

Telling the Story of the Oregon Trail

Fanny — the Original Interpretive Character at the NHOTIC

by Sherrie Kvamme
of the Hells Canyon Journal

The vital importance of the work and contributions that the Oregon Trails Preservation Trust played in the successful opening of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center is an integral part of this series. Everyone involved went beyond the extra mile to ensure the center reached its full potential. One of those who went the extra mile and continues to be a cornerstone is an interpretive character named Fanny. Who she was and the role she played in bringing the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center into being, is best explained by her creator, Joyce Hunsaker.

Fanny is a legend in Baker County and in all of eastern Oregon. She is not just a random pioneer woman who traveled the Oregon Trail. Fanny is a composite character drawn into one personality out of dozens of authentic letters and diaries from documented maternal journalled by women who traveled the Oregon Trail. Fanny was brought to life, to share many of those life experiences, feelings, hardships and joys experienced on the trail, by Joyce Hunsaker.

In 1989, Joyce Hunsaker was asked by Sid Johnson to serve as executive director of the Oregon Trail Preservation Trust, which is a non-profit, community organization dedicated to promoting the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center project.

In the very early stages of the project, awareness needed to be fostered, enthusiasm generated and education provided. The Oregon Trail Preservation Trust took on these tasks.

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"It was surprising in general that people didn't know what an interpretive center was, and the difference between that and a museum. Even when ODOT made signs to put on the highway, they used the word interpretive and ended up having to replace them." [During this time, Joyce's husband, Dave Hunsaker, was the BLM's project director for the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.]

Joyce was born and raised in Baker County, and following high school she moved to California to further her education. While there, she volunteered at the San Diego Historical Society. One of the things she did for them was

would tour, and depending on which home I was hosting, I would dress up as a different character. We would draw up our own conversation for each tour. We were careful and were required to cover certain points."

With Dave's experience and Joyce's love of storytelling and interpretation, it was natural for the Hunsakers to take Fanny on the road. Her reputation grew rapidly and spread far and wide. The effort was successful. Fanny increased awareness about the NHOTIC and taught people about the Oregon Trail in a way that flyers and printed documents couldn't.

"Fanny went everywhere, and her whole purpose was about the Interpretive Center," said Dave. "Word about her got out, and invitations came from all over. Schools, chambers of commerce, city councils, conventions, sales events, educational events and even the governor."

"When I performed Fanny, I wore my great-grandmother's trail bonnet and trail dress. Fanny evolved into quite a character over the years," laughed Joyce. "I found that the worse I looked and the more trail worn I appeared, the better it was for the character, and response to her was incredible."

The Interpretive Center's commitment to living history as a tool for education began with Fanny. Joyce helped write the center's instruction manual for future interpreters to develop interpretive performances, which are distinctively different than theatrical performances.

The purpose of the manual was to have strong and consistent educational and interpretive elements. Interpreters are required to research their material thoroughly. Standards for all 20 criteria must be met, a process that guides development for interpretive characters in the theater. The bar for presentations in the Leo Adler Theater is set very high.

Though Joyce had played an integral role in creating the manual, when she had prepared a Sacagawea interpretation for the Lewis and Clark bicentennial she was required to audition.

"It is absolutely one of the criteria," said Joyce, "and because you have done one, does not mean you are automatically able to do another. We knew the depth of work, sweat and tears that so many had invested of themselves into making that Interpretive Center happen. We wanted each of the interpretations to be stellar for every visitor that came to the center on every level possible. We wanted to be sure that this theater would not fall below the bar."

"When the doors shut and the lights go out, you are not at the Interpretive Center, you are back in the mid-1800s," said Dave. "We knew that the theater was going to be for interpretive programs of all kinds, and that was very important. Because Fanny was the first and so well-loved,

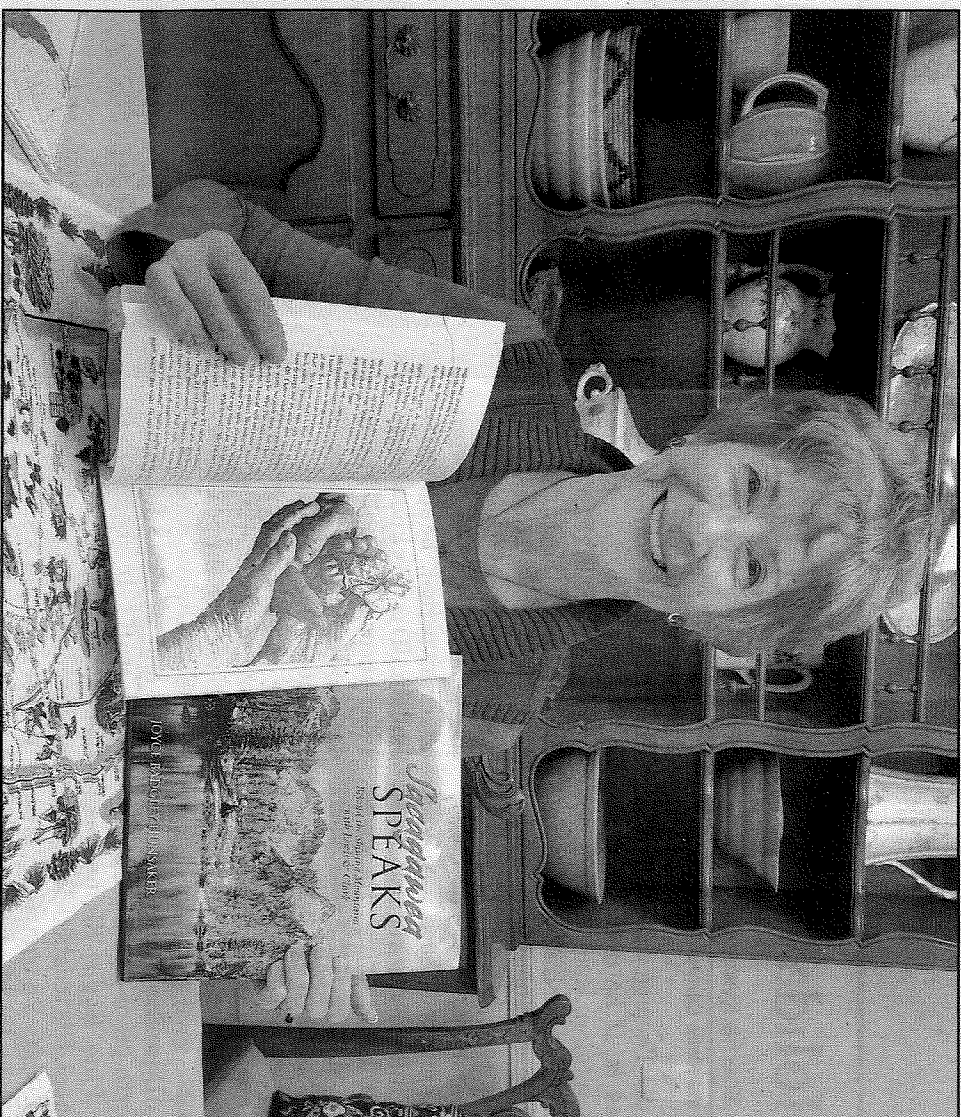


Photo by Sherrie Kvamme

JOYCE HUNSAKER with her books *Sacagawea Speaks* and *Fanny*, which is open to an image of hands with hollyhocks: "Fanny girl," Mama said to me, "I do not know if I will ever see you again in this life. So, I want you to have somethin' to take with you all the way out to Oregon. Hollyhock seeds! From the flower beside Mama's porch." - Excerpt from *Fanny* by Joyce Badgley Hunsaker.

"When the doors of the Interpretive Center were open, and visitors were coming, I had left the project," said Joyce. "But I wanted to do more with her. I wanted to take Fanny back out on the road. She had received such an enthusiastic welcome wherever we had gone."

However, Joyce had created Fanny, for and while under the employment of the Oregon Trail Preservation Trust. She approached the trust's board, and with the stipulation that she maintain Fanny with integrity she was granted sole legal right to perform as the character.

By the time Dave accepted the position of director of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, Joyce had started her own company and was writing more interpretations. Fanny was performed in a myriad of venues around the United States including special events in and around Washington D.C. and for special congressional briefings. Joyce performed as Fanny for the Secretary of the Interior and at countless educational events. Fanny opened legislative sessions and performed with symphonies.

Joyce was hired in a number of places to compose scripts, and she also trained people to present their own programs in places like the Gateway Arch in St. Louis and the Mission Mills Museum in Salem. She was hired by the National Park Service to train their people and do some scripting, and she performed similar duties for the National Endowment for the Humanities. Fanny even went on wild and scenic river trips.

In the evenings, Joyce would disappear and Fanny would come out of the trunk and appear before the campfire to tell her stories. "You should have seen the faces of people around camp-

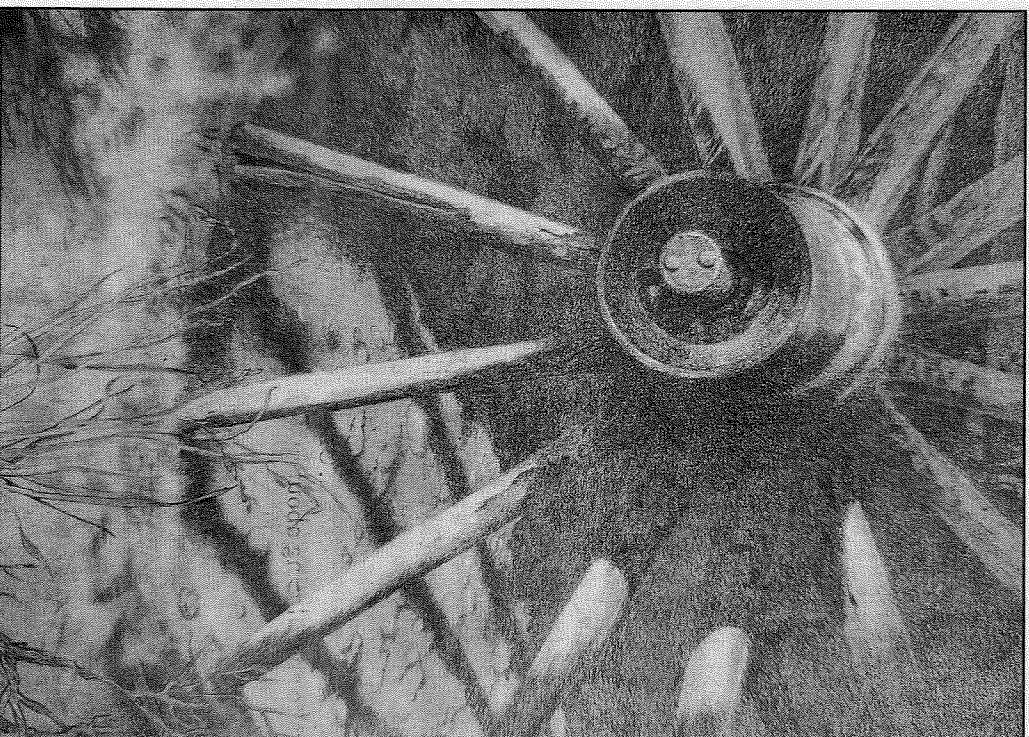


Image courtesy of Joyce Hunsaker from a sketch by Tom Novak

"ONE BY ONE BY ONE, all the other wagons, they lined up in a line... Then one by one, by everlastin' one, they rolled right over the top of that new grave. Right over the top of my baby 'til there weren't nothin' at all... Only dust." - Excerpt from *Fanny* by Joyce Badgley Hunsaker.



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Joyce was born and raised in Baker County, and following high school she moved to California to further her education. While there, she volunteered at the San Diego Historical Society. One of the things she did for them was to dress in costume and greet visitors as if she were living in a historical time period.

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events, educational events and even the governor."

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JOYCE HUNSAKER with her books *Sacagawea Speaks* and *Fanny*, which is open to an image of hands with hollyhocks: "Fanny girl," Mama said to me, "I do not know if I will ever see you again in this life. So, I want you to have somethin' to take with you all the way out to Oregon. Hollyhock seeds! From the flower beside Mama's porch." - Excerpt from *Fanny* by Joyce Badgley Hunsaker.

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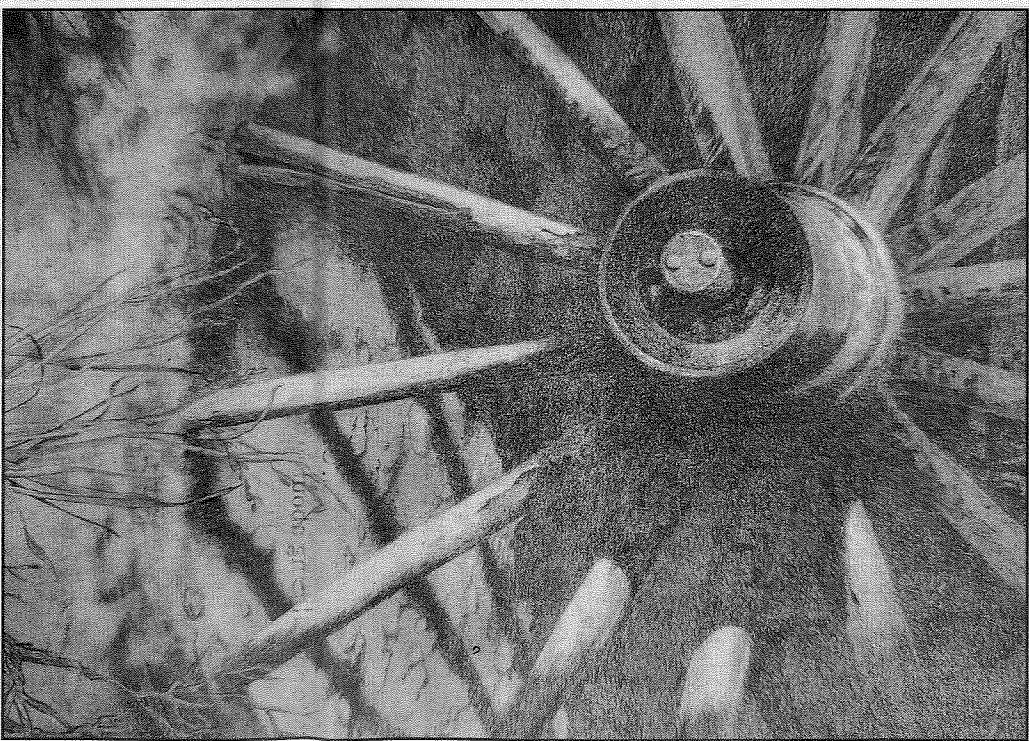
In the evenings, Joyce would disappear and Fanny would come out of the trunk and appear before the campfire to tell her stories.

"You should have seen the faces of people around campfires when Fanny came out and started talking," laughed Dave. "They had been on a river trip all day, had dinner and were sitting around visiting when Fanny came out of the dark into their midst. That was a great experience."

Joyce and several other interpreters from around the United States were part of a team that traveled the nation during the Lewis and Clark bicentennial to perform in places like Monticello. She developed historical vignettes and performed in schools, museums, interpretive centers and on radio and television. Fanny was even on center court with the Portland Trail Blazers.

Her work was featured at the 2002 Winter Olympics and by the Smithsonian Institute. Her work has been featured by the Disney media empire and the Public Broadcasting System, and recognized in *Time* magazine.

In 1998, Joyce received the Oregon-California Trails As-



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"THEY HAD ME SO FEARED about what injuns would do to white folks on the trail, I had all my children shorn bald of their hair before we ever started out! I wish I had all the time back I spent being scared of injuns... for nothin' of that kind ever happened to us." - Excerpt from *Fanny* by Joyce Badgley Hunsaker.

sociation's highest award for national service.

"I love researching, and I love the detail and putting together the characters because you have so many moving parts and the character flaws, their foibles and their strengths. I learned that people really

respond to that and want to know more. I love researching and writing about it."

As a result of her dedication and fondness for researching and recording, Joyce has written and published seven books, all directly related to the history of the Oregon Trail.

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Our basic miniplan includes 200 daytime local minutes, 40 travel minutes, free incoming texts, unlimited long distance (within your minute allotment), voicemail, caller ID, and unlimited mobile-to-mobile minutes (with all other SRPCS customers). This plan is available for \$23.31 per month, taxes included. Our taxes do not change from month to month; this is a set rate. The OTAP credit is available on all of our service plans. If you have questions regarding our plans or assistance programs, please contact us at 541-893-6115 or stop by our office at 349 First Street, Richland, Oregon. For more information regarding the Lifeline link Up America telephone assistance programs, please visit www.lifeline.gov. This program is limited to one discount per household. Use the household worksheet if there are multiple subscribers at one address. The service is not transferable, and only eligible customers may enroll in the program. Federal lifeline supports are provided entirely by the federal Lifeline Program.

Fanny, the Original Interpretive Character

Continued from page 6

She has a special fondness for each of her interpretations, but Sacagewea is especially dear to her heart. After she had developed and performed Sacagewea, she wrote two books. One was called *Sacagawea Beyond the Shining Mountains with Lewis and Clark* and the second was *They Call Me Sacagewea*.

In writing about the famous Native woman, Joyce sought advice and wisdom from the Tribes, including the Shoshone, the Umatilla, Northern Paiute and the Nez Perce.

"Some of the elders taught me how to use their sign language so when I performed Sacagewea who was signing as she spoke, it would be done correctly. The Tribes were so welcoming and so gracious to me that I always felt the loving responsibility to be very accurate and truthful with everything I presented.

"I did that with all my characters," said Joyce, "but Sacagewea was very special to me because I had the endorsement from the Tribes."

Sandra Todd, a great-great-granddaughter of Sacagewea said of the books, "Joyce has offered a text about my great-great-grandmother, Sacagewea, in a way that held my attention. It gave me a feeling that I was an invisible observer."

'Sacagewea Speaks' was honored as the 2001 History Book of the Year by *Foreword* magazine.

"Fanny was every person,"

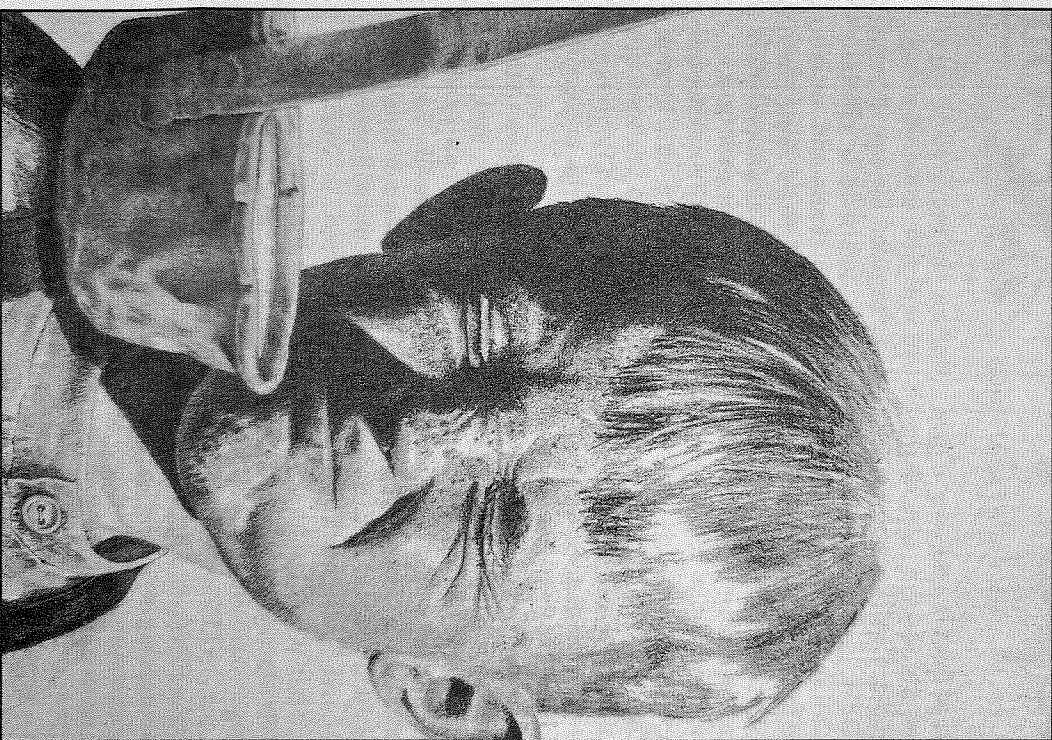


Image courtesy of Joyce Hunsaker from a sketch by Tom Novak

"FINALLY, THE ONLY CHEWIN' TO BE DONE was when we drank the water for the water was alive by the time it hit our lips: one-third green moss, one-third skeeler eggs, and one-third tadpoles. We had to strain 'em out 'tween our teeth!" - Excerpt from *Fanny* by Joyce Badgley Hunsaker.

explained Joyce. "She was choose to and they won't give ordinary. I wanted people to up. We are the link between know and experience that the past and the future. It history is made by ordinary people who do extraordinary things because they have no meaningful way so those who other choice or because they come after us will care."

Legend of Portuguese Buried Treasure Farfetched but Possible

by Finn J.D. John

Stories about buried treasure are very seldom completely untrue. Even the wildest flight of golden fantasy started out, hundreds or thousands of augmented and embellished retellings ago, as true stories. Maybe that's why people love them so much: One

arrangements for their colony with the British. Doubtless they assumed the British Empire, the global superpower of the age, was the more powerful and important of the two countries that shared the territory, and would win out in any dispute over ownership.

But it was more than three years before they were able

a sudden storm blew up. They hurried to the beach, but when they got there they discovered that their boat had been carried away by a rogue wave. The weather was too thick to see their ship. There was nothing for it but to settle in on the beach for the night, staying as warm as they could, and hope the weather would be clear by

After fulfilling his term of service (15 years, according to the story) the Portuguese sailor moved with his little family out to the coast so that he could resume his search. But he had no luck at all. He found the stream, but he couldn't find the spot. Tillamook County's famous floods had resculpted the landscape

Scammers Posing as Oregon DMV Are Busy This Holiday Season

Scammers posing as the Oregon DMV are texting cell phones claiming that a refund is available. It is a fake message and a phishing scam trying to get payment information from unsuspecting Oregonians. DMV urges customer not to click on any links and delete the message.

"DMV does not text customers to let them know about a payment issue, or issue refunds via text message," says DMV Customer Services Manager Katie Hafner.

DMV staff members are aware of the issue and are unable to provide any technical assistance with a customer's phone. If customers have questions about how to block a number, they should contact their cell phone provider.

If you are issued a refund by DMV, you will receive it through the mail or directly back on your payment card. DMV will not text or call to inform you that you will be receiving a refund.

This holiday season customers are encouraged to skip the trip and visit the DMV online at DMV2U. oregon.gov. Customers can go online to renew vehicle registration, notify DMV of a vehicle sale, renew or replace a license/ID card and more.

DMV NOTICE: You only have 48 HRS LEFT to receive your 723 Refund payment from the Motor Vehicle Dpt. Please do it immediately

aut01insurance4me.page.link/now

Friday 1:30 PM

SCREEN SHOT of a text message purporting to be from the Oregon DMV but which is actually a scam intended to trick the recipient into giving the scammer detailed information about payment information.

Image courtesy of ODOT