

Archie's Canoe

When in 1968, it became known in the pulpmill that I had rented Hank Kenatta's former place at Twin Bridges there along the Siletz River, more than a dozen fellows approached me about putting in a shooting range. I built rifles. Every gunshop benefits from having a five hundred yard range nearby so the issue was more a matter of who would help clear blackberries than whether I would put in a range; thus, a brush-clearing-bee, so to speak, was organized for a particular weekend.

I don't remember who came. Dutch was there, as was Jim and a couple of Bobs, a couple of Dons, Dennis, Gene, a couple of Howards—all familiar faces. And while we were hacking through berries and willows beside the creek, I noticed what looked like one end of a dugout canoe.

The shaped log was filled with fallen leaves and moss. As we cleared away the tangle of brush that had grown over it, we saw that, indeed, it was a complete canoe that looked old. Dutch suggested we call the county museum to see if they were interested in restoring it; we didn't have to call a second time. Within two hours, the museum's curator and her husband were out with a boat trailer.

The canoe was carefully loaded onto the trailer. We were thanked then forgotten ... finding the canoe won the curator a trip to Washington D.C., where she presented a paper about something. We never knew what she spoke about—perhaps on how to preserve wood artifacts. The canoe can be seen in the museum at Newport if someone is interested.

Those of us who found it wondered if it was Salish or perhaps Umatilla, a portion of that tribe relocated to the Siletz reservation. None of us had seen a photo of a canoe like it in any book.

The canoe also seemed to puzzle experts. It was too well preserved to be as old as it should be, so the more it was examined and reexamined, the more curious it became until someone found a newspaper photograph of Old Archie hewing it out for his grandson in 1961.

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