

Living Legends: Del Judy

An occasional feature on persons and families with deep Tualatin roots whose impact continues today.

BY LARRY McCLURE

At age 55, Del Judy decided if the last of her four kids wouldn't leave home, then she would. In 1978, after the death of husband Clayton, Del joined the Peace Corps and accepted a two-year assignment in Thailand. But taking on an overseas challenge when others her age were dreaming of retirement wasn't surprising to her friends and neighbors since this Tualatin icon had already made a name for herself as a farmer, piano teacher, 4-H leader, teacher of deaf students, dress shop owner, candymaker, Trailblazer fan, traveler, and church musician.

Coming home after her Thailand adventure in 1980, Del became an active member of the newly-forming Tualatin Presbyterian Church, served a year as president of Tualatin Historical Society, was a prime mover in Tualatin's first farmers' market and is still a relentless advocate for today's Meals on Wheels program and a testament to the benefits of the Juanita Pohl "active aging" Center. In more recent years, Del has been honored for outstanding civic volunteerism.

Del's tenure in Tualatin began in 1958 not long after a daughter said she needed a cashmere sweater like the well-heeled kids where they lived in Lake Oswego. Dad decided it was time to move and the family purchased just over 6 acres south of today's Sagert Street. While Clayton worked in advertising in Forest Grove and Portland, Del coordinated most of the small farm's chores with cows to milk, eggs to gather, berries to pick and nuts to harvest. Milk was sold for 60 cents a gallon. Their neighborhood was a popular gathering place for kids whose names are



still engrained in Tualatin history (like the Silveys who ran the lumber yard before Clark/True Value and whose son David now owns Tualatin-based Suburban Door Co. on Herman Road). Many local families attended the old Methodist church (now the heritage center) and kids would often gather at the big Judy home for youth activities.

To supplement the costs of raising four children, Del offered piano lessons to dozens of students, often holding recitals in the family living room.

Del and Clayton had met at Pacific University in Forest Grove and were married in 1944. As their four children grew up, Del decided it was time to continue her own education so she pursued studies as a teacher of the deaf. Starting at Tucker Maxon Oral School in Portland, she later

taught deaf students in several Portland Public Schools. After Clayton died, she responded to a Peace Corps advertisement seeking specialists in teaching teachers how to work with deaf children in Bangkok. She left the big house and farm in the remaining boys' care and served a full two-year term in Thailand. In the meantime, plans were already underway for subdividing the family acreage into lots for some 25 newer houses today, including one where she still lives on Sagert St.

A committed Trailblazer fan during the 1970s, she and good friend Barbara Silvey would drive to Portland for games and later take a game



bus to Memorial Coliseum from the Sweetbrier Inn (now Nyberg Woods shopping center). With other independent women, the pair would travel together to places like Alaska setting up their tents on the ferry's outside deck. Home hobbies still keep her busy, too, such as weaving intricate pine needle baskets. After launching a successful spring plant sale to support Meals on Wheels at the Center several years ago, Del will be passing her gloves to others in 2017 while keeping her own horticulture pursuits alive at home.

For two years along the way she operated a dress shop in Raleigh Hills but this didn't prove to be her real passion. Del's part-time business success started with a secret family recipe for cream caramels cooked up on her kitchen stove each Christmas for relatives and friends. Soon the word spread and inquiries started coming from far and wide. Daughter-in-law Debbie Judy came to help and when Norm Thompson wanted to start offering the tasty treats for in-store and catalog sales, production moved to Del's garage with two stoves and several pots that had to be

stirred one hour each. During busy seasons, work began at 5 a.m. and extended to 11 p.m. as each batch was cooled, cut and wrapped. Thirty years ago Del turned over operation to Debbie who now runs Judy's Cream Caramels seasonally from her basement commercial kitchen in Sherwood. Standing on a custom-made riser to reach the counter, Del still occasionally helps with cutting and wrapping a diverse array of cream caramel offerings



but no longer helps staff a booth at the annual "America's Biggest Christmas Bazaar" in Portland during the holiday season.

The Judy children inherited the family work ethic. Jo has now returned to live with her mom after a successful law career in Hawaii. Pam stays busy with her family in Canby. Scott teaches at Portland Community College's Rock Creek Campus and lives on the next-generation Judy farm in Sherwood where the candy is also made. James is a contractor in Newberg.

At her 93rd birthday this summer, Del tallied 11 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great-grandchild. To assure she's prepared for the next family celebration or Pacific University alumni reunion, she will likely be found at her weekly yoga and stretching sessions at the Juanita Pohl Center. At 4'8", it's her infectious smile and warm hello that makes her stand out in a crowd. People know this grandma with wispy white hair should never be taken for granted.



Larry and his wife Ellie have lived in Tualatin for 44 years and follow they raised 3 children and now 7 grandchildren on Facebook.