

SENIOR LIVING

Wanda Justice credits her youthful attitude to her mother

By Cathy Kane

The East County Journal

Dull moments are few and far between in the life of 83-year-old Wanda Justice, who has brought youthful vitality coupled with seasoned wisdom to her job as a paraprofessional at White Pass School (WPS) for the past 12 years.

"My mother (Grace Wilson) had a saying. 'Be as young as you can for as long as you can because when you are old, you can't go back,'" Justice said, describing her approach to her busy life, which also includes working at the Morton Visitor Center during summer months.

"Wanda can do just about any job. She has a wonderful presence and is a wonderful person," WPS Elementary School Principal Nathan Coutsoubos said.

Justice originally applied and was accepted to work in the WPS after school program. She was encouraged by teachers to take the paraeducator test. When she hesitated-unsure about taking and passing the test-Jolena Mathis cheered her on.

"I applied on the last hour of the last day and I was hired," she said, noting she made a high score on the test which she took without any preparation.

Since then, she has worked in the elementary and high school in the office, library and in the classrooms.

"I have always been a sub and happy to be a sub. I love the variety. I get to do a little bit of everything," she said, adding she especially enjoys working in the library. "All of the teachers are always helpful, kind, supportive and inclusive. They have been great."

Born in Pocatello, Idaho, Justice grew up in a loving family with three older brothers and two sisters.

"My father was a mechanic and my mother was a stay at home mom when we were younger," she said. "My dad was so cute, such a nice man, patient and kind who really loved his kids. I always felt



Photo by Cathy Kane / The East County Journal

White Pass Elementary School Principal Nathan Coutsoubos is pictured with Wanda Justice, a para professional at the school.

loved. All my brothers were great to me."

Evenings were spent at home together as a family sitting around the living room, listening to the Baby Snooks Show, Amos and Andy and The Green Hornet on the radio. Often her mother sang accompanied by her father on the guitar.

"We were by no means rich, but my dad worked hard and we always had a warm coat, good food to eat, and a place to sleep. My parents were very protective," she said, adding while she had freedom, her parents were very particular about where she went and what she did. "I went to my first slumber party in the 10th grade."

Justice also grew up attending church with her family, both Assembly of God and non-denominational churches.

Due to various circumstances, her family moved back and forth from Idaho to Washington state throughout her school years.

"I always loved school and I loved reading and literature. I went to third or fourth grade in Yakima, then we moved back to Idaho, then to White Swan. I started high school in Idaho, but graduated from Yakima Senior High," she said.

She remembers all the moves as a positive for her

and her family. "We learned to enjoy people because we met all sorts of people," she said.

After her high school graduation in 1954, Justice went on to live and work in Washington and Oregon before settling in Randle 45 years ago. In her early 20s, she traveled to Fair Banks, Alaska while it was still a territory with a Christian mission outreach to teach Eskimo children in children's church while their parents attended adult Bible teaching. Over the years, she worked in a variety of offices as a book-keeper, payroll clerk and secretary, as well as a bank teller. She co-owned a drive-in restaurant in Salem, Oregon. After the restaurant closed, she became the District Court deputy clerk in Salem before moving to Randle, where her brother, Bill and parents had relocated.

"My brother was a salesman for Firestone. He fell in love with Randle and Packwood," she said, adding her brother ended up moving to Randle where he built the Tall Timber Restaurant. "He was the first owner of the restaurant which did not have a bar at the time. My mother was the first cook there."

"My brother was quite the entrepreneur. He was

very popular with the loggers. He also built the Snack Shack, which was situated where the transfer station is now and he ran a tire company," she said.

Her jobs in Randle included co-managing the Snack Shack and working in the business offices of RDW Hardware (now Arrow Hardware), Champion Lumber, U.S. Forest Service and Randle Dental Clinic.

"I loved my job at RDW. John Hedlund Sr. was the supervisor and Jay Christensen was the general manager. I was the only woman there and they were super nice to me. I had really good years there," she said.

Her most exciting job was working as a payroll clerk for the U.S. Forest Service during the Wenatchee fires in Entiat in 1990.

"I was sent with another woman. We left at 8 at night with me driving. We went over White Pass in the dark and got there about midnight. A ring of fire was suspended in the night sky. You could see it for miles around. It was gorgeous at night, but not in the daylight. I worked 15 hours a day and slept in the station wagon. There were hundreds of strike teams (organized fire teams) from many different states. Trucks were set up

for cooking. Prison inmates made and served breakfast and dinner. We had sack lunches. All of the workers had to be paid so a whole bunch of us worked on the time sheets."

For Justice, life in Randle is not all about work. She also thrived after work, participating in community events, community service and church.

"I learned to sew in home economics and from my mother and how to make

my own clothes. But I had never learned to knit. When LeAnna West (McMahan) started the knitting club, I went and Leatrice Hornsby taught me out to knit," she said, noting she still attends the Wednesday night knitting group at the Mountain View Timberland Library.

Justice passed on her skills to a younger generation of girls, who were taught to sew, knit, and quilt along with cooking and etiquette when she co-founded the American Girl Doll Club with Cheryl Baker.

Recently taking up quilting, Justice has been part of quilt raffles to benefit missions in the honor of Miriam Conklin, and fundraising for the Team Moriah (Frisbie) COTA (Children's Organ Transplant Association) fund. She is also working on her own quilt entitled "the Women's Voice Historical Quilt," featuring historical scenes such as the underground railroad.

Justice serves as treasurer for the White Pass Coalition Food Bank and is active at the Randle Nazarene Church where she has served on the Board of Directors.



Mother's Day Cards and Chocolates, New Women's Fashions, Purses, Weekender Bags, Scarves and Purses

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AREA SENIOR NEWS

Morton

On Tuesday, May 14 you can catch the shuttle to the Lucky Eagle Casino in Rochester at the Morton Senior Center. The shuttle leaves the parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Please call for more information.

The Morton Senior Center is at 103 E. Westlake Ave. The center is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For questions about the programs and activities, contact site manager Sally Allen at 360-496-3230.

Packwood

The Packwood Senior Center will host a Mother's Day celebration tomorrow at 1 p.m. Please call the center to make a reservation.

Dr. Zora DeGrandpre will present information on senior health on Tuesday, May 14, starting at 1 p.m.

The Packwood Senior Center is located at 12931 Hwy. 12 in Packwood. The center is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please contact site manager Helen Sutterliet at 360-494-6331 for questions about activities available at the Packwood Senior Center.

Nutrition Lunch Program

Senior Nutrition Program lunches are served on Tuesday and Thursday at the Morton and Packwood

Senior Centers. Meals are available Monday through Friday at the Twin Cities Senior Center at 2545 N. National Ave. in Chehalis. To make a lunch reservation at the Twin Cities Senior Center, please call 360-740-2641.

The Nutrition Menu for the week of May 13:

Monday: Beef stew, green salad, a honey wheat biscuit and apple crisp ala mode.

Tuesday: Chicken Caesar wrap, tomato basil raviolini soup, cottage

cheese, apricots and an oatmeal cookie.

Wednesday: Taco salad with salsa and sour cream, fruit cocktail and tapioca pudding.

Thursday: French dip, seasoned fries, coleslaw, fruit chunks and a Snickerdoodle cookie.

Friday: Parmesan chicken, chicken rice pilaf, Sausalito vegetables, peaches and a Romano dinner roll.

This service is supported by LMTAAA with Older Americans Act funding.

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