

2002 "Days In The Park" Grand Marshal



Ruth Kellar, Grand Marshal

By Robert Davis

"Once a teacher, always a teacher." That's a phrase well suited for the 2002 Rainier Days in the Park parade Grand Marshal.

Born in Meridian, Idaho to Lee and Lydia Rea, Rainier's First Lady Ruth Kellar moved to Rainier when she was 14 months old. "My uncle Charlie Alston asked my dad to go in with him at the Alston Corners store, but he decided against it because he didn't think they could make a go of it," Kellar recalled, "but we moved to Rainier anyway."

The first school for the amiable Kellar was, of course, the Rainier Elementary School. She took a short break from Rainier academics to marry Milford Kellar, a musician who also was a teacher at Clatsop Community College. "He could play any instrument with strings," Kellar said of her late husband. "We did lots of entertaining. His last job was as a fork lift operator as a longshoreman for the Port of Longview."

The two Kellars raised a daughter, Jan Jackson of Salem, and a son Marvin who "moved into the same house my dad built on Meserve Road."

Eager to exercise her motherly rights, Kellar quickly displayed newspaper clippings and photography daughter Jan had authored as a photo-journalist with the Capital Press in Salem and was none too slow to brag on her son Marvin who is a recently retired medical technician, and one of the first in his field, at that.

The bragging rights didn't stop with her children as she was quick to identify her nine grand-

children: Jennifer Sears of Willamina, Gail Gage of Salem, David Alexander of Washington, D.C., Ann Hussey of Salem, Kathryn Kellar of Beaverton, Karen CaValle of Oregon City, Gerald Kellar of Salem, Julie Mathieu, Vancouver, WA and John Kellar of Salem. "I also raised a niece, Linda Columbus, who lives in Lynwood, Washington," Kellar was quick to add.

"When Jan and Marvin left for college in 1955, I decided I just wasn't going to sit still, so I went to college at night at Portland State," Kellar said. At the time, "I was working at Longview Fibre as a statistician, but I couldn't do that and go to school, so I took the job of secretary at Rainier Elementary School - full time and I took classes full time. Once I took 24 hours in a semester.

"I was secretary for four years and started teaching at Rainier and took night classes." After receiving a B.S. and an M.S. from Portland State University, Kellar took administration classes and became the administrator for Hudson Park Elementary School, Director at Briarcliff and taught at Portland State University at nights and on weekends.

The teaching career did not end with her retirement, although she tackled another dimension as she worked for the Oregon State Department of Education. "That was the best job I ever had. I thought about keeping it."

And wouldn't you know it, she is still teaching. "My absolute love is leading a reading group held at the Methodist Church," Kellar said with a gleam in her eye. "They call it, 'Ruth's Readers. It's on the second Monday of the month from 7 to 8:30 p.m. We have about 12-20 people in the group."

Ruth's Readers is not particularly a religious group, Kellar stated. "We try to read good books, whatever 'good' is - books with a message. We're on our 47th book. That means we've been going 47 months.

"I hope this (article) will bring more people."

The active Kellar lives in a pleasant home in Rainier overlooking the city and the Columbia River. The many paintings that adorn her walls are her own handicraft. She enjoys working in oils, but would rather create in watercolors, she said. Not one to brag, her daughter had to hang her award-winning paintings in her own home.

To her credit and a teacher's greatest reward, an example of an often-heard statement is, "Oh, sure, I remember her," said Charlene Niemela, a life-long resident of Rainier. "I had her when I was in the eighth grade. She was the best teacher I ever had."