

Mt. St. Helens – Our local Volcano

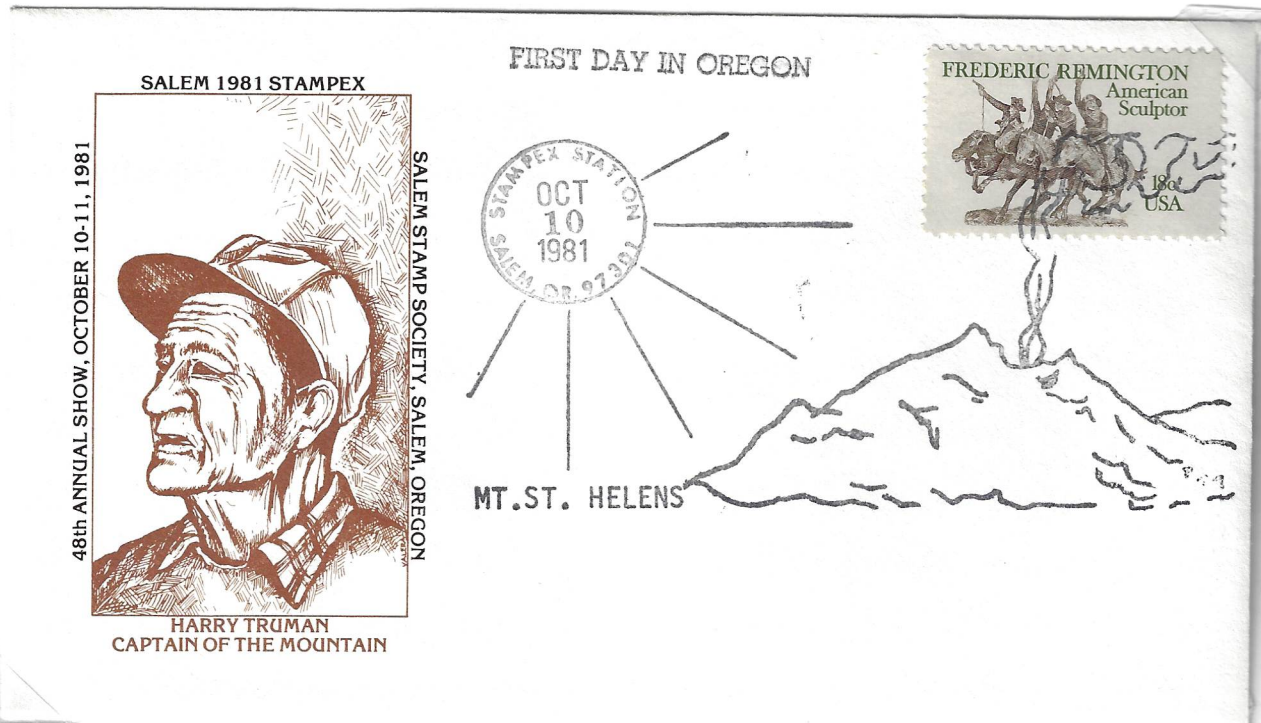
Growing up in the shadow of Mt. St. Helens was never a problem. Trying to graduate from high school in 1980 *proved to be a challenge*. Morning of May 18, 1980 is unforgettable. We lived in Cougar, Washington, 15 air miles from the mountain. Mt. St. Helens woke us up early morning with a major earthquake. (Try walking down the stairs from upstairs bedroom during an earthquake!) We were too close to the mountain to hear the boom everyone else heard. Evacuation of Cougar was completed by noon. We did not evacuate due to family of 6 with pets, and no guarantee we would be kept together; we were one of few families left in this small mountain town. Tremors and small earthquakes occurred all day. For next several months, wore "ash mask" when outdoors, riding bus to and from school (30 minutes away); filled jugs with water in event water supply became contaminated; and Passes to get in and out of Red Zone to attend school through National Guard check points. All names, including children, had to be on checkpoint checklist or you didn't get through. Graduation was held on time.



Photo of ash plumb taken from my front lawn in Cougar; still in high school. Mt. St. Helens blew on May 18, 1980.
Photos taken by Carol j. Johnson-Edholm



Dirty, gritty, gray ash covered lawn and flower beds. By mid-June, weather was cold, wet, ashy and rainy, unlike normal hot summer weather.



Ash from Cougar, WA
June 12, 1980

Old Harry Truman lived on the mountain for decades after his wife died, and wanted to die up there; he did on May 18. Cover produced by Salem Stamp Society.