local libraries, schools,  
historical societies and  
the Literacy of Place



# THE AGATE

## WELCOME, READERS —

Welcome to issue twenty of Central Oregon's only local history journal, THE AGATE. For us, this issue marks both a milestone and also a set of new departures.

The milestone: When we launched THE AGATE in 2013 (building on Beth Crow's JCHS newsletter by the same name), we had high hopes for it. But 10 years and 20 issues and scores of articles and features on the history of Jefferson County and Central Oregon later, we're both incredulous and proud to look over those issues and reflect on what the publication has become. We are especially proud of and grateful to its loyal and supportive readership and for the steady support from the beginning from the Jefferson County Historical Society and the Madras *Pioneer* as we've navigated our way every spring and fall through the fascinating terrain of our local history. Receiving the Excellence Award of the Oregon Heritage Committee in 2017 meant a lot to us and continues to inspire us issue by issue.

The new departures: mainly a shifting of our editorial team and of our publishing relationship with the *Pioneer* and Pamplin Media. Jerry Ramsey has left his old roles as publisher and acting managing editor and will serve as an advisory editor, helping to discover new episodes and issues in our local history to explore in these pages. Jane Ahern will continue as editor of THE AGATE and offer new articles and features as time and editorial work allow. Holly Gill, recently retired after her long and productive career as a *Pioneer* editor, is joining THE AGATE editorial team as a copy editor and regular writer. And *Pioneer* publisher Tony Ahern will coordinate the crucial interaction between THE AGATE and the *Pioneer*. On that score, readers can expect a 28-page format, more ads, and more color pages, hopefully generating enough income to cover our publishing costs, which up to now have been generously met by the historical society. JCHS members will continue to receive each AGATE issue by mail and subscribers to the *Pioneer* will continue to receive each issue with the newspaper twice a year. This relationship — between a historical society and a local newspaper, premised on a shared commitment to the cause of local history — is probably unique, certainly here in Central Oregon, and probably in the Northwest, and we cherish it, as we move into our second decade. (JR)

Regular readers have probably noticed that this fall issue of THE AGATE is much later than usual. That's because of the changes explained above by Jerry Ramsey. We're getting used to our new roles — and trying to fill the very big hole left by Jerry as he steps back — and so it has taken much longer than usual to pull this issue together.

That's not to say Jerry hasn't had a hand in this issue. He has contributed a piece on the interesting and highly relevant concept of "literacy of place," which you will find on page 17. In his usual scholarly yet readable fashion, Jerry defines literacy of place and suggests ways that libraries, educational institutions, and historical societies can foster it.

In addition to that, Jerry followed up on a lead about a Jefferson County native who left Madras as a teenager and went on to have an unusual career. Jerry didn't write the story on Elizabeth Jennings, but he found someone who was eager to take on the project — former Madras resident Evan J. Albright.

Evan's profile on Elizabeth's life incorporates her recollections of 1950s and 1960s Jefferson County and her feelings about the community looking back 60-plus years. Her comments on

her life in Madras are unusually honest — not rosy, not dark, but thoughtful and fair.

Also in this issue is an article about the coming of television to Jefferson County in the 1950s, including how it came about, people's memories of what it was like, and how it changed lives. The article brings out the noteworthy fact that Madras was home to one of the early innovators in cable technology and had one of the first cable TV systems in the nation.

The main feature is part one of Holly M. Gill's two-part article on the Rajneesh years in Madras. Holly was a young reporter in the 1980s when followers of the Baghwan Shree Rajneesh bought the Muddy Ranch in order to create a commune, seemingly unaware of Oregon's first-in-the-nation statewide land-use planning law. Writing for both the *Pioneer* and the *Oregonian*, she covered their efforts to incorporate and build a city from scratch on land zoned exclusively for agriculture in what became one of the first major tests of Oregon's relatively new land-use regulations.

The commune was the subject of the 2018 Netflix documentary, *Wild Wild Country*. The documentary is excellent, but it understandably centers on the city of Antelope and Wasco County, where much of the controversy occurred, and does not capture much of what was happening at that time in Madras and Jefferson County.

That's a shame because a lot was happening here. On one level, the Rajneeshees presented a legal challenge to be worked out by lawyers and government officials, but the object of that legal challenge was emotionally charged in much the same way the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is emotionally charged. For both sides, it brought up questions of whose territory this is, who belongs here, and who decides what can be done with this land, and it had an element of religion to boot. Both sides invoked the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion and separation of church and state to support their arguments.

Aside from the land-use questions, the Rajneesh followers exposed a flaw in Oregon's voter registration laws that enabled them to game the system, causing the state to change its rules in response; they abused the nation's immigration laws on a large scale by carrying out what federal prosecutors at the time called the largest marriage fraud scam in U.S. history; and they perpetrated what is still the largest bioterrorist attack in US history.

Holly's article provides a lot of detail about what it was like to live here during the Rajneesh years. The main events were the dueling protests at the truck scales north of town, the annexation of parcels of land around Antelope into the Jefferson County School District 509J, the homeless people dumped in Madras by the Rajneeshees once they were no longer needed for their dirty-tricks voting scheme, the floods of red-clad people passing through town on their way to the annual festivals at Rajneeshpuram, and the poisoning of Jefferson County District Attorney Mike Sullivan.

Despite the many shocking examples of crime and malfeasance perpetrated by the Rajneesh leadership, locals' experiences with the Rajneesh followers were not all bad. The sidebar accompanying Holly's article is a statement from former Chamber of Commerce Director Joe Krenowicz describing how Rajneeshpuram bolstered his family's fledgling auto parts business, and also how interesting, kind, and enjoyable he found the ordinary sannyasins to be.

Part one of Holly's article leaves off just after Sullivan was poisoned. Part two picks up the story in 1983 as the Rajneesh

are preparing for their Second Annual World Celebration and continues through the demise of the commune. Accompanying Holly's part two will be a sidebar with the personal recollections of Rick Allen, who in the 1980s was the youngest mayor in Oregon.

Thank you for your patience as we adjust to a new way of doing things. We hope you'll find it worth the wait. (JA)



**Cover: Cropped photo of the July 8, 1983 issue of Rajneeshpuram's newspaper, *The Rajneesh Times*, with Baghwan Shree Rajneesh on the front page.**



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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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# RAJNEESHEES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, PART I

By Holly M. Gill



*Editor's note: The following is the first of a two-part series on one of the most fascinating periods of Jefferson County history, the 1980s, when an Indian guru bought the historic Muddy Ranch (often referred to erroneously as Big Muddy Ranch or even Muddy Creek Ranch) and set up a commune. Holly M. Gill is a JCHS board member as well as a retired journalist who wrote for both the*

*Madras Pioneer and The Oregonian in her long career. She covered the Rajneeshpuram years for both publications and in this article she pulls together her personal experiences and reporting into a thorough accounting of what went on. Our available space didn't permit us to run the entire article in this issue, so rather than sacrifice details, we have broken the article into two parts. The first part covers the commune's beginning in 1981 up through the 1983 poisoning of Jefferson County's District Attorney Mike Sullivan.*

In the late summer of 1981, Jefferson County was a small, quiet agriculture-based area with about 11,600 people – less than half the most recent count of more than 25,000. Madras, the county seat, had a thriving business community, with two department stores, a half dozen grocery stores, several lumberyards and hardware stores, two drugstores, a handful of automotive parts and repair businesses, three car dealerships and numerous restaurants and bars. With a population of around 2,260 people, Madras was a conservative, culturally diverse community that trusted and welcomed outsiders.

Over the next four years, a barrage of lawsuits, threats, lies, murder attempts, arson, immigration fraud and ultimately, the country's largest bioterrorism attack would change that – not only locally, but with ramifications that would change Oregon law and ripple across the country.

In September 1981, the Madras Pioneer ran its first articles about the purchase of the Muddy Ranch, near Antelope, by followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, an Indian guru with a large worldwide following. The New Jersey-based Chidvilas Rajneesh Meditation Center purchased the 64,229-acre property, located about 19 miles southeast of Antelope, for \$5.75 million, with the intention of building a large farming cooperative, as well as a home for Rajneesh. At the time, rumors about the new neighbors had been swirling for a couple months, but the articles by Wendla McGovern confirmed the purchase.

While Antelope and portions of the Muddy Ranch are located in Wasco County, more than 60% of the property is located in Jefferson County. Madras is the closest community to Antelope, at about 32 miles, and to the ranch, at about 50 miles. The Dalles, on the other hand, is more than 75 miles from Antelope and about 94 miles from the ranch, which meant that Madras would

become the main commerce center for the followers of Rajneesh.

The entire Jefferson County portion of the land is zoned for exclusive farm use, which would prevent most types of development. The Rajneeshes' determination to create an incorporated city on the property, first in Wasco County and later in Jefferson County, created ongoing conflicts with Oregon's land-use laws, which protect farm land from development.

My first meeting with Sheela Silverman, the now infamous president of the nonprofit corporation that bought the property, was on Tuesday, Oct. 6, 1981, in a private meeting at the Jefferson County Courthouse. The Madras Pioneer's publisher at that time, Mike Williams, and I, the news editor, attended the meeting with Sheela, her husband, John Shelfer, and two other Rajneesh followers – called sannyasins. I took notes to write about the meeting, and Mike took photos.

The private meeting was followed by a packed crowd at a meeting of the Madras Kiwanis, which had invited the group's representatives to introduce themselves and their plans to local members. Shelfer, who had signed the purchase papers on June 22, 1981, told the group that he had searched across the U.S. for three and a half months for a property large enough to farm and build a community. "I had looked at 50-60 ranches," he said. "It had to be attractive land with more than 30,000 acres."

An additional consideration was finding a dry climate, according to Sheela. "There had to be no humidity. I knew that sooner or later, we would invite the Bhagwan. His health has not

been very good," she said," adding that the 50-year-old leader suffered from allergies, a bad back, and "terminal diabetes."

Rajneesh obtained a tourist visa, ostensibly to receive medical services in the United States, and flew from India to New York City on June 1. At the New Jersey meditation center, his health improved somewhat, and he was able to fly to the ranch on Aug. 29, 1981.

At the Kiwanis meeting, Sheela was a forceful and dynamic presence, promoting her vision for the property. "When we landed on this place and saw that this is it, I thought, 'This is beautiful,' she told the group. "We were looking for a place that would provide self-sufficiency."

Just months after their purchase, there were about 150-170 workers on the property, which they called Rajneeshpuram. They had already obtained 20 mobile home permits from Jefferson County and 13 from Wasco County, and had been given tentative permission to build a school on the Jefferson County side. (By 1983, the group had dropped plans to build a school in Jefferson County.) Other permits included one for an emergency medical center in Jefferson County, and Wasco County permits for a dining hall, large office complex and three miscellaneous buildings. Permits for 21 more double-wide mobile homes were also in the works in Wasco County.

For the medical center, the group already had two doctors, a dentist, three nurses and several chiropractors. "Basically, our people are highly professional," she said. "They are educated and

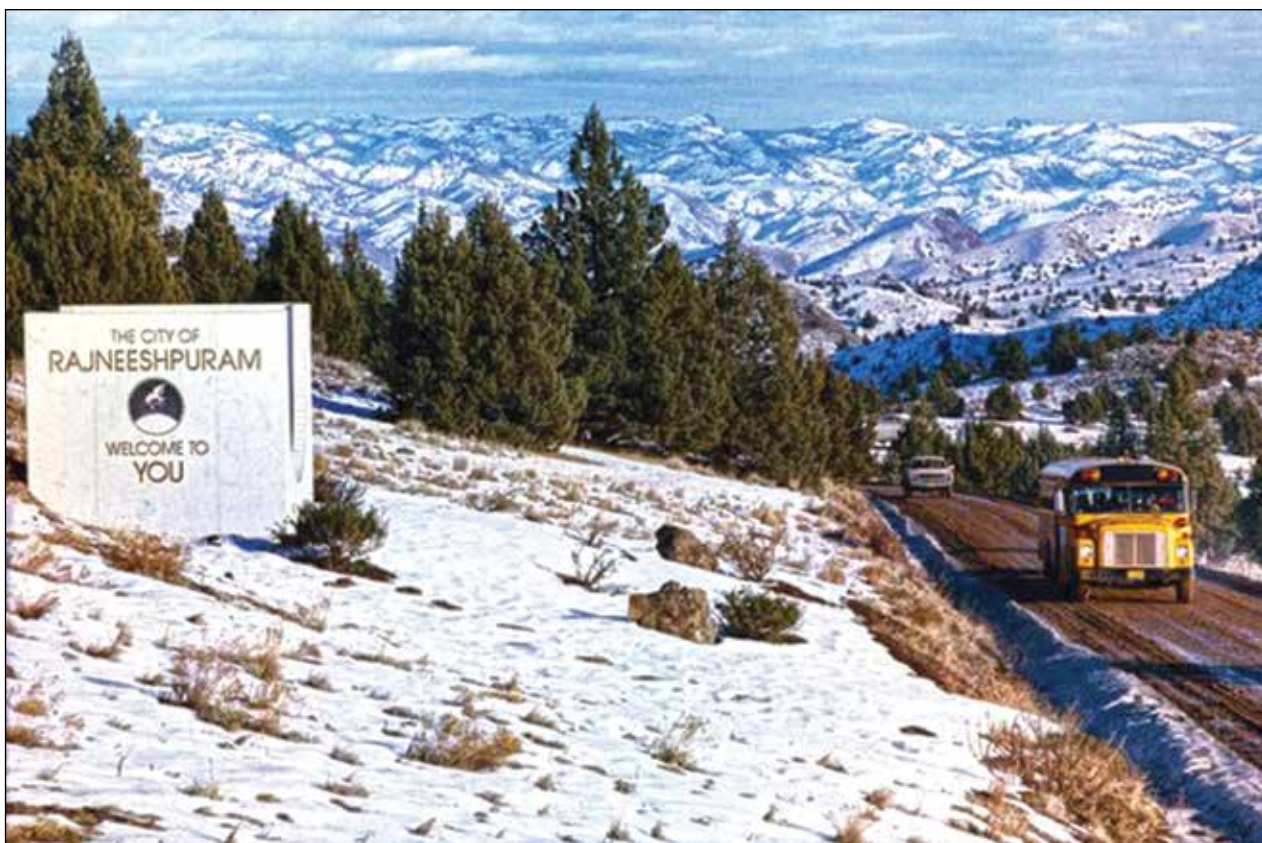


Image courtesy of [www.sannyas.wiki](http://www.sannyas.wiki)



well-traveled and are looking for something more. When you have everything you want, education, sophistication, then what? The point of satisfaction still remains.”

The religious organization's acquisition of the ranch was just three years after the Nov. 18, 1978 mass suicide and murder of followers of Jim Jones' People's Temple in Jonestown, Guyana, which had caused concern from local residents. To allay the community's fears, Sheela said that there would never be gates on the ranch. “Without feeling guilty, disciples can leave at any time. We'll help them pack.”

The biggest problem, Sheela insisted, was with the large number of followers who hoped to join them on the ranch. At the time, there were about 250,000 followers, with ashrams around the world. Ashram is the Indian term for a community around an enlightened one, she explained.

#### Public curious about newcomers

The media's fascination with Rajneesh and his red-clad followers was evident from the start. Jefferson County's district attorney from 1977-88, Mike Sullivan, who went on to become a Circuit Court judge in Deschutes County for nearly 25 years, recently recalled the frenzied time. “There were some days that I would get 200 calls from the press,” he said. “All during that time, I got lots of different phone calls, from Europe, all over the United States, Oregon. I prioritized local and Oregon media.”

Over the coming days and months, activity in and around the ranch accelerated. On Oct. 19, about 140 people attended a meeting of the Madras-Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce, where they learned that the push to incorporate a city had already begun. The incorporation hearing in The Dalles was set for Nov. 4, when they would ask to incorporate 4.5 square miles on the ranch in southeast Wasco County. At that hearing, the three-member Wasco County Court – nowadays called a commission – found the request in compliance with land-use goals and guidelines and voted 2-1 to set an election for May 18, 1982.

The early and enduring obsession with Rajneeshees and their plans in Central Oregon resulted in a well-attended Town Hall meeting in Antelope on Nov. 10, 1981, hosted by Jack Faust, of KATU news in Portland. At the meeting, which I attended and covered for the Pioneer, Wasco County Commissioner Jim Comini, who had voted against the incorporation, said it was “like a newborn babe . . . before it can walk, it needs to learn to crawl,” and that Rajneeshees would be wise to take advice from area residents on what the land could handle.

Wasco County Judge Rick Cantrell (a position which encompassed the roles of commission chairman and county administrator) said that Rajneeshees would need to present their plans for incorporation to the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission and go through its process. The ranch's planning coordinator, Dave Knapp (later known as Swami

Krishna Deva), said that the size of the city would be based on its carrying capacity, which he estimated could be 1,500-2,000 in the next 10-15 years.

Faust asked about a couple of Rajneesh's 336 books, one of which called sex the “most vital energy,” and another about the contradiction between his quest for “egolessness” and his statement, “I'm utterly satisfied with the best of everything,” in another of his books.

Regarding the question about sex, Sheela answered that there are “no titles, no limits,” adding, “There are no taboos, no guilt trips. The word is to accept it all.”



Mike Sullivan at his home in Bend. Photo by Holly M. Gill, 2023.

For Rajneesh, Rolls -Royces were an example of “the best of everything.” The guru rapidly became known for his collection of the British luxury cars, which grew to a total of 93, used on his daily drives to an old weigh station on U.S. Highway 97, just north of Madras.

At the Town Hall, Antelope residents expressed frustration about Rajneesh's disregard for the rules of the local roads. “I feel he's a menace in our community,” said the late Antelope City Councilor Frances Dickson. “He goes down our roads at 70 miles per hour; the road's not even posted for 55. He's been in

the ditches at least three times.”

Sheela – also known as Ma Anand Sheela – who could be charming at times, or quickly switch to caustic or even cruel, questioned Dickson's method of measuring Rajneesh's speed, and then countered with an unrelated accusation of her own that the group's mail was being opened. Antelope postmaster, the late Bill Dickson, who was also in attendance at the meeting, responded simply to the accusation: “I've opened no letter of yours.” He told Sheela that if she felt that their mail had been opened, she could fill out a form at the post office and he would personally notify the Portland office.

#### Pressure campaign intensifies

By 1982, the Rajneesh organization had made significant strides toward achieving some of its goals, but as their goals broadened, the obstacles and opposition spread. In search of city services not yet available on the unincorporated ranch, Rajneeshees had moved into Antelope – which had a population of 40 prior to their arrival – with an eye toward taking control of both the school board and City Council. Antelope Store and Café became Zorba the Buddha, The Rajneesh Restaurant, Gas and Groceries. Major events were happening on a weekly or even daily basis.

In January, two months after Wasco County found the Rajneeshees' request to incorporate a city at the ranch in compliance with land-use goals and set a date for an incorporation vote, 1000 Friends of Oregon and several Wasco County ranchers submitted a challenge of the county's decision to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. Those appealing maintained that the proposed city would violate state land-use laws intended to preserve agricultural land and rural areas, as well as Wasco County's comprehensive plan. Additionally, the appeal alleged that the Wasco County judge, Cantrell, could not be impartial because of an impending sale of cattle to the Rajneeshees.

But the outcome of the May 18 incorporation vote was never in doubt, since it involved only registered voters who lived within the area to be incorporated. The vote was 152-0 to incorporate on 2,013 acres in Wasco County, and work on the ranch proceeded, despite appeals that would extend through 1984.

At the same time that the Rajneesh Foundation was bombarding Wasco County with requests, it also had applications before Jefferson County officials. In March 1982, the Jefferson County Court (similar to today's County Commission) approved plans by Rajneeshees to build a church in Jefferson County on a 600-foot knoll, about 4 miles southeast of the ranch headquarters. The approval included a 14,141-square-foot sanctuary, and 5,000-square-foot support area for offices, restrooms, storage and other services.

A month later, the Rajneesh Foundation was back before the Jefferson County Court with elaborate plans for a week-long




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religious festival, which was expected to draw about 3,000 people from around the world from July 2-9. Wasco County had received a similar application the previous week. Jefferson County scheduled a hearing on the event for April 26.

Jefferson County Judge Herschel Read, who headed up the County Court, conducted the hearing in a courthouse conference room, with attendees packing the hallway and stairwells outside the conference room. By that two-hour hearing, the expectations for the festival had expanded from one week to three (June 22-July 16) and from 3,000 people to up to 5,000. Opponents pointed out that the festival plans appeared to violate Oregon state law on mass gatherings and land use; however, Wasco County had already granted a permit for the festival. Two days later, Read announced that the County Court had unanimously decided to deny the permit. That decision would also be appealed.

Looking back on that time, Mike Sullivan recalled the determination of the three court members: Read, Mary Norton and Gordon Galbraith. "They were firmly convinced they didn't want development out there," he said. "Herschel was all about preserving farm land, making sure the taxpayer's money was well-spent and being conscientious about making sure everyone did their job at the courthouse. He wanted to make sure Jefferson County was as efficient as it could possibly be."

Longtime Jefferson County Clerk Elaine Henderson, who served from 1971-99, remembered one occasion when she was still working after 5 p.m. and Sheela came into the courthouse with a group of four or five Rajneeshees. "I was at the counter when Sheela offered Herschel 'whatever you want – a million dollars,'" and he stood there and said, 'No,'" she recalled. "This county commission didn't go along with their plans."

At the time, her duties included taking minutes for court meetings. "There was always so much work to do," she recalled. "They (the Rajneeshees) always came to the meetings wanting something. It just made me uncomfortable having them sitting there. Our commissioners didn't give in; they held the line."

In retrospect, how would she characterize the Rajneesh years? "It just was not a good time," she said. "It was a very trying,

disruptive time."

While the incorporation of Rajneeshpuram was nearing a vote, the city of Antelope was moving in the opposite direction. The Antelope City Council, fearing a takeover of the town, made a surprising preemptive decision: they unanimously agreed to hold an April 15 vote to disincorporate the 81-year-old town.

"We really didn't have a choice," said Antelope Mayor Margaret Hill in an article in the March 18, 1982, Pioneer.

"They want our city charter, and this is the only possible way we have to maybe prevent that. I don't know that we'll be successful; it's just our last try." At that point, disciples had already purchased 11 lots in the Antelope city limits.

In the same article, Sheela said that 80 percent of Antelope's property was for sale. "Whatever is needed, I'm going to buy it."

In advance of the disincorporation vote, Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles officials in both Madras and Prineville reported that over the previous week (March 1982), 25 people had visited the DMV to change their addresses to Antelope or get ID cards identifying them as living in Antelope.

Henderson pointed out that in order to vote in the disincorporation election, persons must have been a resident of Oregon for at least 20 days, and must have established a residence in Antelope. Residency could be established and voting registration could both occur on the day of the election.

Although a group of Rajneesh's followers had filed a motion for a review

before the disincorporation election could be held – since they believed it didn't qualify as an emergency – Wasco County Circuit Court Judge John Jelderks ruled that the election could proceed. On April 15, the vote was 55 in favor of maintaining the city of Antelope to 42 for disincorporation. That meant that 97 people had voted – nearly two-and-one-half times the city's total population just 10 months earlier.

The Antelope City Council contested the results, challenging 70 of the votes based on the 20-day state residency requirement in Oregon law and the Antelope City Charter, but Jelderks ruled that the requirement violated the U.S. Constitution, and that the challenged voters were bona fide residents of Antelope. Three years later, on Nov. 4, 1986, Oregonians passed Measure

## Doing Business with the Bhagwan

By Joe Krenowicz



*Editor's note: While the Rajneesh leadership wrangled with local governments, committed numerous crimes, and were a menace to the health and safety of Central Oregonians, most*

*Rajneesh followers were relatively ordinary people with no malign intent. Local residents had a variety of experiences with them that are worth recounting; not to do so would omit a significant part of the history of 1980s Madras. Below is an account by Joe Krenowicz, a longtime community leader who recently stepped down as Madras-Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce director. Krenowicz has served many years on the COCC Board of Directors and has recently been elected chairman of the board. In the 1980s, he was a co-owner of Madras' NAPA Auto Parts and as such interacted regularly with the Rajneeshees. Krenowicz gave an oral statement, which has been transcribed and edited for clarity, with an attempt to preserve his voice.*

In the early '80s when the Bhagwan came, we were probably two or three years into our business, which we started in '79 — my mom, my dad and myself. At that point, we were losing money. We knew we were going to lose money the first five to seven years.

Then the Bhagwan came to town, and it was probably the best thing you ever could have happen to a new business anywhere.

What we did in sales just with the Bhagwan in the first year with them was comparable to our normal sales with our agriculture community, logging, commercial repairs, repair shops, and tourists combined. So, basically, we doubled our sales in one year. It was a great infusion of cash as well as profits from that point on — year three or year four or whatever year that was. We always made a profit every year. So we were very fortunate.

And it was a great experience. The followers were from all over the world; they were all



Image courtesy of [www.sannyas.wiki](http://www.sannyas.wiki)



13 – still in effect – which requires that voters register at least 20 days before an election.

### Editorials, letters heat up

Before the arrival of the Rajneesh followers, letters to the editor were sporadic, depending on the time of year. Prior to elections, the page would fill up with endorsements, but most of the year, the letters consisted of periodic missives from a handful of locals with strong opinions about whatever was in the news. It was unusual to see the editorial page entirely full of letters, but that changed during the Rajneesh years, from 1981-

85, when the editorial page was frequently loaded with letters, which occasionally overflowed on to another page. One of the most prolific letter writers, Jon Bowerman, of Fossil, had regular interactions with Rajneeshes because his ranch is located just across the John Day River from the Rajneesh Foundation property. Initially, Bowerman said recently, he enjoyed living just across the river from the colorful group.

Early on, he recalled reading one of his satirical poems at a dance at the Clarno Grange, which had a few sannyasins participating. "Maybe a week later, Sheela's secretary called me up and wanted to know if I'd do it for Sheela and some of the higher-ups." He accepted the invitation, and rode his horse across the river. "At the lower end of my property," he explained, "you can almost walk across in the summer and barely get your socks wet."

Soon after, he said, "A half-dozen of them went to a neighbor's to buy hay. They stopped by and drank up all



**Sheela with Jefferson County District Attorney Mike Sullivan. Madras Pioneer, Nov. 12, 1981.**

to followers of Rajneesh were just that – rumors, Bowerman commented, "Some of us said the same thing when rumor had it that they were going to buy the Antelope Store and Restaurant. Then they bought it and now in the middle of this cattle-raising community, you may now be treated to a 'vegieburger.'"

"Many of the residents of Antelope are elderly, retired people who had hoped to enjoy their remaining years in what was a peaceful community," he continued. "Some have already done as the governor suggested and left. Others, who elected to stay, have been treated to such rare delights as having their activities observed by a red-clad video camera crew from the street in front of their house."

"Most of the remaining residents of Antelope, as well as the farmers and ranchers in the surrounding area, are doing as your editorial suggests and 'making a stand for our beliefs and constitutional rights,'" Bowerman wrote.

Bowerman's letters to the editor, which he wrote to the Pioneer, were picked up by the old Oregon Journal, which paid him \$100 per letter, and later by both the Klamath Falls Herald and News and

my beer; they were really friendly. I thought, 'What was the big deal? Why was everyone against them?' It wasn't too long before they started harassing the people in Antelope and that's when I got off the fence and started writing my stories."

He was among those warning Madras residents not to be complacent, since the fight facing Antelope residents could eventually move further south. In response to an editorial in the Pioneer pointing out that the rumors about property sales

genuine and sincere. They were content to be followers of the Bhagwan. They had a philharmonic orchestra pianist, an executive in a New York advertising agency, a couple college professors, retired folks, people who were empty nesters. They were very cautious because the world was watching, but once they got to know you, they'd tell you stories. We joked back and forth.

They had two shops down there and one was a heavy-duty shop for parts for all their trucks and semis, all their heavy-duty cats, and excavators. Then they had an auto shop that took care of the almost 100 plus vehicles they had. Basically, between the two shops, they had about a quarter million dollars in parts and we supplied them three times a week.

We had a good agreement with them up front. We had a set amount that we would extend credit to them for a week and as long as we had the check Monday morning when we got down there — either myself, my brother or my dad — we tag-teamed that every week — as long as we had the check, we'd bring more parts down there and we never did get shortchanged on the checks, never had a bounced check.

We sold them transmissions, engines. We actually had to buy a heavy-duty, four-wheel-drive rig and a heavier trailer to haul stuff.

And so we got to meet these folks. If you got there before lunch, they always wanted to take you to lunch. They had a huge cafeteria. It was in the big building that is now south of town by the Central Oregon Livestock Auction. Tom Green purchased the building from Rajneeshpuram. A portion of it was a huge ballroom, a huge gathering location, but a portion of it was one of their cafeterias — they had three of them.

So I made a point not to get there before lunch because all they had was vegetarian tofu and all that stuff where, you know, I'm a steak and potatoes, chocolate cake and ice cream guy. But every once in a while we had to get down there early because they needed something and it was nothing unusual for us to take \$1,000-\$1,500 worth of parts down there three times a week.

So when I did get down there early and they did invite me to lunch — and you'd never turn it down — they knew that I wasn't too excited about it. They just wanted to take me, talk to me and I met so many cool people from all over the world. And after a while they got to know me and when they knew that I had to come down early for stuff that they really needed, they always found a roast beef sandwich. Meat was not part of their diet, but they just took care of us, which was really quite neat.



**Antelope Mayor Margaret Hill accepting a check from Nike Co-founder and local landowner Bill Bowerman to help cover legal costs of the town's struggle against the Rajneesh takeover. Madras Pioneer, May 27, 1982.**

the Medford Tribune, which also paid him. Newspapers around the state were eager for inside information on the activity in and around the ranch.

Violence against residents of Antelope – both recent and longtime – was becoming a concern. In March, several young Prineville men drove to Antelope and harassed a red-clad resident. Wasco County police were called and charged a 22-year-old male with harassment for shooting a small-caliber handgun into the air.

In an editorial in the April 1, 1982, paper, Mike Williams, the publisher, wrote: “This past weekend, an incident involving threats and gunfire took place near Antelope – a situation which came dangerously close to what a great many people already feel could happen between opposing sides in the growing Rajneesh controversy.”

“There have been shooting wars (range wars) fought in this region for much less serious differences of opinion, but we would like to think that the area has become a bit more civilized in the last 100 or so years.”

After describing the situation, which involved obscene remarks or gestures and at least one shot fired into the air, he continued: “We can’t condone violence by either side in the brewing controversy, but neither can we ignore the imagined or real threat that the longtime residents must see in the influx and rapid spread of the Rajneesh people.”

“Antelope residents have a legitimate worry about being swallowed up and controlled by this group. When you are a resident of a city with a population of 40, a move to disincorporate to avoid takeover is a real and reasonable move to make at this time.

“As might be expected, the Rajneesh Foundation is attempting to delay that election – their action also being taken through legal channels.”

In addition to Williams’ editorial, the April 1 issue was brimming with letters to the editor regarding the Rajneesh situation.

Nine residents of Madras and Metolius signed on to a letter to the editor expressing their concerns about the “once-magnificent Muddy Ranch and the now-threatened little town of Antelope.” They addressed comments by Sheela calling locals “miserable messes” and claiming that they were jealous of the Rajneesh lifestyle. “We want no part of (the Rajneeshes’) ‘anything goes’ society,” the letter noted.

The locals sounded a warning: “What is happening to the longtime residents of Antelope could very well happen to us and others. The people in Antelope have worked all their lives for what they have and we should help them to retain it.”

They also extolled the beauty and historical value of the land



**Former Antelope Café, renamed Zorba the Buddha: The Rajneesh Restaurant. Madras Pioneer, April 1, 1982.**

purchased by Rajneesh’s followers. “How sad that the old fort remains have been destroyed by bulldozers, we hear. Parts of the military trail, which led from The Dalles to Vale, are still apparent. And the Muddy Station, the old stopping site, was located near the old ranch house. Also, on this property are pioneer graves, an Indian traverse trail that dates back centuries, Indian artifacts, the remains of the rasper on Aristra Mountain, where Spaniards used burros to pull the huge stone to ground (sic) the rock from which gold was extracted, and numerous other historical treasures.”

Another letter, written to then Gov. Victor Atiyeh, was forwarded to the Madras Pioneer by Sheela. In the letter, a West Linn couple took the governor to task for not encouraging the “pleasant community of hardworking, self-sufficient people who have already transformed a barren piece of ground into a garden spot ...”

The letter continued with harsh criticism of Antelope and its citizens, which inspired even more letters. “Oregon can hardly prosper if it is to be filled with stagnant, dilapidated little towns like Antelope – a place where unproductive, indolent old people go to mark time before they die.” While watching a national broadcast, the letter writers said that they had seen close-ups of Antelope residents – “their faces contorted with spite and hate and the kind of fear born of ignorance.”

A couple weeks later, a Metolius resident, who grew up in Ashwood, wrote to express her irritation at the mischaracterization of the community and its residents, many of whom were cattle or sheep ranchers or wheat farmers. “My father was born in Antelope and has lived in the area all of his life,” she wrote. “He was and is a very productive citizen. The people of Antelope are honest, hardworking citizens who value their historical home and they desire to keep that community alive and as a tribute to Americans.”

They had 60 pieces of heavy equipment. That’s trucks, tractors and excavators. They had about 100 vehicles. They probably had at least a couple of dozen ATVs or work trucks. And then, of course, the Bhagwan’s, 22 or 23 Rolls-Royces. They were all owned and they were all managed and they were all dispersed out by the ranch, so to use a car, sannnyasins needed to check the car out. And they had to be authorized to check one out and say where it’s going and all that.

One time I got called out to the ranch to check on the Bhagwan’s boat. They had built a huge dam up there that wasn’t built under any permits or any construction stuff, but whatever they did, they did right. I’m sure the dam is still there. Well, it made a very nice little lake about the same size as Haystack and the Bhagwan had a patio boat. They had people on the boat taking care of it and it was always immaculate.

They asked me to go up there because the outboard on this patio boat wasn’t running very well, so I went up there and checked it out, and found out what the problem was.

Afterwards, I was talking to a couple of people that I knew and all of a sudden three cars raced up to the dock area and about a dozen people got out with flyswatters. Well, what happened was Kabir, who was the parts manager for the auto shop who went with me, and I forgot to close the door on the boat and so flies went inside because they had a whole nice buffet of food for the Bhagwan. When they found that out, they brought in a bunch of people with flyswatters and they got rid of all the flies in about two minutes after they closed the door. Once the flies were all killed, the Bhagwan showed up.

Wherever he went, the Bhagwan always had his followers lay down a carpet before he got out of his car and into where he was going. So they rolled the carpet out and he got out of his car and did his walk across the carpet into the houseboat with his aid.

The classic was one time I was going up there and I found that the Bhagwan had driven off the road, on that road up to Antelope before you get to the top of the pass. I had to stop and wait and I asked the guy from the Blazer (the Bhagwan’s vehicle was always escorted by bodyguards in Chevrolet Blazers in front and behind) how long it would be. He said it would be another 20-30 minutes, so it wouldn’t have been worth my time to try and turn around and come back later.

And sure enough, a whole bunch of his followers came up and they must have had 10 rolls of carpet, and they rolled his carpet out for him to get out of the Rolls-Royce and into another Rolls so they could take him back to the ranch. And then they



### Rulings, appeals dominate news

In early April 1982, Antelope lost its battle to withhold building permits based on concerns about water and sewer and was directed by the Wasco County Circuit Court to issue four building permits to Rajneeshee applicants: for a print shop, two four-bedroom homes and renovation of an existing structure into office space. At the same time, the Wasco County Planning Commission approved a 9,000-square-foot community center, and a 29,570-square-foot school building for secondary and adult education.

However, not every project was immediately approved by the Wasco County Planning Commission, which put on hold an application for a 485-acre Rural Service Center by the Rajneesh group. Plans for the Rural Service Center included a library, gas station, print shop, school, retail center and other facilities on the former Muddy Ranch.

Later in May, Rajneesh followers filed an appeal and a writ of review of the Jefferson County Court's denial of a permit for the religious festival set for June 22-July 26. The county based its denial on its belief that it would be a commercial use of land zoned for exclusive farm use, as well as health and safety issues associated with a mass gathering. Both matters were heard in the Deschutes County Circuit Court on May 28. Judge John M. Copenhaver ruled for the Rajneeshees, saying that the county had reached an "erroneous conclusion," and that it was not a matter to be considered by a zoning or land-use board.

District Attorney Mike Sullivan, who also served as county counsel and had represented the county in the case, said that the county's decision was not based on the group's religion, but

rather on its plans to build permanent structures, which should have been a conditional use application.

Sullivan continued working to find ways for the Rajneesh organization and local governments to work through their disagreements. "I felt like my job was to keep the peace and not have incidents where people get in trouble," he said recently. "I felt their house of cards was built on confrontation. It wasn't my style to stir up the hornets' nest; my job was to keep them calm."

In July 1982, Sullivan was instrumental in an agreement between Antelope and the Rajneesh organization to resolve differences and move forward with a more positive relationship. The Rajneeshees waived a claim for \$19,000 in attorney fees in the disincorporation process and the city of Antelope expressed regret for any damage to Rajneeshees from its actions.

As part of the agreement, Antelope agreed to support incorporation of Rajneeshpuram, approve long-pending building permits in Antelope, terminate its moratorium on building and development, and ensure that "all current residential uses in commercial zones shall be lawful, nonconforming uses."

In addition to waiving the claim for attorney fees, Rajneeshees agreed not to initiate any new development projects in Antelope. The mediation involved the Community Relations Service of the Oregon Department of Justice, LUBA's hearings officer and Sullivan.

### Changes at ranch impressive

In May 1982, Mike Williams visited the ranch with the retired former publisher, Art Staat, and a local builder, Jerry Wilkinson, and participated in a "well-orchestrated tour" of the ranch, along with a journalist from London.

let me through as he turned and left.

He always drove himself. He was a nightmare to watch drive. I'm surprised he didn't have more accidents.

So our business was established in the community, but we knew when Rajneeshpuram started it was not going to last forever. It actually lasted longer than we thought it would. So we were prepared to cut back once that business went away.

The day that we pulled the plug on the Rajneeshees, we had left about \$4,500 in parts down on the ranch. We just told them we weren't coming back. The end was coming around. We had heard through the grapevine that the feds were coming, which they did, about a week and a half later.

We saw a lot of companies out at the ranch, and they were good for maybe only a month or two selling them stuff, but there was one company, an electrical company, that sent the same one or two guys for the whole time. We always thought those guys were plants with the FBI or CIA, or whoever was watching them, because they were everywhere on that ranch, just like we were.



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Williams wrote about the extensive changes at the ranch in the May 27 paper. "Apparently, endless funds and a workforce in the hundreds are leaving their marks on the land, with recent work including rip rap and stream bank stabilization, and the planting of some 16,000 trees."

"Building and improving on the ranch's road system has now taken place on nearly the entire 40-mile network, with rock crushing underway to eventually gravel all the road surfaces to avoid the heavy mud, which apparently had something to do with the former name for the ranch," he wrote.

The group had already established a Holstein dairy and egg-producing facility, planted 3,000 fruit trees, 12,000 grape vines of five varieties, and was working on a drip irrigation system and a 2-acre greenhouse, he wrote. The 24-head of dairy cattle was producing 125 gallons of milk per day.

"On weekdays, the reception center handles an average of 30-40 visitors each day, with that number swelling to 100 or more on the weekends."

The article's positive representation of the ranch bothered some regular readers of the Madras Pioneer. "I took heat for praising what they'd done on the land," said Williams, noting that after the editorial was written, Bill Bowerman, the founder of Nike, who had a residence west of Fossil, drove to the Pioneer's office to talk to Williams. "We sat down and had a 20-minute conversation." In that conversation, he assured Bowerman that the article was simply an observation of changes and not an endorsement of their activity. "I'm not in favor of these people; I'm just trying to stay neutral," Williams said.

The following week, the Pioneer ran a photo of Bill Bowerman, the president of Citizens for Constitutional Cities, presenting a check for \$2,500 to Antelope Mayor Margaret Hill to help with legal expenses incurred by the city in its fight to maintain the city's independence.

"We will be doing everything possible to have the courts determine if the takeover of your town and conversion of it

into a religious city, or the formation of a cult city on the Big Muddy Ranch is an unconstitutional violation of the principle of separation of church and state," he said.

During the Rajneesh years, Jon Bowerman said that his father still lived in Eugene, where he had taught and coached track at the University of Oregon. When the guy who had sold the Muddy Creek Ranch to the Rajneesh organization called his dad to let him know about a nearby piece of property, "Dad couldn't get his checkbook out fast enough," said Jon Bowerman. "He thought Sheela would buy it. The place was between me and the highway."

The property had an old pioneer house and a doublewide trailer. "My parents used the doublewide when they came over; he was over here quite a bit. It really upset him, what they were doing to the people in Antelope," said Bowerman. "When things started getting really sticky, he hired a lawyer to travel with him."

Jon Bowerman had his own problem with harassment by the Rajneeshes, who would shine spotlights on his home from a private road within Muddy Ranch, just across the river. One night, he said, when his oldest daughter was about 18 months old, she woke up screaming and he and his wife ran into the bedroom. "There's this spotlight going back and forth across the wall," he said. "We moved her crib into our bedroom."

In June and July, the Rajneesh festival drew at least 6,000 people, as evidenced by a photo taken by Williams. "I knew there were thousands of people camping out, so I chartered a plane and flew over it. It was like a mob scene; it was incredible," he said.

The information accompanying the photo in the July 8, 1982 issue of the Pioneer stated: "The former Big Muddy Ranch near Antelope looked much like a military camp during the past week as an estimated 6,000 followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh took part in the 'First Annual World Celebration' at Rajneeshpuram. The large structure at the lower left, the main assembly hall for the celebration, is scheduled to be turned into a 2-acre

Really, we were the only two entities that were everywhere on the ranch. The Rajneeshes felt comfortable if we needed to go check something out. We always drove our vehicle and they had a vehicle in front of ours. We always had to have an escort. Same with that electrical company.

So when we found out that things were piling up, and of course, the media was telling us all that too, out of respect to the two parts department guys, we told them this was going to be our last trip. And they understood and they were embarrassed, but they were real genuine folks and so we left, like I said, about \$4,500 of parts down there that we didn't get paid for. And we were willing to do that. There was nothing we could have done anyway.

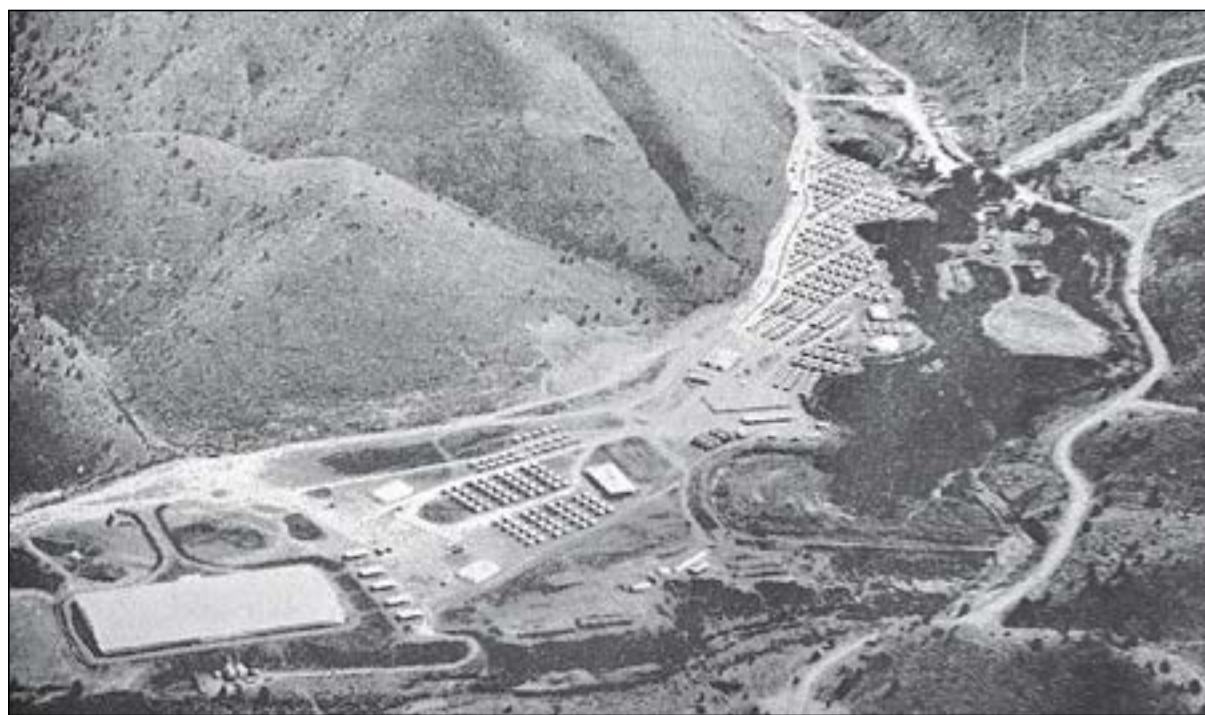
About six weeks later, I got a call from Satish, the auto parts guy and he asked me, "Hey, Joe, can I meet you down at the parts store Saturday morning before 5?"

"Before 5 in the morning?" I said. "Well, yeah, but you know we're open all day and I can meet you anytime. I most likely am going to be working anyways."

"Well, I need to see you before 5," Satish said.

So I met him down there at 4:30-5 and he had a box van. He had brought two pallets of parts and it was about \$5,000 worth of parts that he returned to us to make us whole.

They were just neat people. Different, but they were real.w



Aerial view of annual festival at Rajneeshpuram. Madras Pioneer, July 8, 1983.

greenhouse at the conclusion of the festival. Other structures are tents on wooden platforms, with smaller clusters of camping tents scattered in nearly every canyon of the ranch. The main portion of the festival was scheduled to end on July 7; however, extended programs are scheduled through July 18."

#### School never out for summer

In July 1982, I visited the ranch to gather information for an article on the school system for the children of sannyasins. School was in session on a Thursday in mid-July – as it was all year long – and I was able to meet with a group of mixed age students and a couple of teachers.

According to Swami Sarvananda, the school coordinator, students gathered at 8:15 a.m. in a large old house next to the ranch reception area for the beginning of their 8-hour school day. Once a hotel, the house served as both school and home for many of the children.

Sarvananda, who had a doctorate in American history and had previously taught history at the State University of New York, pointed out that the private school's teachers had all taught before. "We have a basketful of degrees," he said.

After a briefing on the day's activities, the kids would break up into cleaning crews to work both inside and outside the school before starting morning classes in math, language arts, German and French. Afternoons were more flexible, sometimes including a visit to Patanjali Lake (formerly Maze Reservoir), located about seven miles south of the old ranch center.



"The road (to the lake) was cleaned and widened and the lake was cleaned and dredged. We spent two to three weeks with six or seven men," he said. The project also involved scuba divers who cleaned up the bottom of the 16-acre lake, removing such things as cans, bottles and barbed wire, to make the lake safe for children.

Students studied natural sciences at the lake, such as geology, ecology, meteorology and biology, before spending the last two hours of their school day, 4:30-6:30 p.m., working on the farm.

Young children lived with their parents until age 5-7, when they could choose to live with other children at the school, supervised by two commune members. Teenagers were able to live as adults in trailers.

Swami Puneet, 14, from New Delhi, India, had become a sannyasin the previous year, and had arrived at the ranch with his parents and sister in time to help prepare for the festival. In India, he had attended a private school run by Irish Catholic priests. "In India, the schools were harder and stricter. I didn't like it there at all," he said. "Teachers forced you to do everything. (The priests) used to cane you. If some naughty boy did something and didn't own up, they caned the whole class. It was pretty terrible." Ma Prem Binu, 13, from North Carolina, said she had been a sannyasin for four and a half years, and admitted that wearing red had occasionally been a problem. "But it's okay. Kids used to beat me up because I wore red and my mala (a strand of prayer beads). I had no friends. I didn't like it. Sometimes, I'd like to wear other colors, but I don't. It's been four and a half years since I wore other colors."

#### Rolls-Royces rile residents

More than a year after Rajneesh had started his daily drives to the old weigh station north of Madras, members of the Madras Conservative Baptist Church began holding peaceful demonstrations at the turnaround point, with the express purpose of attempting to convert Rajneesh to Christianity.

Spread across the top of the Dec. 23, 1982 issue of the Pioneer was a series of photos showing the protesters, carrying an American flag, Rajneesh in one of his numerous Rolls-Royces, and Mardo Jimenez, the Hispanic pastor of the Conservative Baptist Church, who wanted to give Rajneesh a Bible, but was instead persuaded to give the Bible to Sheela, who happened to be there.

In January, the demonstrations grew more confrontational, with larger crowds of church members, media, law enforcement officers and busloads of followers of Rajneesh. Jimenez would stand on a pickup, with a PA system, and lead church members in patriotic songs, while Rajneeshes, nearby with their own PA system, would sing and dance.

Jimenez said that he had three reasons for initiating the demonstrations. "First, we are in disagreement with their morals. I believe they are a group that practices an immoral lifestyle," he said. "I want to be honest and speak the truth and love as the Bible says."

Secondly, Jimenez believed they weren't being honest about their intents. "They said they were not going to take the city of Antelope and they did it. I believe they want to take our city. They are coming here. They have people working here. He comes here every day for over a year in different Rolls-Royces."

"The third reason is that I believe they're a type of crude communism," he continued. "First of all, this man

gave a speech in Poona, India. The theme was 'We are not a Democracy.' In that speech, he says, 'I run this commune. Whatever happens here happens according to my will.'"

A native of Honduras, Jimenez said that he believed they were part of "the New Age Movement – the ones bringing the Anti-Christ to the world."

Asked for comment, a spokeswoman for the Rajneeshes, Ma Prem Isabel, said, "This is a clear infringement on everything America is built upon – freedom of worship, freedom of religion and freedom of assembly. Americans seem to have forgotten in 300 years what the pioneers wanted to do when they came here. This kind of trying to convert people is violent."

Sheela responded to Jimenez's fears about a takeover saying, "I don't want to take over anybody. We're absolute lovers of freedom. We want to be left alone to live our life the way we want to live – peacefully."

Her husband, Swami Prem Jayananda, formerly John Shelfer, said that they had a perfect right to drive to Madras and they weren't interested in compromise. "The minister is drawing an analogy between Madras and Antelope; it's hogwash. We moved into Antelope because of commercial pressures and for the need of communication."

After buying 15% of the property – all for sale – within the city limits, he added, "We have people living there. They work in Antelope and love living there. It has nothing to do with



Schoolchildren at Rajneeshpuram. Madras Pioneer, July 29, 1982.

Madras."

Because of the concern about the potential for violence, the police chief at the time, Robert Lowry, invited Mike Williams to go with him to a hill overlooking the site where everyone was gathered. "I went out with the police chief and watched for snipers; there were concerns about that," said Williams, recalling that they used binoculars to surveil the site. "There was also a state policeman with a spotting scope on the other side watching the crowd."

In a letter to the editor about the situation, Jon Bowerman called attention to a change he'd noticed. "A further indication that the followers of the Bhagwan are adapting to local customs are the well-filled gun racks that were seen recently in the vehicles that make a daily drive from Wasco to Jefferson County to visit the Shrine of the Weighmaster," he wrote. "The exact type of weapons was impossible to determine, but at least one of them appeared to be a shotgun. After repeatedly stating that they have no weapons on the ranch and that they abhor violence, there must be another reason that they are 'packing iron.' How's the goose hunting, Swami?"

The situation was tense, but at that point, there was no actual violence. However, some Rajneeshes began blocking the highway, which caused concern about the potential for injuries.

"Rajneeshes were starting to stand in the middle of the highway near North Madras Heights," recalled Mike Sullivan. "They wouldn't get out of the way. One of the state policemen pushed a gentleman off the road because he thought the person was going to get hurt."

Following that incident, Sullivan said that he ended up with numerous people in his office as he tried to sort out the problem, including Rajneeshes complaining about being pushed, Oregon State Police Sgt. Larry Adkins, and Sheriff Ham Perkins. "They did a good job of keeping the peace," he said.

#### Former governor dies

The Jan. 8, 1983, death of former Gov. Tom McCall, a Central Oregonian who was a co-founder of the land-use advocacy group 1000 Friends of Oregon and



Antelope School. Photo courtesy of Dreamstime.com







# TELEVISION DEBUTS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY



By Jane Ahern

Virtually all of Oregon missed out on the early days of television. Portland didn't have a local station until 1952 and most of the rest of the state couldn't pick up any TV channels until KOIN began broadcasting in 1953, its VHF signal wafting well beyond Portland, all the way to Central Oregon. By that time, residents

of New York had been watching TV for more than a decade.

When KOIN, which turned 70 this October, started up, iconic shows like *Howdy Doody* and *Meet the Press* were in their seventh seasons, as were the pioneering national newscasts by Douglas Edwards and John Cameron Swayze on CBS and NBC, respectively. George Burns and Gracie Allen had moved their show from radio to television three years earlier, and Lawrence Welk had been on the air in Los Angeles for two years.

Oregon's delayed entry into television was due to the FCC's freeze on licensing new stations from 1948-52. The fledgling industry had taken off so fast after World War II that the agency needed time to think through how best to allocate the limited resource — airwaves — fairly.

It is no wonder that by 1953 many Jefferson County residents were eager to tune in and catch up with the rest of the world. Unfortunately, KOIN's broadcast signal, traveling 100 miles across mountainous terrain, wasn't easy to capture for most people here. Reception was especially problematic in Madras because of its location in a basin.

To get a good signal in 1953, most TV viewers needed large antennas, sometimes mounted on 30 to 40-foot poles. Gary Clowers, who grew up on the Agency Plains, said that the Lydy family was one of the first he knew of to install an antenna tower, which he estimates was 35 or 40 feet high.

"For some reason, Nig (Lydy), of all the people we knew, was more interested in getting TV. I don't know if he had some background with it. It was a surprise to everyone that he did that. Just as soon as Portland began to broadcast, he got that antenna for watching TV," Clowers said.

"All the neighborhood kids, the Olsons and Clowers and whoever else, we went down there every Friday night to watch *Portland Wrestling* and *I've Got a Secret*. He had a great big ol' antenna and he could pick it up direct. I think that's the first I ever saw of TV," Clowers said. "We'd all cheer for our favorite wrestlers and boo the bad guys."

The Lydys lived on Columbia in the old Hiram Links homestead. Over in the Mud Springs area, the Chamness family was one of the first to get TV, in 1954.

The Chamnesses hired Paul Rowan of Rowan's TV-Radio Service to install their television. To get a signal, Rowan put up

The Radio Corporation of America Tells  
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On April 30th RCA television was introduced in the New York metropolitan area. Television programs, broadcast from the lofty NBC mast at the top of the Empire State Building, cover an area approximately fifty miles in all directions from that building. Programs from NBC television studios are sent out initially for an hour at a time, twice a week. In addition, there will be pick-ups of news events, sporting events, interviews with visiting celebrities and other programs of wide interest.

**How Television will be received!**  
To provide for the reception of television programs, RCA Laboratories have developed several receiving sets which are now ready for sale. These instruments, built by RCA Victor, include three models for reception of television pictures and sound, as well as regular radio programs. There is also an attachment for present radio sets. This latter provides for seeing television pictures, while the sound is heard through the radio itself. The pictures seen on these various models will differ only in size.

**Television—A new opportunity for dealers and service men**  
RCA believes that as television grows it will offer dealers and service men an ever expanding opportunity for profits. Those, who are in a position to cash in on its present development, will find that television goes hand in hand with the radio business of today.

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1939 RCA ad introducing television to the New York City market. Broadcasting would initially be one hour twice a week. Public domain photo from wikipedia.org

an antenna on a pole of galvanized pipe approximately 20 feet off the ground. The pole was alongside the house so that Art Chamness could make adjustments while standing on the roof.

Dan Chamness, who was 8 years old when his family got television, remembers his parents inviting neighbors over to watch shows with them. The Scheuchzers, the Shepherds, the Osborns, and the Stines all came over to watch if there was something special on TV.

Chamness listed some popular shows: *The Red Skelton Show*, *December Bride*, *The Ed Sullivan Show*. After school, Chamness would watch *Mr. Moon* —, a show produced by KOIN in Portland that debuted in 1953.

"It was after school every day. Mr. Moon had a moon on his head — you couldn't see who he was — and he'd have kids in

the studio and show cartoons and do little humor things." Those shows were good, Chamness said, but, "Nothing compared to the *Lone Ranger*."

Asked how their television reception was, Chamness said, "I was comparing it to no television. It seemed pretty good."

Even with a large antenna, it could take a lot of effort to get a good signal. One evening when still a child, Bill Houts went with his family to the home of Leo and Beulah Bicart to see their new television. "We all went down to their house, waiting to watch that thing come on," said Houts. "Rowan put up this antenna in their yard about 25-30 feet tall, and we sat and sat and sat from 5 until about 9 that night and finally we went home. No TV."

Out in Culver near Juniper Butte, Ray Pokorny's family got their first television in about 1956. Their neighbor, Bud Clowers (a relative of the Agency Plains Clowers), was an aficionado of technology and helped Ray's father set it up. "We had a huge antenna on top of the house. It went up, I believe, 30 or 40 feet . . . They were fooling around with that and kind of got it aimed to get the best signal. They pointed it toward Mount Hood."

The results were not ideal, probably because of electrical interference. Pokorny said, "We had a power line right next to the house and so there were these lines that were black that were like dashes across the top of the TV screen about an inch down from the top and there was two inches of crap and then there was the picture and then there was two inches of crap."

The coming of television provided new opportunities for businesses in Jefferson County almost overnight. Two months after

KOIN began broadcasting, local shops optimistically began advertising televisions for Christmas. Madras Electric's *Pioneer* ad proclaimed, "There's still time to install TV for Christmas" and its rival, Better Living Appliance Center, encouraged people to buy a television and "Start the Christmas Season by enjoying the Holiday Programs."

In Madras, there were a variety of television brands available, including Zenith, Westinghouse, Motorola, and Admiral. Screen sizes ranged from 17-24 inches.

There were at least three businesses that sold and serviced both radios and televisions: Madras Electric, Art's TV and Radio, and Rowan's TV-Radio Service. According to Dan Chamness, the early televisions broke down frequently.

"It used to be they would do a lot of repair because these TVs



had tubes. They would replace the picture tube, which was the big tube, but also quite a number of other tubes were involved in a television or radio,” Chamness said. “Rowans were real good about fixing things fast.”

“We went through quite a few TVs over the years. They didn’t last like they do now,” Chamness said.

A large part of Rowan’s business was getting customers’ televisions set up, with towers and antennas and other equipment as needed. Art’s also advertised similar services, specifying that they had equipment that could search for a signal even if electricity were not available on site.

Don Rowan remembers helping his dad put up antennas. “He spent a lot of time wandering around trying to figure out where you could pick up a signal. I can remember carrying an antenna and him with his signal strength meter trying to find signals for people that had antennas,” Rowan said. “That’s what he spent most of his time doing before the cable and even after the cable was going because some people couldn’t have cable.”

Two of the three television service businesses eventually closed and faded out of collective memory, but Paul Rowan innovated, thrived, and expanded his business into other cities in Central Oregon.

#### A Pioneer in Cable

Here’s a fact in danger of being forgotten: Madras was one of the first communities in the nation to enjoy cable television. Some sources credit Astoria with being the first, in the late 1940s, but some small communities in Pennsylvania, Arkansas and Wyoming make similar claims. What these communities had in common with Madras was geography that made it difficult to receive a signal from distant cities.

Ironically, it was precisely because it was so hard to get reception in the Madras basin that Paul Rowan, owner of Rowan’s TV-Radio Service, developed his state-of-the-art cable system and provided the city with excellent quality television.



Paul Rowan’s first antenna tower on the former Galbraith property, 2023. The antenna itself is gone and the cement block building that once housed equipment is empty.

The truth was, the coming of television had been somewhat disappointing to Jefferson County residents. For one thing, it was expensive. Television sets were in the \$200 range and that did not include the cost of an antenna and installation.

And then there was the problem with spotty signal reception. Even with an antenna, some people could get only mediocre or poor reception. Situated at a low point on the east side of Willow Creek, Paul Rowan had the same problem at his shop, but unlike most people, he was equipped to find a solution.

Rowan had enlisted in the Navy after high school and received training in sonar and electronics. He did a stint teaching electronics at Navy Pier in Chicago before leaving the Navy and relocating to Central Oregon. He tried his hand at farming in the Culver area, but found he was still more interested in electronics, so he rented a storefront and went into business selling and repairing radios and televisions. But poor TV reception was a hindrance.

“What happened was, he had a radio and TV store, and he didn’t really have a good signal to work with, so he went up where Galbraith’s farm was, up above Madras,” explained Rowan’s son, Don Rowan.

Gordon Galbraith’s property was on the hill west of Madras, above Ahern’s Stop and Shop convenience store, which at the time was occupied by competitor Art’s TV and Radio Service. Galbraith gave Rowan permission to install an antenna mounted on two telephone poles which were encompassed by a small cement block building. It is too far back on the hill to see it from the street, but the tower still stands on the former Galbraith property, next to the railroad tracks and not far from the trestle.

From there, Rowan dug a trench eastward down the hillside, to bury the cable, with young Don Rowan helping by moving rocks out of the way. Fourth and Fifth streets were obstacles easily dealt with because of the bridge across Willow Creek. Rowan simply strapped the cable to the underside of the bridge and extended it to his shop on the other side of the creek.

Rowan’s building at the north end of Fifth Street is still there; today it houses Quality Business Service. Interestingly, a manhole cover in the sidewalk on the south side of the building has the letters “TV” stamped into the concrete.

Rowan’s experiment was successful. “A test pattern on channel 6 is the first thing he picked up,” said Don, alluding to the fact that stations didn’t use to broadcast around the clock like they do now.

It is unclear exactly what year Rowan put in his first cable system, but it was probably 1955 or ’56. A March 1956 ad in the *Pioneer* provides further information about the set-up. With a large headline reading “Here’s why our cable brings you good TV,” the ad has pictures of the antenna and of the equipment inside the small building. Information in the ad included the cost of the amplification equipment — more than \$1,400 — the

height of the antenna — 51 feet — and Rowan’s plans for expansion — up to five channels in total.

Rowan’s cable delivered such superior television reception that soon other people were asking him to hook their TVs up too. The Galbraiths were likely the first recipients of Rowan’s cable because of their proximity.

“That’s when we first got TV, when it went down through there,” said Gordon Galbraith’s son, Gerry. “I’m sure that they gave it to the folks for free because I’m sure Dad didn’t charge him anything for doing any of that stuff up there.”

Rowan had to expand his system gradually, starting with the homes and businesses near his shop and spreading out from there. It wasn’t practical to grow any other way because laying the cable was a laborious process that involved a lot of digging with shovels and picks or sometimes a tractor with a cable plow. It wouldn’t make sense to lay a mile of cable for a single customer.

Rowan’s ad in the Feb. 9, 1956 *Madras Pioneer* promised, “You Can Have Good TV Now” and included a helpful map showing the parts of Madras where cable was available. Any home or business within a block of the cable line was eligible for his cable service.

From Rowan’s shop, the cable extended straight north on Fifth Street, through the “Y,” and several blocks beyond. To the south, it zigzagged its way over to Ninth Street and then south along 9<sup>th</sup> between B Street and E Street. At E Street the cable turned west, back to Fifth Street, ending at the U.S. National Bank on the corner of Fifth and D streets.

From Ninth Street, the cable also went east along C Street and up into the Hillcrest neighborhood.

The map includes a proposed future route for new cable. It went south on Fourth, then west on C Street, then along First Street for a long stretch to J. Perpendicular to that, the map



shows proposed cable along a length of G Street on either side of First, meeting the Culver Highway on the west end and Fifth Street on the east end.

In early 1956, Rowan's cable service began offering a second channel, KLOR, which would later change its call sign to KPTV. KLOR had been broadcasting on channel 12 in Portland longer than KOIN, but it wasn't available to Jefferson County residents because it used a UHF signal that was hard to pick up in Central Oregon and because most televisions in the early '50s were not made to receive UHF. Apparently, Rowan's equipment overcame both of those problems.

Rowan's cable was clearly the most desirable way to get television in Jefferson County. The reception was better, there was no need for an unsightly tower and antenna that had to be adjusted every time the wind blew, and it could deliver more channels.

Still, cable was relatively expensive and there was only so fast Rowan could distribute it. So, in 1956, while Rowan was making remarkable strides in developing his cable system, Madras community leaders began working on an alternative plan to improve television reception in town and beyond.

#### Another option for television

Louis Kinkade, city father Howard Turner, Ken McCaulou and others formed the nonprofit Jefferson County Television Inc., usually referred to in the newspaper as the TV corporation.

Kinkade was president of the corporation and Turner was initially elected secretary. Turner's U.S. National Bank branch would be responsible for the funds collected from subscribers. Later, McCaulou would become secretary and Turner would remain on the board of directors.

The aim of the TV corporation was to install a translator next to the water towers on the hill south of town. The translator would pick up the VHF signal from KOIN in Portland and rebroadcast it as a UHF signal across the city of Madras and about three miles north of town.

The leaders of the corporation took pains to explain that the manufacturer of the equipment and the engineer overseeing the project guaranteed its success and would not demand payment if it failed to deliver a good signal within the targeted area.

To raise enough money, they needed to sell 200 shares at \$50 each. The resulting \$10,000 would pay for erection of a 65-foot tower, a small cinder-block building to house equipment, the translator, and other electronic equipment. It would also cover the \$3,300 cost of adding a second channel once the first was up and running. Subscribers would be expected to pay an additional \$10 per year for equipment maintenance.

Rowan must have been a little worried that the translator would put his cable service out of business just as it was poised to take off, because shortly after the TV corporation launched its membership campaign in September 1956, he ran a large ad in the *Pioneer* with the headline "Sitting on the TV Fence?" It was chock full of information about the television technology available in 1956 and its cost.

The ad highlighted the fact that consumers now had some

choices to make about their television and spelled out five ways to get television reception, listing costs and characteristics of each. Three of the options were variations on his cable service — buy, rent, or try it for a limited time offer. The fourth was to continue picking it up directly from Portland using an antenna and tower and the fifth was UHF television via the proposed translator.

A cable connection was the most expensive, with a cost of \$150, plus a \$12 federal tax and \$3.78 monthly service charge.

Working out the cost of getting set up for "translator TV," as it was commonly called, was more complicated because it would be a UHF signal instead of VHF. "All-channel" televisions that could receive either type of signal were just coming on the

selling a 9-inch portable television for \$89.95 and a cutting-edge 21-inch color television for \$850 — considerably more than it would cost today.

The TV corporation steamed ahead with its plans. Formed in September 1956, the non-profit gave itself a Dec. 1 deadline to recruit 200 subscribers. It came down to the wire, but they made it.

The following week, Rowan, a marketing master, emphasized the advantage of his cable service by advertising the television schedule for three channels — KOIN, KLOR, and KGW, which would begin broadcasting on Dec. 15, 1956.

The TV corporation's translator could deliver *Portland Wrestling*, *I've Got a Secret* and the *Lone Ranger*, sure, but Rowan's cable could deliver all that plus *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Lawrence Welk*, and the *Mickey Mouse Club* on KLOR and on the new channel 8, well, a lot of the same shows, albeit at different times of the day.

Meanwhile, the corporation had immediately applied for an operating license and within days got a wire from Sen. Wayne Morse saying that the FCC had received the application and would likely issue the license after the required 30-day waiting period.

The corporation continued to move quickly on the project and on Jan. 25, 1957 the translator began broadcasting. The *Pioneer* reported that the signal was stronger than expected, reaching out into Agency Plains, and that "reactions of viewers ranged from a high of 'terrific' to a low of 'wonderful.'" (Madras *Pioneer*, Jan. 31, 1957, p. 1)

Chamness said that once translator TV was available, his family switched to using that. He said it was an improvement because it was more consistent and his father didn't have to get up on the roof to adjust the antenna and wires as often.

It is hard to believe there was a time when Americans did not know how to watch television, but as soon as translator TV was on the air, the *Pioneer* ran an article with tips from an Oregon State College specialist. Her instructions mostly involved using soft lighting in the room both to avoid eye strain and to avoid frightening young children watching scary shows in the dark. She also advised that children should

not watch TV while lying on the floor, but rather should be positioned so as to look down on the screen. And one more: viewers should sit no closer than 6 feet and no farther than 15 feet from the screen.

Not everyone got the memo, of course. Clowers recalls he and the other kids sprawled on the floor watching television at the Lydy home and Chamness described his younger brother's viewing habit. "In 1954, my brother Mike was not yet in school. I remember getting home and he was already watching. He would sit really close to the TV in a little wooden chair. He would sit almost on top of the TV. When I got there, he would have to move back," Chamness said.

In June 1957, local viewers reported an interesting phenomenon which is unlikely to occur with our modern technology. On the preceding Tuesday they had unexpectedly received broadcasts from faraway places like Amarillo, Texas,



Family watching television circa 1958. Public domain photo from wikipedia.org

market, but most people already had a television that could only receive VHF, so they would have to buy a converter for their TV. They would also need a UHF antenna, possibly on a tower, and some wiring to connect the antenna to the TV. Total cost could range from \$105 to \$133 and possibly more for people outside of town.

The cost of tuning in the signal directly from Portland with a tower and antenna could be anywhere from \$35 to several hundred dollars, depending on the height of the tower needed, the amount of wire used, etc.

Even if cable wasn't necessarily the least expensive option, it had the advantage of immediately providing at least two channels — soon to be three — whereas the translator would broadcast only one channel to start with and no telling when additional channels could be added.

Another interesting tidbit from the ad is that Rowan's was



Omaha, Neb., and Wichita, Kan., for as much as an hour at a time. Apparently, that can happen when weather conditions are just right for the ionosphere to reflect the signal back toward Earth where an antenna can grasp it.

As with the 1953 television business boom, the advent of translator TV brought on a flurry of related business. Local stores offered all kinds of accessories for watching television: lamps for that soft lighting, TV stands, TV trays, recliners.

And although the translator was a competitor of Paul Rowan's cable system, it was also a business opportunity for him. His store could sell all-channel televisions, install UHF converters and antennas, and probably gained a larger base of customers needing repairs.

Within a year of beginning operation, the TV corporation had added KLOR, channel 12, but was not satisfied with its signal. They were working to improve reception on both

channels and had put the addition of channel 8, KGW, on hold until that was done.

The corporation had a bigger problem, though — one familiar to supporters of Oregon Public Broadcasting. Once the translator began broadcasting, anyone within range could use its signal regardless of whether they had paid for it.

An informal survey found that there were 710 UHF antennas in the city of Madras but only 206 members of the corporation. Only 92 members had paid their annual \$10 fee for the second year of operation.

By 1958, the corporation had yet to add channel 8 because it was still having problems getting people to pay their share of the expenses.

#### Color TV

Both KLOR and KOIN broadcast in color for the first time in 1954, within days of each other. However, it would be more than a decade before color television became the norm because color

broadcasting was more expensive than black and white. Color television receivers were also too expensive for most people and so the industry suffered from a chicken-and-egg problem. Why broadcast in color if few people had color TVs and why buy a color TV if the broadcasts are in black and white?

Instead, Portland stations would make occasional color broadcasts in color. "Color TV amounted to one show per week — *The Price is Right*," said Don Rowan. "And then there was *Bonanza*."

The first color televisions were so exorbitant that even Rowan's business partner, Jack Watts, was impressed. Watts' son John said, "I remember he talked about people who'd purchased the color television set. He'd say, 'Wow, they must really have a lot of money.'"

Both Watts and Rowan let their kids watch color television in the store after hours. "I remember so well when they started selling color televisions and we would go down to the shop and get to watch *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color* on one of those color television sets, which hardly anybody in Madras was wealthy enough to afford to have their own," said John Watts.

Other people remember the store's color televisions fondly, too. The little building at the North Y doesn't see a lot of foot traffic these days, but it's not too hard to imagine a small group gathered around the window as they used to in the '50s.

"I remember as a kid looking in Rowan's store. He would run his TV at night. He would leave the TV on, especially when color TV came. People would stand outside and watch color TV shows outside his store," Chamness said. Rowan had outdoor speakers set up, too.

According to Don Rowan, the first color TV his dad borrowed via his company wasn't that great. "I remember him complaining because it was \$975 and when you were sitting there watching it, the faces would be green, and then they'd turn orange, and he'd adjust it. It didn't work very good."

Color television didn't become standard until the mid 1960s.

Most people will tell you that there was no remote control in the 1950s, but they are not strictly correct. Around the end of 1956, Art's TV and Radio was advertising the Zenith Space Command tuning feature in their 1957 models. "It's Magic: Nothing between you and the set but SPACE," read the ad. The picture of the "command control box" makes it look about the size of a car battery.

Unfortunately, there is a typo in the ad, so we'll never know for sure how much the Brookwood model cost, but possibly \$1,000 because it read "\$000." The Ashford table model was only about \$100 more than typical televisions at \$269."

#### Crestview Cable

Of course, translator TV did not kill Rowan's cable service.

In January 1959, Rowan moved to a different building farther north on Fifth Street, at the corner with Trade Street. Later that year, he started advertising that cable was available in Culver. According to Don Rowan, his father had put up an antenna on private property on Iris Lane and extended the cable from there into Culver.



Philco TV-123, an early model color TV produced in 1955. Don Rowan still has his father's service manual for this model. Picture from <http://www.earlytelevision.org>

In 1961, Rowan hired Jack Watts to work with him in the cable business. Like Rowan, Watts got his first electronics training in the military. He was a radio and radar technician in the Marines during World War II. After the war, he got a degree in physics from Willamette University. Watts spent 10 years as the county weed supervisor before joining Rowan.

In the late '60s or early '70s Rowan's put up an antenna and equipment shed on the hill near the TV corporation's

**TELEVISION VIEWING**  
We Are Working Toward  
**Quality Television**

Madras and have taken a voting share in JEFFERSON COUNTY TELEVISION INC. It is so reasonable all can afford it. Madras and Prineville already have their applications in. We hope Jefferson County Television will soon have enough money to.

**Announcing ... the ONE and ONLY thing NEW in TV...**  
**SPACE COMMAND Tuning**  
Only on NEW 1957 **ZENITH**  
OPERATES YOUR TV FROM ACROSS THE ROOM  
No Wires! No Flashlights! No Cords!

**It's Magic**  
nothing between you and the set but SPACE...

- turns set ON
- turns set OFF
- CHANGES channels
- MUTES sound while picture remains on screen

The BROOKWOOD (Model E3000)  
Receives Super Superhite picture with 200 sq. inches of rectangular picture area. Chatterbox. Chatterbox. Top Tuning. Space Command. In multiplex color. At Madras only. Multiplex only. \$1000.

from across the room you can push A BUTTON on Command control box in your hand.

IT COSTS YOU NO MORE TO OWN ONE OF THESE GREAT NEW ZENITHS WITH SPACE-COMMAND TUNING...  
\$269.95

See the New Ashford Table Model AS LOW AS \$100

SPACE COMMAND TUNING is built right into the set... not an accessory... only ZENITH HAS IT!

**ART'S T.V. & RADIO**  
North Main Street at the Y

Ad for an early model remote control TV, Madras Pioneer, Sept. 27, 1956

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translator and that became the “head end” of his cable service, replacing the antennas on Galbraith’s property and the Iris Lane property.

He and his employees brought cable to Metolius, Warm Springs, Sisters, and La Pine, sometimes partnering with other entrepreneurs.

By 1973, Rowan had bought two small cable systems in Prineville, combined them with the rest of his business, and called it all Crestview Cable. Crestview’s new headquarters were in Prineville, but it kept an office in Madras. Jack Watts and Rod Gregg were partners in Crestview Cable, each owning 5% of the company.

The cable companies purchased in Prineville didn’t cover much of the city, so Crestview Cable had work to do building that system. John Watts worked for Crestview the summer after his high school graduation in 1973. “They preferred to have the cable underground, and so lots of digging. It was hard work. My dad worked awfully hard,” said John Watts. “It helped me decide that I wanted to do something that was not manual labor for a career,” he added.

Watts’ immediate supervisor that summer was Don Rowan, who worked extensively for the business and later had a separate trenching business. Watts’ mother, Marilyn, worked in Crestview’s Madras office for years.

Rowan, Watts, and Gregg sold Crestview Cable to California Oregon Broadcasting in 1982 and California Oregon Broadcasting sold it in turn to TDS in 2017.

As an innovator in cable television, Rowan was active in professional associations and had the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., to testify before the FCC. Don Rowan has a photograph of his father shaking hands with President Ford during one of his trips to Washington.

In 1975, the Pacific Northwest Cable Communications Association, of which Rowan was an early member, named him a CATV (community antenna television — that’s what the first cable systems were called) pioneer and gave him a plaque reading, “In recognition of over 20 years [sic] service in cable television.”

After selling the company, Rowan became active in national Republican politics. Don Rowan has pictures of his father with politicians of the 1990s and early 2000s, including Greg Walden, Gordon Smith, Newt Gingrich, and both Bushes.

Rowan died in 2018.

### Those thrilling days of yesteryear

What did people think of television in the 1950s?

“We were so excited to get a TV we just couldn’t stand it. We couldn’t wait to get hooked up,” said Bill Houts who, with his brother Bob, bought their family’s first television in 1956 with earnings from their farm labor.

Chamness said, “It was exciting when it came. It gave us more entertainment, a different kind of entertainment.”

However, the Chamnesses knew at least one person who thought it was foolishness. “One of our neighbors didn’t think it was worth their time,” he said.

Jerry Ramsey said, “I first encountered television about 1950,



Paul Rowan shaking hands with Gerald Ford

on visits to relatives in Portland. I was not impressed. What was the appeal of watching ghostly figures flitting about in what appeared to be a snowstorm?”

And Paul Rowan? “My dad used to call it the idiot box,” Don Rowan laughed, “because it eats up a lot of time.”

Television did not transform Jefferson County overnight. For one thing, people didn’t watch it all that much. There were only a few channels, the screens were small, and the pictures were poor. More importantly, people were busy.

“Back then, we didn’t spend a lot of time around the TV too much. During the day we were either going to school or sports and then when we were home, the majority of the kids were either farming or doing stuff like that, so usually if the TV came on it was late at night, watching it with the parents. I don’t ever remember watching TV with a bunch of kids,” Galbraith explained.

The advent of television brought about gradual change in people’s habits. Families began to watch television together in the evenings instead of listening to the radio. Popular radio programs like *The Lone Ranger* and *Red Skelton* switched to television to keep up with their audiences.

People began to embrace products developed specifically to cater to television watching like TV dinners and TV trays. Jerry Ramsey’s family was an example. “When I came home from college for the first time in my freshman year, I was astonished to find a Philco set in our living room, mounted on a spindly TV stand and wired to an equally spindly antenna on the roof. We watched the national news at dinner time while eating TV dinners off trays a la mode.”

Pokorny noted that television had a powerful influence on its watchers. “It was one of those things that changed perception of what was cool because really popular shows would have a whole merchandise program behind them. Especially in the cartoons, *Mickey Mouse*, *Walt Disney*, *The Lone Ranger*.”

As a visual medium, Pokorny explained, TV helped popularize different fashions in the same way movies did. He and his high school friends started wearing snap-brimmed hats, London Fog raincoats, white shirts, and thin ties as a sort of “civilian uniform” after seeing similar outfits on the big and small screens.

While television added to American culture, it also took some things away. “It seemed to end the card games,” Chamness said. “My folks used to occasionally host card games for the neighborhood. There was a Lucky Clover Club that was farmers’ wives. We had that in our area. When television came it seemed to eventually get rid of those neighbor-to-neighbor type activities.

“My dad would cut hair and that was one of the parties we’d have. Three or four farmers would come up and he’d cut all their hair. That was something I remember doing and it seems like we didn’t do so much after television came,” Chamness continued.

Ramsey’s father changed his lunchtime routine and lost some sleep. “I realized that we had entered a new era of entertainment when I discovered,

coming home from college after my junior year, that my dad was now skipping his habitual short nap after lunch before returning to farm work. Instead, he was joining my mom in the living room to join each afternoon’s enthralling episode of ‘As the World Turns,’” Ramsey said.

Certainly one of television’s — and cable’s — most lasting impacts is as a step toward the technology we use today. Television grew out of radio, adding video capacity, first in black and white and then in color. Cable was developed as a better way to deliver the television signal. The path from there to today’s electronic environment is not as direct. There are numerous other components, but television and cable were an indispensable part of the mix.

Speaking of his father’s legacy, Don Rowan said, “Lots of people still have cable, but now there are lots of variations on that cable.” He referenced the internet, YouTube, Facebook and other social media. “It’s all on a cable line, but now it’s all fiber optics.”

“It’s a time saver and it’s also a time waster,” Rowan added.

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# ON LOCAL LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS, HISTORICAL SOCIETIES, AND THE LITERACY OF PLACE



By Jarold Ramsey

For a long time, I've suspected that my career as a writer and scholar probably wouldn't have amounted to a row of pins without the help of libraries and librarians along the way —

and for that matter, my early teachers. I spent my first five school years at the last of the one-room schools on Agency Plains, "New Era," with two savvy and inspiring teachers, Elva G. Hall and Helen Hering. The New Era library consisted of a separate room, probably planned as a cloak room, but it had long since become our library — like a big walk-in closet, with a window and a draped swatch of cloth for a door, and bookshelves to the ceiling, crammed with books.

If you finished your assigned work early, you were allowed to "go to the library" and browse. So it became for me and, I think, for most of my New Era schoolmates, a place full of accessible wonders in the form of books . . . an encyclopedia set, books of photos about other lands and their peoples, and especially a kids novel that I read and re-read (and have never relocated), about a Canadian Indian boy who goes on a canoe voyage with his father down a river in the Ontario wilderness. They capsize and are separated and to survive the boy must draw on his native command of wilderness skills and does so, for a month or more, until at last he is found and reunited with his father. Wow — even now, I burn to turn the pages of that book again!

Then there was the Jefferson County Library, in what had been, I think, a small dwelling on D Street in Madras — even then inadequate for what should have been the county's library priorities, but the Jefferson County officials had persisted since the county was formed in declining to give the library a tax basis, so it survived on gifts and small grants, and endless

fundraising and a dedicated library board. On that basis, somehow, the current library was designed and built in the 1990s. But even then, the creation of a county library tax-basis was put aside — until, finally, in 2000 an unstoppable team of local women, led by Kathie Olson, triumphantly (if narrowly) got the library levy passed. It was a landmark achievement in this county's cultural history, and Kathie Olson's

System, and became obsessed with it, at 11 or 12. One of my cousins and I, left alone while my parents were at a lodge session, were inspired to go through all the books in our house, and mark them, in indelible ink, according to what between us we knew — not much — of the Dewey system — so everything became FICTION 813, or BIOGRAPHY 920, AMERICAN HISTORY 973, SCIENCE 500, and so on. My

parents, when they discovered that we had disfigured all of our books in the name of library science, were so flabbergasted that the punishment we deserved was withheld. Even the family Bible was "decimalized."

Much later, my scholarly work on American Indian literature, Shakespeare, modern poetry and other literary topics was supported at every turn by good academic libraries and generous, capable librarians. Research can be a kind of bookish treasure hunt, and librarians became mates and co-conspirators in the adventure. And as I began to write books, I confess I never thought that any of them had really "arrived" until they were duly entered in my university library's card catalogue. That was really more gratifying than the first royalty check!

I imagine we can all agree that writers and librarians do indeed need and complement each other. Whether it's Henry David Thoreau borrowing books incessantly from the Concord Free Library, or William Stafford as a boy haunting the Carnegie libraries in the small towns of his native Kansas,

it does seem that literary achievement is just about unthinkable without good librarianship. Which is why writers and librarians naturally share an active concern with *literacy*, and with the many ways it is challenged and subverted in our culture — by much of television, by attempts at censorship, by shifty writing in politics and advertising, by mediocre teaching.

But what I want to briefly explore here is a specific and I think somewhat neglected kind of literacy. It's what I call "literacy of place": it means having a working knowledge of, being fluent in, the natural and human history of a locality. People who are "place-literate" know where things are on the home ground, and how to find them; they have a good command of



Photo courtesy of Pixabay.com

detailed and trenchant history of our library, *Pages of the Past* (2008) ought to be required reading both for the story of persistence and resourcefulness it tells, and for its account of equally persistent official short-sightedness in this county over many decades. Happily, belief in the importance of libraries won out here, and under capable leadership ours has steadily grown in scope and service to the community since then.

Anyway, it was in the old D Street library that I learned to borrow books (and return them), and then, even to order books not on the shelves here from the state library in Salem. Imagine being able to do that! It was probably through my commerce with the library in Madras that I encountered the Dewey Decimal



local stories, especially about how place-names came about; and they also have a decent practical command of local geology, climate, weather, and native plants and animals.

Now, it may sound like I am just setting up an obvious distinction between what the natives and old-timers of a region know, and what newcomers and outlanders don't know. But in fact I've encountered many natives of these parts who are in truth quite "place-illiterate" in odd ways. The elders of my own family, who came here as homesteaders from Tennessee and Missouri well over a century ago, never seemed to learn how to accurately identify many of our local plants and creatures — so our distinctive early summer blooming balsamroot was referred to as "wild sunflowers," and the spotted skunks out here were loosely labeled "civet-cats." And conversely, one meets newcomers and even visitors who seem to have acquired impressive amounts of local lore, including the proper names of our flora and fauna.

By the same token, I'm not proceeding here from a rough-and-ready assumption to the effect that "literacy of place" is inherently the privilege of country people, but unavailable to city-dwellers. Anybody who's ever spent street-time in Brooklyn, or the Lower East Side will be aware, on the contrary, of how intensely knowing the residents of such places are about their local turf — where important discriminations of place are to be made literally street by street. It's only in the suburbs and the subdivisions that you often find the truly unlocalized folks, for whom — as Gertrude Stein once said about Oakland — "there's no there, there."

So I'm talking about literacy of place inclusively, as a desirable and useful state of mind for all of us, wherever we happen to be "at home." And that's just the point: it's how we make ourselves cognitively and imaginatively at home wherever we hang out — how we accommodate ourselves to our environment.

The best, most illuminating study of this process of learning about and through the landscape is by the anthropologist Keith Basso, in his book on the Northern Apaches of Arizona, *Wisdom Sits in Places*. It's a wise and wonderful book, summed up beautifully in the title (which is apparently an Apache proverb). For the Apaches, according to Basso, their rugged homeland is like a giant reference library, in which every arroyo, every creek and spring and pinyon-pine forest, every rock-pile speaks volumes about what makes Apaches, Apaches. Myths, historical events,

spirit counsel, moral precepts, survival lore — all there to be "read" across the landscape — if you are a place-literate Apache.

Lest we think that this is an old-time, traditional way of knowing, a vestige of the Apaches' fading past, Basso emphasizes its ongoing value to them by telling the following story:

"On a late spring day a few years ago, an Apache youth from Cibecue spent the morning fishing on the upper reaches of Cibecue Creek. He caught several trout, which he strung on a stick by their gills and carried to a spot where he planned to fish some more. There he placed the catch on a tiny spit of sand. Suddenly a mature bald eagle bolted from the sky, and sacred bird and impulsive youth fought for the trout lying beside the stream. The eagle won, the young man was badly raked, and a year or so later one of his maternal uncles bestowed a commemorative place-name on the small piece of sand. He named it "ItsaCh'iyaa'iltoole" (Eagle Hurtles Down). Another Apache place-name came into being that day, and another historical tale — which advises never to challenge eagles — now hints tersely at some of the reasons why. Those who 'speak with names' have one more name to work with, and those who imagine place-worlds in the future will have one more world to construct. The Apache youth, now grown to manhood, is presently training to become a ceremonial singer. Everyone in Cibecue who has heard him perform comments on the clarity and intonation of his voice. Some people say he may one day be wise. The ancestors, no doubt, are watching." (*Wisdom Sits in Places*, p. 152)

I suppose it's to be doubted that any of us (or our children) could ever possess anything quite like this intense and nurturing orientation to our homelands. It's not the way our system of education works, for one thing; for another, we move around too much, and thus tend to keep our roots retractable. But short of sentimentalizing the Apaches' mindset, I think it can serve to remind us that awareness of place is still very much a part of our mental and imaginative apparatus, too, however neglected or undeveloped it may be in us. As Keith Basso says, "What people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth, and while the two activities may seem separable in principle, they are deeply joined in practice. If place making is a way of constructing the past, a

venerable way of *doing* human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine." (p.7)

An aphorism usually attributed to Wendell Berry puts this even more succinctly: "If you don't know where you are, you probably don't know who you are." Quoting Basso further: he reminds us that places have always served mankind "as durable symbols of distant events and as indispensable aids for remembering and imagining them. In modern landscapes everywhere, people persist in asking, 'What happened here?'" (p.7)

Indeed they do, in regions like central Oregon where rapid and drastic change has become the order of the day, and newcomers from every point of the compass are swelling our towns and countrysides. It's in the face of such change, I think, that literacy of place becomes especially important, and consequently the work of librarians, local historians and writers, and teachers becomes crucial. When our new arrivals look around and inquire "What happened here?," it's worth asking ourselves how well-prepared we are to help them find satisfying answers about the places and features of Central Oregon.

Well, for libraries (including school libraries), maybe there should be a renewed emphasis on stocking regional *maps* of all kinds and scales and formats, and materials on GPS cartography. As for books per se, I hope that every public and school library in Central Oregon is already invested in the basic guides to our territory, like Phil Brogan's *East of the Cascades*, E.R. Jackman's and Rube Long's *The High Desert*, Russ Baehr's rich but neglected *Oregon's Outback*, and Ray Hatton's excellent series of geo-historical books on our main places. In the same vein, let's hope that our school and public libraries have kept up with more recent regional place-guides, especially Steve Lent's indispensable *Central Oregon Place Names*, with volumes on Crook, Jefferson, and Deschutes counties. Lent's ambitious work takes the large-scale focus of McArthur's *Oregon Geographic Names* and localizes it.

As long as I'm proposing possible library expenditures here, I might as well go on to propose additional investments in our cause of place-literacy. One would be to regularly sponsor *speakers* on local history and our notable places, like Martin Winch, whose book *Biography of a Place*, covers the ecological and human history of Camp Polk Meadow near Sisters, including an instructive account of how it was rescued



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from subdivision and is being patiently restored; like the Northern Paiute elder and writer Wilson Wewa, on the Paiutes' traditions of occupying places like Smith Rock; and Stan Pine, whose recent books offer excellent, historically informed guides to visiting interesting places here in far-flung Jefferson County; and Ellen Bishop (who used to live in Madras), whose beautifully-illustrated book *In Search of Ancient Oregon* offers a superb, scientifically-informed but very readable account of Oregon's geological "shape" and how it got that way — with special emphasis on Central Oregon.

A third suggestion would be for Central Oregon Community College to return to its practice of sponsoring informal, noncredit courses in local history and lore. Here in Jefferson County, such offerings were popular until the early 2000s, ably organized and led by knowledgeable local historians like Helen Hering, Beth Crow, and Jodi Eagan. Why they were suspended, despite COCC's investment in its Central Oregon branch campuses in Madras, Redmond, and Prineville, is unknown. Likewise, COCC until fairly recently offered courses in Bend on local history and had an impressive number of historians with local expertise on its regular and adjunct faculties, including Ray Hatton, Keith Clark, and Ward Tonsfeldt. One wonders, looking at the current COCC course-list, who's covering Central Oregon history now?

A fourth suggestion happily does not involve replacing or creating something, but simply helping to publicize and promote it — namely, the availability here of excellent, very well organized *tours* of places of local interest. For years, the Crook County Historical Society has offered members regular guided excursions to sites all over the tri-county area, often led by Steve Lent. And in Jefferson County, former County Historical Society board member Dan Chamness has persevered despite COVID and bad roads in mounting his "Dry Side" walking tours to out-of-the-way but not inaccessible places within striking distance of Madras, with a devoted and grateful band of participants, and with Gary Clowers often along as naturalist. Have these tours revealed the wisdom sitting in our places? Their popularity seems to speak for itself!

A fifth suggested investment (returning to desirables that would probably cost money) would be in the *archiving* of unpublished local materials — diaries, records, letters, photos, and the like. Our county historical societies do have important archival holdings, but in my experience they seriously lack the resources for cataloguing, safe storage, and controlled access that libraries DO have. (It's even worse here in this county, with our museum and its extensive archives inaccessible in storage until a new museum can be built, and consequently no strong provision for donation and acceptance of valuable items.) So maybe the task of conserving and making available this very rich, neglected, and perishable part of our local heritage could somehow be *shared* by our public libraries and historical societies. I know I am begging all sorts of questions about archival security, preservation, ownership, and cost—but maybe through some sort of institutional partnering we can do a better job of preserving and making use of "the wisdom that sits in our places."

I want to conclude with a passage from the final essay in my book *New Era: Reflections on the Human and Natural History of Central Oregon*. The essay is titled "An Impromptu on Owning Land," and I think it extends some of the ideas I've been exploring here. It tries to evoke a sense of a particular place, some range and timber land east of Madras that my family has held since the 1940s, and in playing with the idea of *land ownership* it will serve to remind us, maybe, that what we cherish and find edifying in our home landscape may not be conditioned by ownership in the legal sense by us or anybody else. Places can become part of us, we "possess" them deeply and profit greatly from the possession, but not necessarily as owned property; indeed, it could be argued that they can "possess" us. That's a paradox that the Apaches would understand!

"Once, while I was walking in the woods on some property next to our summer rangeland — a place that I had always coveted for its meadows and creeks and park-like terrain — I came to the edge of a little meadow. Looking into it, I saw a young coyote, playing with a pinecone as if it were a mouse, flinging it high into the air, retrieving it with great galumphing leaps,

pointedly ignoring it, and then pouncing on it again. When finally, having promises to keep, I walked into the meadow and broke the spell, the coyote ran off — but when I looked over my shoulder a few minutes later, here he came behind me, discreetly keeping his distance, fellow traveler through the woods, probably expecting me to flush out a chipmunk or a rabbit."

Back there at the edge of the meadow, watching the coyote at play, I had coveted nothing — for the moment, what more was there to want? But later, of course, I resumed my brooding over that land, and everything on it, under it, and over it, wishing that I had the undivided title to it in my safety-deposit box, and could pass it on to our children, along with our own place just over the ridge. For shame: thou shall not covet thy neighbor's property, let alone his wife; and if the sin of lust applies to land as well as to human flesh, I am guilty of a mortal sin. What if I could turn my ownership-complex inside out, and really accept the proposition that the land owns me, gives me my life, requires my devoted service? The habits of thinking otherwise run very deep, but I remind myself that when Thoreau felt that universal urge to build and live in his own house, he built his Walden cabin on land he neither owned nor rented. I wouldn't want to do that, now, on the shores of Walden Pond, but like everything else in Thoreau's story it shows what you can try to do without.

Meanwhile, I keep looking for images of being in place, in the right place, without ownership. Some years ago, before he died, an old-timer here made a final request to a neighboring rancher, one of his best friends, who owned an antique biplane. The old-timer's wish was for his friend to take his ashes up in the old plane and scatter them over an isolated rocky pinnacle near Trout Creek known locally as the Dry Island, which he had loved and visited since boyhood — probably on BLM land. So late in spring, as the sidehills above the creek were still greening, the dead man's family and friends gathered close by, and the pilot took off with his cargo and flew over the Island. In the calm morning air, the old-timer's ashes came down in a faint ribbon of white, and vanished, reclaimed, in the bitterbrush.

(Ramsey, *New Era*, pp. 151-52)

#### Sources and Suggested Readings:

Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.  
Jarold Ramsey, *New Era: Reflections on the Human and Natural History of Central Oregon*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003.  
Kathie Olson, *Pages of the Past: The History of the Jefferson County Library*. Madras, 2008.  
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The Gateway Canyon Preserve" (PGE)



# Threshing Bee 2023 and other recent JCHS Activities

## Trivia Nights

What invention of the 1890s helped keep cold weather out of buildings? If you answered “the revolving door,” you might just have won the last Trivia Night.

Trivia Nights have been a resounding success, and a fun way to raise money for the Jefferson County Historical Society, which sponsors the monthly event.

Nearly every month since September 2022, community members have gathered to test their knowledge on a wide range of topics – from current events to geography, presidential trivia, sports, flora and fauna, local history or historic events around the world. Name a topic and the host, JCHS member Margee O’Brien, a retired teacher, has probably asked a question on it.

First held at Mecca Grade Estate Malt, the event was moved closer to town to New Basin Distillery in April, when it also moved to a new date – the last Wednesday of the month. When weather is warm, the event is held with the doors rolled up, or entirely indoors in inclement weather.

New Basin sells drinks from its bar, while the Wandering Chef food cart is typically located nearby, offering dinner options.

Participants, who are asked to contribute \$5 each to JCHS, form their own groups, or can join other groups at the monthly event, which begins at 6 p.m. When a question is asked, participants consult with their team to come up with and secretly write down a single answer for the team. When each team has recorded its response, the teams hold up their answers before O’Brien gives the correct response and points are tallied. Proceeds go to the organization’s museum fund.

Through the Sept. 27 event, Trivia Nights – one of several fundraising events put on by JCHS – have raised \$4,469.

“The Jefferson County Historical Society is feeling great support for the establishment of a new museum in our county,” said O’Brien. “Each month, a large crowd participates in our trivia fundraising event. Their continued support reinforces the hope the board has that Jefferson County needs and wants a history museum.”

## Seventh Annual Threshing Bee

This past September marked a new beginning for the annual Threshing Bee, as it was held in a new location. After six years at the fairgrounds, the threshing bee had to find a new home because the Jefferson County Fair needed the former wheat field on the western edge of the fairgrounds property for parking.

Chris and Cate Casad graciously stepped up to host the event, which was held Sept. 8 and 9 at Casad Family Farms on Elm Drive outside of Madras.

Campbell planted 1.5 acres of wheat on donated Casad land and Mike McIntosh of Terrebonne harvested the wheat with an antique reaper-binder drawn by a team of Percheron horses, as he has in past years.

Though threshing bee organizer David Campbell was initially dismayed at losing the threshing bee’s traditional fairgrounds site, the new location turned out to be a winner. The threshing bee drew a large crowd and garnered attention from media outlets throughout Central Oregon.

## Art Class Fundraisers

On Oct. 23, Margee O’Brien partnered with the Studio on 5<sup>th</sup> to host a fall painting class in which participants created an original fall-themed watercolor. For \$40, they were provided with materials, instruction, and snacks, and the \$300 in proceeds all went to the historical society.

O’Brien and the studio put on a second “make-and-take” art class November 28, but with a Christmas theme.



Sample of the fall watercolor made in the October art class.



## Scenes from the Threshing Bee





# Love history? Love your community?



Madras circa 1930s

# Then join us!

**We have ambitious goals, big ideas, some hopeful dreams and exciting plans. Make this the year you and your family become Jefferson County Historical Society members.**

**Be a part of something amazing for local history and our community! Join the JCHS!**



MUHS Class of 1928



**O**ur historical society is currently working toward a goal of having a museum at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. It's past time our county had its own museum to showcase and celebrate our history.

We're also focused on building historical society membership.

**A** taste of what's up in 2024: Annual Spring Dinner and Fundraiser in April • Monthly "Team Trivia Nights" • Interesting and fun History Pubs • Tours of the Homestead House during the fair • September Threshing Bee • Fall Meeting

**For information on joining the Jefferson County Historical Society, see page 28, or contact a board member, whose names and numbers are listed on page 2.**



# FROM MADRAS TO MATERA: JEFFERSON COUNTY LIBRARY, SCHOOLS LAY FOUNDATION FOR A SATISFYING LIFE IN ITALY



by Evan J. Albright

*Editor's note: THE AGATE is very grateful to both the subject and the author of the following article. Thanks to their generous collaboration, based on a lengthy trans-Atlantic ZOOM in early October, we are excited to bring to our readers the remarkable story of Elizabeth Jennings, of Matera, Italy, an*

*internationally renowned writer of romantic suspense novels — some 40 of them to date, mostly published by Berkley/Penguin, and translated into many languages. A long way up and out from Madras, Oregon, where she was born, grew up, went to school, and learned to love books and reading and the art of writing, as an avid borrower of books from the small and cramped Jefferson County Library (as it was back then) on D Street.*

*Jennings' life-trajectory is in some ways paralleled by that of Evan Albright. He, too, grew up in Madras, a few years behind Jennings: his father, Warren Albright, served as Jefferson County District Attorney from 1956 into the 1970s. When the Albrights moved to Portland, Evan finished high school there, and after college took up a writing career in earnest, working in journalism, corporate communications, advertising, and what he calls "executive ghost-writing." His books so far include *Cape Cod Confidential: Murder, Crime, and Scandal from the Pilgrims to the Present* (2004) and *The Man Who Owned a Wonder of the World: A Gringo's History of Mexico's Chichen Itza* (2015). Both books have been widely acclaimed by reviewers and readers.*

*He and his family have lived on Cape Cod for many years.*

*Again, our thanks, and a hearty "Welcome back!" to two exceptional writers, whose achievements should make us proud, here where both of them started out!*

For some, life in a small Oregon town is enough; for others, especially when their home life is dysfunctional, there is always someplace they would rather be.

Growing up in Madras in the 1950s and 1960s, Elizabeth Jennings sought escape. For the first 17 years of life, she found refuge in books from the Jefferson County Library. "Liz" learned to read at the time the little library, then on D Street, expanded to meet the needs of an exploding population in Madras and Jefferson County, with plenty of books to transport her away from home.

While books can take you away, when you get to "The End," you're back where you started. At 17, Liz escaped

Madras for Italy and soon embarked on a 30-year career as a translator that took her all over Europe.

Eventually, she felt the need to settle down. She married, had a son and moved to another small town, Matera, located in the instep of the famous boot that is Italy. In Matera she embarked on a new career as a writer of romantic thrillers, providing literary escape for readers around the world. To date, she has penned more than 50 books, writing as many as three a year.

Liz's desire to escape was baked into her DNA. Her father, Roy Jennings, was born and raised in Oklahoma where his family homesteaded. The Great Depression sent the Jennings family to flight and Roy landed in the Terrebonne/Redmond area. Roy lived where he found work; he hung his hat in Redmond, the Montgomery district near Terrebonne, and Culver.

When World War II broke out, Roy served like most working-class men of his generation. The Army sent him to Europe, not to battle but to work behind the scenes. According to Liz, the Army recognized his keen intellect and kept him off the battlefield.

While in Italy, Roy met a young woman, Marcella Amerighi. She was born in Cavriglia, not far from Florence, home to Michelangelo's *David* and *Pieta*, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, Giotto's *Ascension of St. John*. After Roy's discharge and return home, he and Marcella kept up a romantic exchange of letters.

Marcella had been a teenager when they met. She longed to escape the cultural and societal confines of class-conscious Italy. "My mother was a free spirit, a bohemian," Liz recalls. In Italy at that time, one's role in society was established at birth; "She wanted to be free," Liz says.

The family name, Amerighi, means "of Amerigo," Liz says, therefore it was appropriate Marcella would flee to the land



Matera, Italy, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world.



named after Florentine explorer Amerigo Vespucci. In 1948, she boarded a plane for the United States. "It was a three-day trip by plane," Liz says. Marcella's emigration did not go over well at home. Her mother "took to bed in protest," Liz says with a chuckle.

Marcella and Roy married and settled briefly in Culver. In late 1949, Marcella made an extended visit back home to Italy. When she returned in February 1950, Roy invested in a small ranch near Gateway off Highway 97 and became a grass seed farmer. A few months later, Marcella was pregnant. Things were going well for the couple, but like any good novel, the tide was about to turn in 1951.

It began when Roy's field hand showed up one Sunday in March at 7 a.m. at a Prineville motor court. Although details released were few, it doesn't take a writer's imagination to fill in gaps. He discovered his woman friend there. There was an exchange and in the end, the field hand shot himself in the head with his .22 rifle. For any farmer, to lose a hand, especially in such a tragic way, is a terrible way to start the growing season. If life was a novel, this would have been a portent of drama and tragedy to come for the Jennings family.

In September, Liz was born. Marcella's parents, Luigi and Narcisa, arrived from Italy for a visit in December to meet their grandchild, celebrate the holidays and welcome the new year.

The year 1952 would be challenging for the Jennings family. In July, a wildfire threatened the farm; in August, Marcella went into the hospital.

The bigger picture, however, was that Roy could not make a success of the farm. Perhaps it was because he was a dreamer who "dabbled in various projects," but none led to any sustainable income. As success eluded him and disappointments mounted, "My father kept . . . disappearing," Liz remembers.

The seed was sown for Liz's escape when she was 13. Her mother took Liz to Italy to visit family in Florence. What Liz experienced was not so much "culture shock" as exposure to more culture than one can read in books. She saw Italy and France, the opposite of Madras. Where Madras was reinventing itself into something new, buoyed by the introduction of irrigation and the post-war economy that exploded the demand for lumber products and electrical power, Europe was digging itself out from the war but had the statues, structures, history, and art that were there as they had been for centuries.

In Liz's junior year at the new Madras High School, she

pressured her mother to leave her job and move back to her family in Florence. It was, in some respects, the last place Marcella wanted to go, as she had escaped there almost 20 years earlier.

Marcella loved America, Liz says. She never desired wealth, but instead wanted freedom and that was what America offered. In Florence, "Her parents were very old fashioned. Every moment of her day was accounted for," Liz says. In

one of her novels, Liz used Madras as a model for one of her locales and calls it a place where "fashion was never a priority." When Marcella first arrived in Central Oregon, the story is that the first thing she did was put on a pair of pants, something that was never allowed back in Italy.

In Liz's teen years, the family lived in the apartments next to Sahalee Park that had been built during the war to house military stationed at the air base. With Roy coming in and out of their lives, Marcella initially supported the family by bouncing from one "strange, low-paying job" to another until Liz decided she had had enough. "I was a parenting child, I was the adult of my family," she says. Her mother had to get proper employment. Back in Italy, Marcella had learned accounting, so she got a job with Eastern Oregon Mills at the top of the hill overlooking the town keeping their books.

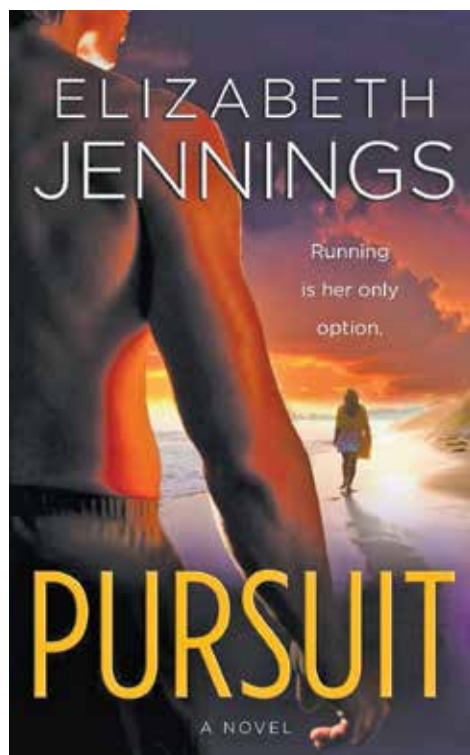
Liz hit a crisis at 17. "I was a very obedient child, but I was starting to act up," she recalls. She did not

elaborate, other than to say she demanded a move. "I wanted to leave, I wanted to go, I wanted to go to Europe," she says. She insisted they leave Madras before her senior year.

Marcella had built a life in Madras. She had good friends, like Christina Shevlin (a war bride from the Netherlands), and a good job. Returning to Tuscany would plunge her "right back into the life she didn't want," Liz says. But she acceded to her daughter's wishes. "My mother used to say there were two parallel ditches cut across the U.S., and those were from her heels," Liz says.

#### A New Chapter in Italy

The transition from small town Oregon to one of the cultural centers of Western civilization was not without its challenges. Devastated by the war, Italy was a hard place to live. "We were living in Florence, but our lifestyle plummeted," Liz says. In Madras, the family had a car to go to Bend for a movie or Portland to shop. When icy winds blew through town in the winter, heat was only a switch away. "Florence was suffering post-war," Liz says. "Homes had no heat." The hardships, however, never outweighed the desire to live in Italy. "I wanted to be there, I wanted to do this."



Cover of a 2008 romance-suspense novel by Jennings.



## Elizabeth Jennings Books In Order

### Publication Order of Standalone Novels

Bernadette's Bluff .....	(1998)
Heart to Heart .....	(2000)
Joy Forever .....	(2000)
Taming Nick .....	(2000)
A Fine Specimen( As Lisa Marie Rice) .....	(2000)
Port of Paradise( As Lisa Marie Rice) .....	(2003)
Woman On The Run( As Lisa Marie Rice) .....	(2004)
Dying for Siena .....	(2005)
Murphy's Law( As Lisa Marie Rice) .....	(2005)
Homecoming .....	(2006)
Pursuit .....	(2008)
Shadows at Midnight .....	(2010)
Darkness at Dawn .....	(2011)
Don't Think Twice( As Lisa Marie Rice) .....	(2020)
Runaway( As Lisa Marie Rice) .....	(2022)
Protector( As Lisa Marie Rice) .....	(2022)
Taken( As Lisa Marie Rice) .....	(2022)

### Publication Order of Lisa Marie Rice Short Stories/Novellas as Lisa Marie Rice

Fatal Heat .....	(2011)
The Italian .....	(2012)

### Publication Order of Women of Midnight Books as Lisa Marie Rice

Midnight Kiss .....	(2020)
Midnight Embrace .....	(2022)
Midnight Caress .....	(2023)

### Publication Order of Men of Midnight Books as Lisa Marie Rice

Midnight Vengeance .....	(2014)
Midnight Promises .....	(2015)
Midnight Secrets .....	(2015)
Midnight Fire .....	(2015)

Liz finished her last year at Miss Barry's American School, a small private institution run for the families of Americans in Florence. At the time, Liz says, there were a lot of "artists, bohemians, flotsam and jetsam" of society as opposed to children of businessmen one would find in Rome or Milan. The school was run by the eccentric and colorful John Faust — Dr. Faust — who, unbeknownst to the students, including Liz, was the son of one of the greatest writers of American westerns in history, Frederick Faust aka "Max Brand."

Though born in Seattle and raised poor in rural California, writer Faust/Max Brand made enough money writing to move his family to Florence. "I was a reader. I always wanted to write," Liz says about her prospect, "but I knew that I didn't want to be poor."

Looking back, Liz can see that growing up in Madras gave her a competitive edge in the Italian workforce. In Italy at that time, social class was everything. The rich were rich, the business classes ran the businesses, the peasants worked the farms. Being American, Liz said she came to Italy with a can-do attitude. She ignored the class system. "America does teach you, you can do things."

Knowing she had a capacity for languages, she worked and put herself through interpreter's school in Italy. She studied French at the Sorbonne, German in Heidelberg. She was soon proficient in French, German, and Italian. She applied to the European Community (as it was called then) as a simultaneous interpreter. Her timing proved excellent as England had just joined the European Community and even though she was American and not eligible for the job, rules were bent because of her languages. She went to work for the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium. Soon she was traveling all over Europe for work.

Being a translator is the kind of occupation one reads about in romance novels, a place where one meets the *crème de la crème* of European society, falls in love, lives happily

ever after. But the reality is the profession is hard work. "I was away from home 200 nights a year," she says.

One thing she didn't want to be was her parents. She didn't marry until she was ready. At 38, she wed Alfredo Cinnella, a doctor. The couple soon had a son, David, and settled in Alfredo's hometown of Matera.

Settling in Matera and having a child forced Liz to give up her career as an interpreter. These were the days before Zoom and cell phones, so she would have to find another way to make a living.

She turned to writing. "As an interpreter and a translator, I was a wordsmith," she says. "As an interpreter, I had access to the way people spoke. I translated heads of state, heads of industry, lawyers, doctors; I had in my head the cadences of dialogue."

Her previous attempts at serious fiction writing had not been successful. "I was sending off very bad short stories to the *New Yorker* and *Esquire*," she says. When she turned 40, she decided that writing was how she wanted to make a living, "so I chose a very popular genre, and that was romance."

Romance writers, she says, are "a very welcoming and warm community." She began writing novels but struggled to find a publisher. Her chance came when an editor mentioned they were launching a romance line. Liz sent her a manuscript.

While traveling for business in Brussels, she received a call from the editor, who told Liz, "I like this novel a lot, do you have any more?"

"Why yes, I have five," Liz relates with a laugh. "I sold them all. I had five novels published in a year."

Her first romance novel, *Bernadette's Bluff*, came out in 1998. Like Max Brand a century ago, she began producing multiple novels every year. Her formula is simple: Write what sells. When consumers of romance demanded stories that were more adult, Jennings created a pen name, "Lisa

Marie Rice." Unlike traditional romance, where the chapter ends when the protagonists shut the bedroom door, the Rice novels not only keep the door open, the lights stay on. Of her pen name Rice, Liz describes her as

*... eternally 30 years old and will never age. She is tall and willowy and beautiful. Men drop at her feet like ripe pears. She has won every major book prize in the world. She is a black belt with advanced degrees in archeology, nuclear physics, and Tibetan literature. She is a concert pianist. Did I mention the Nobel? Of course, Lisa Marie Rice is a virtual woman and exists only at the keyboard when writing erotic romance. She disappears when*

Midnight Quest .....	(2016)
Midnight Fever .....	(2017)
Midnight Renegade .....	(2019)
Midnight Kiss .....	(2020)

### Publication Order of Her Billionaire Books as Lisa Marie Rice

Charade.....	(2018)
Masquerade.....	(2018)
Escapade .....	(2018)

### Publication Order of Midnight Books as Lisa Marie Rice

Midnight Man .....	(2004)
Midnight Run .....	(2004)
Midnight Angel.....	(2005)
Midnight Shadows .....	(2014)

### Publication Order of Dangerous Books as Lisa Marie Rice

Dangerous Lover .....	(2007)
Dangerous Secrets .....	(2008)
Dangerous Passion .....	(2009)
Reckless Night.....	(2011)
Hot Secrets.....	(2012)

### Publication Order of Protectors Books as Lisa Marie Rice

Into the Crossfire.....	(2010)
Hotter Than Wildfire .....	(2011)
Nightfire .....	(2012)

### Publication Order of Ghost Ops Books as Lisa Marie Rice

Heart of Danger .....	(2012)
I Dream of Danger.....	(2013)
Breaking Danger .....	(2014)

*the monitor winks off.*

To date, she has published more than 40 novels. Liz has cited one that was inspired, in part, by her childhood in Madras. *Woman on the Run* (written under the Rice pseudonym) is set in the fictional town of Simpson, Idaho. Simpson is near the larger town of Rupert, a substitute for Bend ("Anyone from Simpson can find their way to Rupert with their eyes closed.") The local paper is the *Pioneer*. In Simpson, everyone is nice and the children are well-behaved.

Simpson only bears a faint resemblance to Madras. Unlike with Craig Lesley's *The Sky Fisherman*, readers will only be disappointed trying to unmask the various locations like the diner or the ranch. For the protagonist, Julia, "Simpson was like the old joke; you either wanted to be there or you were lost."



Another view of Matera, Italy.



And yet, the heroine of the novel falls in love with a local rancher and comes to appreciate the town. For Liz, while she doesn't express nostalgia about growing up in Madras, she has come to recognize what the town offered, at least at the time she lived there.

"We had excellent infrastructure," Liz says. Every school had comfortable classrooms, always bright, with big windows. Compare that to her Italian husband's education. His grammar school was a converted convent — "It had no heat in the winter."

Another thing about the Madras schools was that "the food was excellent," she said, high praise from a woman whose mother was an amazing cook. The libraries were well stocked and, together with the county library, fed her eager mind. "In hindsight, I realize how lucky I was," she says. "It was a period when America invested in schools."

Liz recognizes the benefit of growing up where she did, but she would not have had the life she did had she not left. In some respects, her life has gone full circle, as her life in Matera is as quiet and tranquil as it had been in Central Oregon.

Writing is a solitary activity, but at some point Liz decided, with friends, that the time had come to bring *her* community, that is, romance writers, to Matera. Beginning in 2004, she helped organize and run the Women's Fiction Festival, a conference for writers and editors. In the U.S., such conferences are frequently held, a

place where writers can pitch editors. In Europe, including Italy, the publishing model is different. The decision to publish an author is based on recommendations, as in, it's who you know.

With the WFF, Liz and her colleagues helped break down the publishing barriers, bringing editors and writers together. The conference ran for more than 15 years, and by the end was selling out. COVID, among other things, ended it, Liz says.

done since 2011. She and other professional writers meet to brainstorm the plots of upcoming novels. "It's fun and amazingly helpful," Liz says.

#### Conclusion

In many of Elizabeth Jennings' novels, the protagonist is a woman who must escape a dire situation. In the end, the woman finds love and a community. That community usually isn't better or worse than the place she escaped, but it is a place where the heroine can be safe and secure.

Many of her protagonists are women running away from difficulty. They meet a capable man who falls in love with them and with the help of his friends and colleagues, the protagonist and her man triumph. It turns out running away works for a while, but happiness and survival can be found in community. Liz knows that today.

As the poet Corman noted during his time in Matera, "Nothing displaces us/Like our own intelligence." Because of the chaos in her home life, Liz felt she had to leave Central Oregon. For her, it proved the right move at the right time.

And while she is not nostalgic about her childhood, today she can look back and see its positive influence. "I have fond memories of the people, the kindness of everyone, and the town," she says. "I hope it's still the same."

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These days her focus is on an "Indie Unconference," an open-format gathering pioneered in the United States where writers can learn the latest in self-publishing. The first was held in 2019 and it will continue next summer. Liz also holds brainstorming sessions for writers, something she's

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# President's Message

Dear *Agate* readers,

This last year has seen a reawakening of the Jefferson County Historical Society. We kicked it off in February with our first history pub in three years. It was received with open arms by the community. The number of volunteers who contributed to its success was enormous. Thank you again for joining in our effort to find a home for Jefferson County's artifacts.

We then had our annual dinner with guest speaker Steve Lent in April, tours of the homestead area at the Jefferson County Fair in July, and the Threshing Bee at a new venue in September.

The society held its annual membership meeting and ice cream social on Sept. 24. About 27 members attended the meeting and four board members were re-elected: Tony Ahern, David Campbell, Elaine Henderson, and Tom Manning.

We do all these things to educate, entertain and to remind everyone of the importance of our history and where we come from. The problem is, we have no place to showcase this.

We are working on this as we speak. So please support our efforts to open a museum. Watch for news on our efforts to get this off the ground.

Looking for ways to volunteer in your community? Make sure to think of us. Contact any of the board members or myself and we will get you on our volunteer list.

As for now, enjoy our new issue of *The Agate*. We hope you do!

Thank you,

**LOTTIE HOLCOMB**

President

Jefferson County Historical Society



**JCHS President Lottie Holcomb**

## New JCHS members joining between March 15, 2023 and October 10, 2023

Willard & Suzette Bean		Mid Oregon Personnel Services
Trevorr & Chelsie Beaver	Debra Holbrook	Rob & Patricia Mossbrucker
Gary Clowers	Identity Zone	Davida Plaisted
Skip Dawson & Harriet Anderson	Jefferson County Library District	Dianne Treadway
Joy DeHaan & Rick White	Larry & Pat Kelley	De Wayne Weaver
Diane Green Hartley	Rebecca Macy	Breffmi Whelan

## Donations to the Society March 15, 2023 to October 10, 2023:

Judith Bowden	Sharon Nesbit
Macy Farms	Dan & Marianne Phillips
Gregg Macy	
Rebecca Macy	James Quinn

## Memorial Gifts to the Society March 15, 2023 to October 10, 2023:

<i>In Memory of</i> <b>Mack Lochrie</b> Jerry and Dorothy Ramsey	<i>In Memory of</i> <b>Delores Vincent</b> Jerry and Dorothy Ramsey
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# THE AGATE

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 647, Madras, Oregon 97741

## THE AGATE • JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



### ***PLEASE JOIN US!***

**Jefferson County Historical Society**

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#### **MEMBERSHIP DUES 2023:**

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

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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