

Local History

Biography - Aisted, Lorena

Centenarian reminisces about good and bad years

Pioneer woman remembers telephone as greatest invention in her lifetime

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Of the Herald-Republic

Centenarian Lorena "Lola" Aisted has lots of stories to tell.

She had a career before career women came into style. She tasted life in the country and in the city. She ran a boarding house and lived on a houseboat. She owned several businesses and raised two daughters.

The Yakima woman is one of 10 Yakima Valley senior citizens whose photographs are included in "A Centennial Perspectives on Growing Old," an exhibit sponsored by the Department of Social and Health Services and the Yakima County Centennial Committee. Two years ago, she was awarded a pioneer certificate by the Washington State Genealogical Society for having lived in Washington Territory before it became a state.

She and her husband, George, homesteaded 160 acres in Canada and she managed a country store.

"Oh, I always seemed to have a knack for getting involved in things that I didn't really want to be in," says Mrs. Aisted, who now lives at Good Samaritan Health Care Center.

The oldest of five children, she was born March 17, 1889, in the small mill town of Port Hadlock.

While attending the Bellingham State Normal School, she met George Manuel Aisted and was married in 1906.

The Aisteds caught the homesteading bug and in 1911 they packed all of their belongings and boarded a train for British Columbia.

George worked clearing right-of-way for a train from Edmonton; managed an Englishman's estate; and built the first frame house in the remote area. The couple's home became a stopping point for travelers.

"We never knew how many we'd have for dinner," she says. George was offered a job working on the waterfront in Seattle. Lola sold all the stock left on the farm and the furniture and left the Canadian wilderness to join her husband.

"No money could buy the experience I had, but I would never want to do it again," she says in a 25-page story of her life she wrote when she was 91.



(Photo courtesy of DSHS)

'No money could buy the experience I had, but I would never want to do it again.'

— Lorena 'Lola' Aisted

George worked as a longshoreman in Seattle for years while Lola ran a restaurant.

When George retired, the couple bought a dairy farm near Easton. They lived there until they moved to Yakima in the late 1940s.

George died in 1967 and Lola lived in her own home with her daughter, Alta Siegmund. After Alta died, she continued to live in the home with her grandson, Dale. Eight months ago she moved to Good Samaritan.

Mrs. Aisted outlived both of her daughters and most all of her friends. She has four grandsons and four great grandchildren.

George Velikanje, Mrs. Aisted's grandson, says his grandmother's health has deteriorated over the past several years.

"But, she's still tough as nails," he said, laughing.

A lifelong Republican, she is a former president of the Yakima Republican Women's Club.

"She is absolutely convinced that everyone in the nursing home is a Democrat and wants to get her out of here," he laughed.

Mrs. Aisted admits that her life was a bit out of the ordinary.

"Everything always seemed to come my way," she says.

She said her mother once told her that she would either become a preacher or a teacher.

"I didn't do either," she says. "But, I was never idle."

The centenarian sees the invention of the telephone as the most important innovation in her lifetime.

"I remember very clearly how wonderful I thought it was."

Mrs. Aisted says she remembers that one of her teachers told her students they would not see the turn of the century.

"I won't make it to that, but I did make it to my 100th birthday."

Mrs. Aisted celebrated her birthday in style. Family members, friends and the nursing home staff hosted a special St. Patrick's Day party, complete with green cake and punch.

Although she wasn't able to attend last week's reception honoring the people depicted in the photographs, her son-in-law, Fred Velikanje, accepted the certificate in her honor.

Over the years, she was active in several organizations. She served as a trustee when the Yakima Valley Museum was founded and was active in the Woman's Century Club and the Daughters of the Pioneers.

As her sight and hearing failed, Mrs. Aisted lost track of politics. But, nevertheless, she's happy that a Republican is in the White House.

Pulling together memories spanning 100 years is difficult for Mrs. Aisted. Some days, she says, everything seems clear; other days the adventures of her lifetime seem jumbled and confused.

"I've had a full life. I've done many wonderful things," she says.

Looking back, she wishes she would have been less concerned about herself and more concerned about others.

"People have to do more for others. I'd like to talk to people and tell them that. If I had only known then what I know now."

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