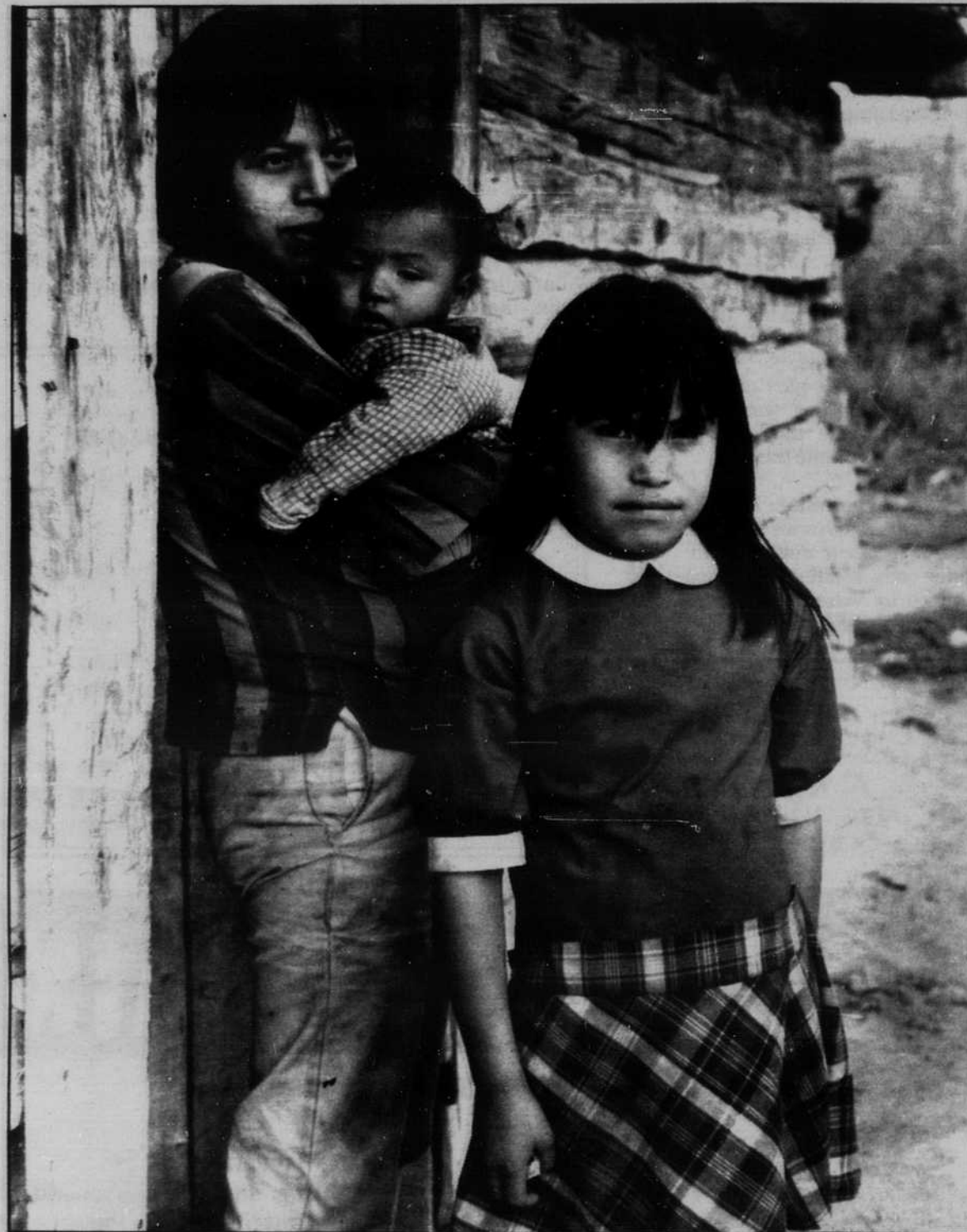


Wounded Knee: faces of today



William Kunkle is a Eugene writer and photographer. He was born and raised in Phillips, S.D. about 40 miles from the Pine Ridge Reservation. The photos on these pages were taken in 1969 and 1970 at the reservation.

A popular joke among comedians suggests that a short cut to success for many countries has been military defeat by the United States. Countries once defeated by the U.S. in war have resurged as prosperous powers.

But for the group of original Americans who gathered their hungry families on a reservation in South Dakota some 80 years ago at the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre, on a reservation at Pine Ridge, S.D., the dream of a good life still hasn't come true.

One of the last battles between United States Armed Forces and Native Americans took place in December, 1890 in a wind-swept ravine near Pine Ridge. It was known as the



"Wounded Knee Massacre" and was hardly a battle.

A group of tired and beaten people were camped along a trail and the troops were circled above them on a nearby ridge. Before the "battle," the Native Americans' weapons were taken from them but according to survivors, one rifle was overlooked. According to some reports the rifle discharged in a teepee and the signal to open fire was given. For several hours troops blasted the camp with rifle and cannon fire. When the carnage was complete, over 350 Native Americans lay dead, most of them women and children, some of whom were shot while trying to run away.

Records indicate that 18 medals of honor were awarded to U.S. soldiers for service in this encounter. But what has happened in the years since this "last stand" is even less understandable.

The Sioux Indian, who has survived the

perils of nature for thousands of years before being "liberated" by the White man, was locked into guarded and barren areas following the massacre. Today 10,000 forgotten Americans live a life of misery on a reservation called Pine Ridge.

At Pine Ridge the life expectancy is 43 years compared to a national average of 67, according to a 1969 Public Health Service study. 89 per cent of the people live in sub-standard housing — some in tents and abandoned automobile bodies.

Less than half the population is employed (57 per cent of those by the federal government). Most live over 30 miles from any form of public transportation; some reservation residents must travel up to 90 miles for the simplest kind of medical care and 75 per cent of the families have no safe water supply.

In a society obsessed by education, the federal government's resources have failed to

give even 20 per cent of these people a high school education. And they have not built a new high school on the reservation since 1897.

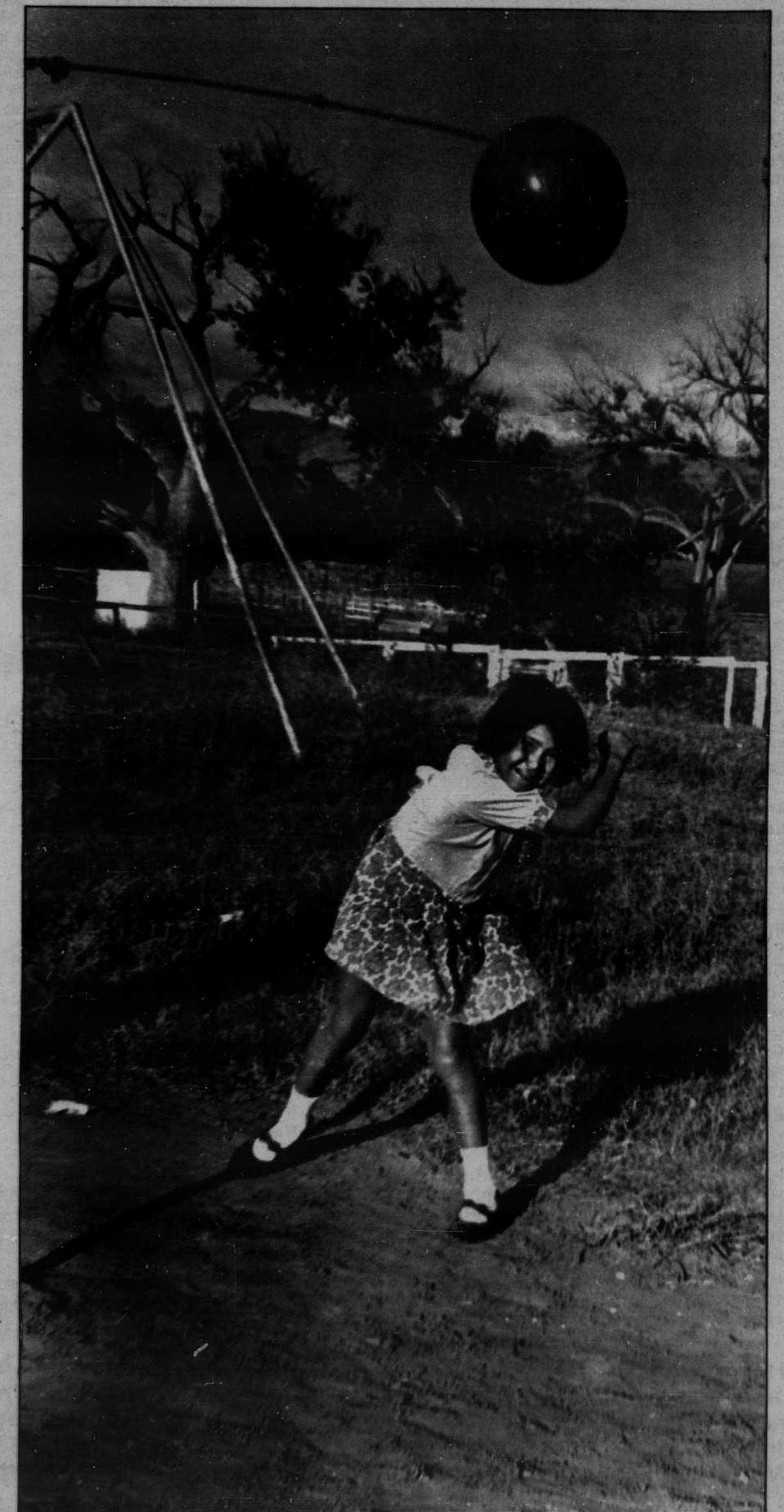
About half the population is under 21, yet there are no public movie theaters, drive-ins or other recreational facilities. And yet, despite what seems to be an obvious attempt to destroy the culture and health of the Native Americans and to destroy their opportunity to make a decent living, the "vanishing Americans" refuse to vanish.

These Native Americans have only their land and with government supervision, 45 per cent of it is already gone — sold to the White man at the rate of 15,000 acres per year. With

their only means of livelihood gone, thousands face another cold winter on 5,000 square miles of rough prairie. All over this "land of tears" you see the enforced misery.

Yet, from out of this misery and all its sadness come some of the most wonderful children. They have a certain tenderness, a kind of shine and hope in their eyes. But will the hope last? The Native American wants the same thing all of us do: jobs, more and better education, and respect for their culture. Until now they have been denied this.

William Kunkle



Photos by William Kunkle