

Currens Family History

White Bluffs Hanford Pioneer Association 38th Reunion- 1981
Response to family history questionnaire

Currens Family

Journey Into Memories

Priest Rapids and White Bluffs:

Priest Rapids was my home for five or six years. I came directly from Los Angeles, California to Priest Rapids.

My husband was working at the Power Plant, at Priest Rapids. My brother and brother-in-law drove me there in a Ford Roadster. I had my German shepherd dog, "Duke", with me. At one motel we stopped for the night and tied Duke to a bench and went a block or so to a restaurant. Soon, right down the middle of the street, came Duke dragging the bench. The boys were annoyed with Duke, we had to stop so often for him to find a tree.

I arrived in Priest Rapids in September of 1931. Bill Currens and I had been married for five years, but no children so far. On the 25th of June, 1932, I gave birth to an 8 pound 4 ounce, baby boy. That's my souvenir of Priest Rapids. As Billy grew, we made our weekly trips to White Bluffs, where we bought groceries and things at the Drug Store and Hardware Store.

As I marketed, people would say to me, "I heard Billy got a haircut today." He hated the clippers and screamed bloody murder. You could hear him from one end of town to the other. We would have dinner at the only hotel in town and then we became acquainted with the Chases, George and Dorothy, who published the White Bluffs paper. Together we attended the Saturday Grange dances and danced to the music, "I Love Mountain Music" played by a real Hillbilly band.

Bill was born in Yakima, Washington, at the St. Elizabeth Hospital. The Joe Picatti family were our dearest friends. They were such a help to me when I had to stay in Yakima the last month.

When we attended the dances, a high school girl babysat Tony Chase and we put Billy in a dresser drawer in the middle of a full-size bed.

At first I thought I would go mad coming directly from Los Angeles, but I grew to love Priest Rapids and never felt better in my life. I could see across the Columbia River, just desert and sagebrush for 50 miles (approximately). Once, I saw the telephone poles across the river go down, one after the other, on fire as the lightning struck them. Once we had a completely dark dusty day, I couldn't see a thing! I thought it was the end for me. I was only 25 at the time, now at 75, I think that's very young.

At the Rapids we were a very small community, just three operators at the Plant; the Sisk family at the Ranch, the Brain's and the railroad family. I can still hear the once-a-week train, "The Priest Rapids Line", coming from Beverly. That lonely train whistle still lingers in my memory.

The Wanapum Indians lived at Priest Rapids, just a mile or so from us up river. One day, Tomanwash came knocking at my door and wanted "Boss". I said, "Boss at work." Well, then he wanted "Boss Wife." I said, I was "Boss wife"; he just laughed and laughed and left. Guess he didn't think I made a very good camp woman.

I remember many of the good people and their names from White Bluffs. I felt that White Bluffs was my town. It hurts to think all that is history; our time is so short. Yet the memories are many, summer's amber light, the last cricket of fall, the sound of the Columbia River. As long as there is life, this will not be still.

Maja-Lisa Currens