

GARIBALDI, OR
by Ruth Porter

My husband and I were married in 1958. I quit my job at McClellan AFB in Sacramento, CA, and moved to Garibaldi, Oregon, where he lived and was working at Oregon Washington Plywood Co. He had been working there for 11 years.

Going from the Sacramento Valley to Tillamook County was like going back 50 years in time. The population of Garibaldi was 1,100. For such a small town, there was a surprisingly wide variety of stores located there. There was a Post Office, two grocery stores, a hardware store, an appliance store, a variety store, a barber shop, a drug store, a real estate office, one small cafe, three churches, and three or four taverns. Garibaldi also had a crab store where you could buy fresh crab, shrimp and fish, and it had a boat dock where you could fish from charter fishing boats or buy fishing tackle and bait.

Most of the local people went fishing and clam digging a lot. There were limits on how many clams you could get and one of my earliest memories is of a local person getting a ticket for having too many clams.

The local hangout was Clem's Howdy-Do Cafe. People went there to eat, drink coffee, read the newspaper, visit with friends and brag about the day that they had successful fishing. According to what you heard, at least every fisherman had had one really good day in their fishing career. I think they spent most of the rest of their time at the Cafe.

The people in Garibaldi were like a big family. They were loyal, kind, gossipy, down-to-earth, and considerate of the eccentrics in town.

The main eccentric in town was called Joe Whitewash. His real last name wasn't Whitewash, but that's what everyone called him. Talking about his past actions could keep a conversation going for hours. He lived in a little shack down on the edge of the Bay. Rumor has it that he tried to burn some sulphur in a bucket one time and caught his shack on fire and burned it down. It wasn't too long before he had another shack though. He did what he pleased, but he was always law abiding. Except, more than once, he hauled boards on top of his wheelbarrow right down Highway 101. Only the local basset hound, Gomer, and Joe Whitewash could occupy Highway 101 as long as they wanted to, without being run over by a log truck (or, getting a ticket.)

If you hired Joe to dig up some garden space or chop some wood, and you tried to pay him more than the agreed-upon amount, he wouldn't take the extra money, and

he wouldn't work for you again. He felt that if you would change your mind one direction, you might also change it the other way.

He would go in the grocery store and argue with the clerk to get fruit and vegetables for less than the marked price, by pointing out bruises and blemishes on them.

He carried all his money with him -- which might be as much as \$1,000, because he never spent any that he didn't absolutely have to spend, and he didn't use the bank. He lost his wallet once, and a bunch of the local business people helped him look for it until it was found.

He was hit by a car once on Highway 101; evidently, by some driver whose brakes weren't as good as the log trucks were. They took him to the hospital in Tillamook. They couldn't get his clothes off of him until they put him to sleep. Then they bathed him and burned his clothes because they were filthy. When he woke up, he was furious. After a few days, they were going to release him, but he had to pay his bill first. He would not pay one cent more than he felt his hospital stay was worth. He certainly wouldn't pay what they were charging. Finally, the owner of the crab and shrimp store reminded the people at the hospital that it WAS a county hospital and for them to give him back his wallet. They did, and he paid what he thought he owed. Then, since he felt that he had paid for his little white hospital gown, he wouldn't give it back. The local butcher had given him an old suit to wear home from the hospital so he put it on, over the little white hospital gown, and left the hospital.

Once in a while, after that, people would see Joe wearing either the pants or the jacket of the suit, with other clothes, but not together.

During World War II there was a big push in Garibaldi for people to buy War Bonds, and Joe bought a lot of bonds (to beat those dirty Germans - his words) not realizing that he would eventually get his money back. He thought he was donating it for the war effort.

He lived to be an old man, but eventually he was put into a nursing home. He didn't last very long after that. He had a sister who was a Catholic Nun, who handled his affairs.

Garibaldi was never the same without Joe Whitewash.

The Drug Store in Garibaldi was owned and operated by a local man and his wife. The man was very witty, and once in a while needed to apologize for something that he said -- even though it was hilarious. He always called me the "sickly" Porters because I got a lot of prescriptions filled. My husband had a lot of operations and our daughter had tonsillitis, so when I went into his store, he would say, "Here comes the sickly Porters." I always thought he was funny. His drug store still had an old fashioned soda fountain with a counter, and had stools in front of it, to sit on.

Garibaldi had a lady Mayor. She had grown up in Kansas, had married and been widowed at a young age, so she had been self-supporting for years before she met and married her second husband, who was the town barber. She sold insurance and real estate and did income tax returns. She always dressed up and wore high heels - regardless. Everyone else was casual and informal, but not her. If Joe Whitewash was sick she would fix him some food, but she did it in high heels. She and her husband lived in an apartment in the back of the barber shop. They had a parakeet that her husband took with him every day into

the barber shop. It was really a Union bird. It knew when it was time to go to work, and it knew when it was time to quit. When a customer came in the door, it would say, "Haircut, Mister?" Then it would dance around in its cage and say, "Petey is a pretty bird. Petey is a pretty bird." And, then when the customers were leaving, it would say, "Goodbye, sucker."

An older man was the Postmaster in Garibaldi, and his wife was the clerk. The Post Office was an ancient building with old fashioned mail boxes. The Government made the Postmaster retire when he turned 70, but he didn't want to. However, when he was still working, he was very grouchy, but after he retired, his disposition change dramatically. Whenever you saw him he always had a Burma Shave poem to tell you. The one I remember is:

She put a bullet through his hat,
But, he's had closer shaves than that.

Burma Shave

One of my good friends was also our neighbor for a while. She was a very talented artist. She was usually in the process of working on a painting. Her husband had a friend who had a problem with alcohol. This friend hung out at their house a lot, and sometimes when they went to bed, they'd leave him in their living room watching TV and tell him to lock the door when he left.

One day, one of the neighbors noticed this friend going under my friend's house so she told my friend. When they investigated, they discovered that their company had drilled small holes up through the bathroom floor and would lay under the house with his liquor bottles and try to see when the family members were in the bathroom. He got sent to the county jail for six months for this deed. My friend said she had been wondering who kept scrunching up the rug she had on the bathroom floor.

This culprit spent a lot of time in the county jail. Usually, it had something to do with his drinking. He said it was because he was such a good cook, because whenever he was in jail, he cooked for the other prisoners.

In Garibaldi, we had one landlord for five years. He was an elderly man who had been divorced for years. He had bought a lot of vacant lots in Garibaldi back when you could buy them for back taxes, and after World War II, he bought some old buildings, tore them down and used the lumber to build rental houses.

When a person rented from him, he believed it was his privilege to walk into their house whenever he wanted to, to check something. However, after he smashed his nose on our front door a couple of times, he learned to knock. I always kept the door locked.

One Thanksgiving he appeared while I was trying to cook for company, and he wanted to work on the pipes under the kitchen sink. Since Thanksgiving was the same as any other day to him, and he never cooked, he was oblivious to how other people lived.

He was still running around on roofs when other people would have been in the old folks home. He lived to 100 years old.

After we had been married about six years, some elderly friends of ours decided to move to Washington to be near their children, so they approached us about buying their house. We loved the house. It had three bedrooms and was setting along side of Highway 101, on five acres that overlooked Tillamook Bay, and also had a view of the ocean.

We applied for a Federal G. I. loan and since that area was considered a depressed housing area, we qualified for the loan, until the Government found out that the house had a private creek for its water source.

We had to get the County Sanitarian to sign a paper saying that the water wasn't contaminated, but instead of doing that, he wrote a note that said the water source was untreated surface water.

Approval of our loan seemed doomed. Finally, the seller got frustrated and decided to hack through the underbrush with his machete, and see where the water was coming from. The back of the house was near the edge of the woods, that went up hill. About 50 or 60 feet behind the house, under a mass of blackberry bushes, he found a cement box that surrounded where the water was coming out of the ground. It was a spring. The water ran down the hill and formed the small creek that went thru the side yard of the house, and continued on into Tillamook Bay.

This changed things for the better, because the Government said that if we covered the cement box and ran a pipe thru the side, piping the water to the house, the house would qualify for a loan. Then, we had to get the County Sanitarian to send off a sample of the water to have its purity tested. The answer came back that the water was pure and didn't need any chlorine.

Also, the Federal employees in Portland must have had visions of a little mud puddle when they heard the word "spring," so they required us to put a storage tank down the hill, half way to the house, for the water to run into, and then pipe it to the house from there. When this was all done, it only took 30 minutes for the 500 gallon tank to fill up, and from then on, it ran over, day and night.

No one that we knew in Garibaldi had any idea when the cement box had been built up on the hill behind our house.

We loved this house. We loved the yard and the view. And, the restaurant across the highway, called the Pirates Cove Supper Club, and incidents on the road, became our unofficial entertainment.

One morning we found our front fence laying on our grass due to a 3-person free-for-all. A couple of customers broke the antennas off of customers' cars during a fight they had. A gun was discharged into the sky one early morning when one group of men were mad at another group. No one was injured. One person's car was accidentally knocked thru the wall of the restaurant. We made calls for ambulances and the police because the restaurant didn't have a phone.

While we lived there, I ran a grocery store for a terminally ill lady when my two children were too young to go to school.

I made a midnight drive to Portland -- 100 miles away -- to take a friend and her husband to the hospital for surgery. The husband had been chopping kindling wood and accidentally chopped his thumb nearly all the way off.

I had to call the Sheriff when a hitch hiker wanted to come into our house to use our rest room and change his clothes.

After I had lived in Garibaldi for 16 years, my husband came home from work one day and said that the Superintendent at the Plywood Mill where he worked, had called a meeting that day and announced that in two weeks the Mill would be closing permanently. The economy was not doing good and the owners in New York were going out of business.

Before the dust had hardly settled, the TV program "60 Minutes" came to Garibaldi and made a video that we, later, watched on television. They covered the churches, the taverns, the town, the boat dock, etc.

Many of the Mill workers moved away, and the ones who were close to retirement age, stayed put.

Now, we go back to Garibaldi in late July, when they celebrate Garibaldi Day. It is the last full weekend in July. They have a parade, different entertainments throughout the town and a Garibaldi School reunion. It is held in the City Hall after the parade, and former classmates come from all over. My husband's class had 12 members and there are 9 or 10 of them there every year.

Garibaldi has a hotel now and many of the old places are now antique shoppes, i.e., a church, the dentist office, the old Post Office, etc. The plywood mill is gone, there is a mobil home park down at the boat dock, and there are more than one restaurants there now.

The old Garibaldi lives on in the memories of the older people. At the Garibaldi Days celebration, the main thing being celebrated is the "wonder" of the olden days.

Garibaldi was, and still is, small. It's population was around 1,100, but it was NEVER boring.