

REMINISCENCES

by
Carol Clemens

I met Oliver at Carol Schlentner's sod house in Manley Hot Springs around 1980, when they were building. Carol was not there at the time –I forget why that was.

During that time I also met his grandson, who was visiting. Oliver was building a riverboat at the time. He was making the keel from a long piece of spruce that had a natural bend upwards to form the bow.

I also remember the utensils, baskets, and scoops that he used while we picked blueberries together off the road to Tofty.

I visited him in La Grande, Oregon in February, 2009. Years before, he'd visited me when I was staying in Washougal, Washington. We also exchanged some letters.

He visited me several times when I stayed in Fairbanks, and once helped me fix the ignition on a car. (Actually, I stood by to help him if needed.) We used a plastic doorbell from the lighting section of one of those big stores. He mounted it on a piece of wood that we hung somehow under the dashboard. The doorbell button would make contact with the ignition, and then a turn of the key would start the old wreck! That was a memorable and amusing occasion.

I always bought him hamburger meat so that he could eat his special diet, as a change from those small containers of fat and powdered fish he used to carry around.

I kept up with his whereabouts through Carol Schlentner, who had regular phone contact. I'd call him occasionally when he was in La Grande and other places.

In addition, I have several copies of his book "*Thoughts Born of Turmoil*". I once accompanied him to a philosophy class once at UAF, where he gave a talk. I gave him rides to Fairbanks from Manley, so we had a chance to talk more about those subjects.

I remember that he gave me one of the kayaks that he built at the sod house. He had carved the frame from native woods and had covered it with canvas coated with tar. He also gave me a rip saw that he had remade from a crosscut saw. I wanted to rip some runners from birch for a sled, but he needed it for something so I gave it back.

I'm glad someone is saving the artifacts from his homestead. Unfortunately I was never there, although I always wanted to go. His handmade tools and the other things he made there and elsewhere came from rare skill that few have these days.

As I write I am remembering so many more things about Oliver. Too bad such people can't last forever.