

Let me tell ya:

Jan 21, 1969

Chief Johnny was a real character

By IANTHE SMITH
Democrat-Herald Writer

rels to any of the mob that gathered to
break into the jail and hustle a prisoner

rels to any of the mob that gathered to break into the jail and hustle a prisoner out who was there in durance vile charged with murder.

One man suggested I do a little something on John Catlin, known as "Warm Springs Johnny." Catlin, who was a former resident of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation served in a number of capacities on the city police force, culminating his work by being chief of police.

Now let me tell you Johnny Catlin was a real character. I can well remember his talks to us from the first grade on through our secondary school days about his experiences in the Civil War. Come Decoration Day, as it was called then, he and one or two other Civil War vets would come to the school and tell about "tenting on the old campground." However, Johnny would digress at times and tell about his experiences while living with the Indians. He had us all tittering and giggling. He believed in calling a spade a spade.

When Johnny was first an officer I can remember him coming to the Linn county jail, when my father was sheriff and giving father inside information on a "blind pig."

Now is you don't know or have forgotten, a "blind pig," was where one could purchase booze. Father always listened and then went about closing up the sale of illicit liquors during prohibition times. He would sort of sidestep Johnny as Johnny would made such a racket in approaching the "blind pig" that the purveyors could get away.

When he was chief of police I can remember his costume. He was a short, dark man and his policeman's cap looked like a railway conductor's headpiece—only his cap had a lot of gold braid on it. He carried an oldtime six shooter that was about as long as his leg.

But one thing for sure while he was in office there were no hobos around the town. It was his big deal each day to go to the Southern Pacific depot and prowl up and down the railroad tracks keeping the tramps on the train—freight trains that is—and admonish them to "git." He did a lot of hammering around with his billy club. Anyway the word went up and down that Albany wasn't the stopping place to get a hand out. If he did catch a vagrant walking around town said hobo was led off to the city jail—which at that time was situated on the second story of an old frame building on West Second St., between Broadalbin and Ferry Sts. Johnny got a firm grip on his man's arm and made quite a thing of ushering him off to the "pokey."

He didn't like dogs running at large and these he also picked up—and took them to the pound.

He served as an officer of the law until the mid-twenties—if I'm not mistaken. If I am—tell me.

Johnny Catlin

Let me tell ya!

'Colyum' stirs the memories

I had a happy surprise the other day when I received a letter from M. Redfield "Shorty" Payne, formerly of Albany, who now lives in Warrenton. He wrote that Mrs. B.R. (Alice) Wallace of Albany had sent he and his wife one of my Tuesday "colyums" wherein I had mentioned his father, the late Judge B.M. Payne. Mrs. Wallace and Mrs. Payne are sisters.

"Shorty" started off referring to the clipping, "The one about Dad. And I will say that your facts are facts. You



IAN THE SMITH

Staff Writer
Albany
Democrat-Herald

must have some good files or a heck of a good memory. I can remember back in those days when your father, 'Vanny', and my Dad were good friends. When I was a kid I used to think that you were on the top of the heap as you lived over the county jail, and to live there you had to be somebody. That is the fact you had to be the daughter of the sheriff.

"In some ways it seems a long time ago and then just like yesterday."

My good friend "Shorty" (never could understand why folks called him "Shorty" as he is big and tall) reported he and his wife have their home up for sale and plan on moving to Lebanon in the near future. His

sister Jean is 83 and Nimrod Payne is 69, and the Paynes in Warrenton feel they must come here to be near them.

The Paynes are old-timers and have many friends here. Hope I get to see them soon and ask Payne if he still sings. He was a member of an often-called-upon quartet.

As the saying goes "There are no friends like old friends."

So now we go back into the bound volume of the Albany Democrat for Wednesday, Jan. 24, 1923. First front page story to catch my eyes was one about Johnny Catlin. This is for real old-time Albanyites. "Johnny Catlin, veteran peace officer of Albany and Linn County, and Mrs. Catlin depart today for National City, Calif., where they will make their home. With Johnny's departure, Albany loses one of its historic characters, who has for the past 40 years been associated with law enforcement in this county.

"The destination of the Catlins is the former home of Mrs. Catlin. There they have a home waiting for them and from there Johnny plans on going to his old haunts on the Mojave Desert, where he carried mail while soldiering along the border immediately after his service in the Civil War. Johnny is seeking to regain his health, which has been very poor during the last two years."

My earliest memories are of "Warm Springs" Johnny. He was a city police officer when my father was sheriff. I also remember his Union Civil War uniform.

How I loved the grand sweepstakes winners (the Indians) in the Timber Carnival parade! My father knew a lot of Indian jargon, and I wanted to call out, when the Indians in their fancy dress marched along, to say how great they were. All I could think of was "cultus" and that certainly wasn't the word because that means "no good." Then "clatawah" came to my mind, and that wasn't right because that means "get going," or "let's go!" I've the book upstairs that Circuit Judge Leonard McMahan, Salem, gave me, so I'd know what he and father were talking about! Judge McMahan was quite a person and I still laugh at some of his and my father's antics.

Now then, speaking of Indians — and I love them — I had a letter from Mrs. Eugene Cusick, Portland, stating she had been visiting with Russell Parker in Albany and he showed her a picture of Indian War veterans of 1898. in the picture was Moses Parker, a relative of Russell and her. She also noted she saw



By
IANTHE SMITH
Staff Writer
Albany Democrat-Herald

Johnny Catlin in the picture. As oldtimers know, Johnny Catlin was Albany's chief of police at one time and he had the nickname of Warm Springs Johnny. He was a civil war veteran. How I remember the talks he and Cyrus Walker and other vets of that era would have. They'd come to the public shools and talk to us before Decoration Day, now Memorial Day, about their experiences. One time Johnny got strung off on squaws and their "papoosies," as he called them. What a tale!

My father fought in the Bannock Indian War, but that was before the 1898 one. That was in eastern Oregon. Never saw an Indian, but he found warm campfires. The late Oregon Governor and U.S. Senator George E. Chamberlain of Albany and my father were great pals, and my father always recollected how "George" stood watch for him one night out in the sagebrush in eastern Oregon when Corp. Smith had a toothache. It was a lieutenant watching for a corporal!