

Arthur Bensell Receives Posthumous Award

By Rosemary Breon Landis

I was privileged to represent the Siletz Tribe in accepting the first Outstanding Alumni Award for former Chairman Arthur Bensell from Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio. Reg Pancoast, class of 1936, had suggested Art's name to Lee Martin, director of development, for the award.

Reg attended class with Arty and remembered his athletic, academic, and singing abilities. I was told that every president of the Excelsior Men's Society has to learn the entire list of past presidents every year. So every year, Uncle Arthur's name is recited in memory of his past achievement at Heidelberg College.

The Siletz Education Committee will have the award on display before

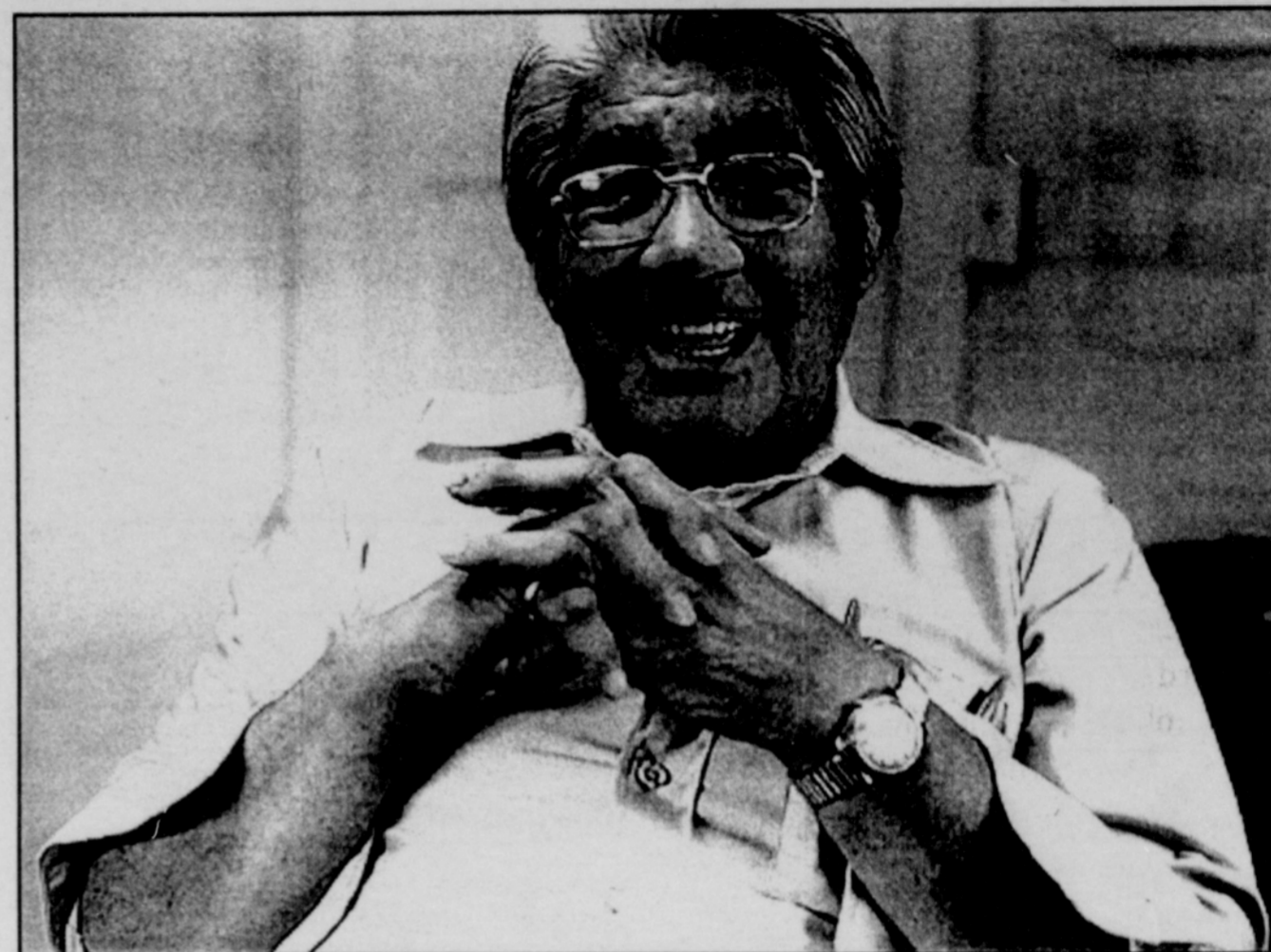
the Arthur S. Bensell Scholarship is awarded at the August pow-wow.

The president of Heidelberg, Dr. Richard H. Owens, presented the award to me after Lee Martin read the following words:

Benjamin Franklin has been credited with the wonderful quotation, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." No words better describe the recipient of our first Outstanding Alumni Award, presented to an alumnus or alumna in recognition of lifetime accomplishments and contributions to their profession, community, and society.

Arthur Sutherland Bensell was born in Siletz, Oregon, the son of Siletz Indian farmers. Early in life, he learned determination and the spirit to overcome odds. He married Margaret Egbert, the daughter of the local Indian agent, and they eventually moved back to Ohio, near Bellevue, where Margaret's family had a farm.

In 1931, Art enrolled at Heidelberg College, where he participated in a variety of activities including glee club, quartet, and solo groups. He particularly excelled at football, making the Associated Press All-Ohio Conference team twice and being inducted into the Indian Athletic Hall of Fame. He was president of the



Arthur Bensell

Excelsior Men's Society and in 1934, graduated with honors.

For 18 years, Art was a teacher and administrator at schools in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Alaska. In 1952, he moved back to Siletz, where he and his wife operated Bensell's family store. He soon became mayor and was re-elected six times to that position.

In the late '60s, Art and a core group of Siletz Tribal members recognized the desperate need to establish programs to rekindle the bonds of brotherhood between tribes. This re-emergence of a common destiny led the tribe to embark upon a 10-year odyssey of intense diplomacy and constant cross-country traveling to testify before Congress.

In 1977, their dreams were realized when President Jimmy Carter signed Public Law 95-195, which restored the Confederated Tribes of Siletz to federal recognition, only the second tribe in the United States to ever do so. For the next six years, Art worked to establish economic enterprises that would benefit his fellow tribal members.

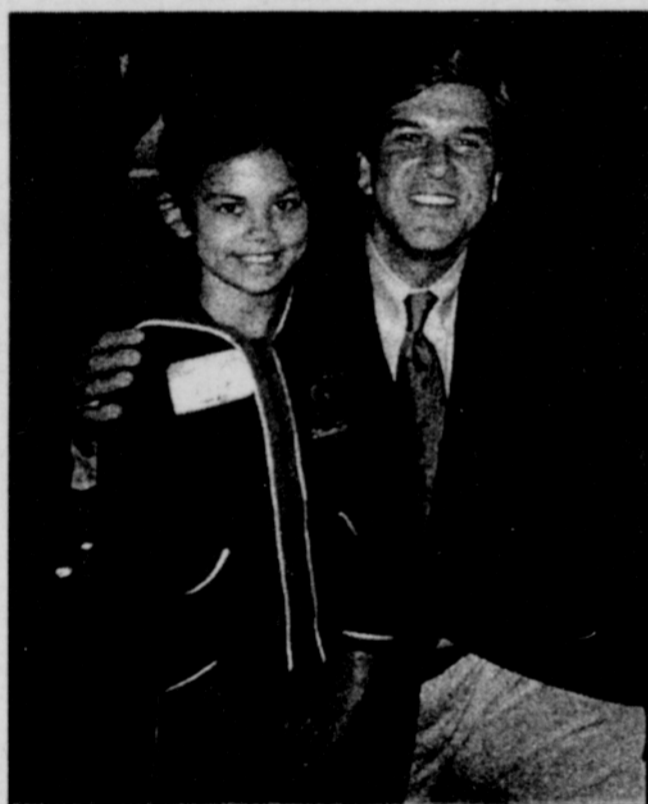
Today in his hometown of Siletz, there is a health clinic, which treats all members of the community, both Indian and non-Indian. He helped to create services that provide programs for housing, employment, education, job training, alcohol rehabilitation, and a variety of other social initiatives for the benefit of more than 2,900 tribal members.

Years of travel and constant stress took their toll on Art's health and he

retired to Siletz. His life can be understood best through the words of his grandson, who wrote: "Art Bensell possessed the same blend of personal qualities as did people such as Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Benito Juarez, and Martin Luther King. Yes, their stages were larger. But Art was fundamentally like them in that all of them achieved deep and lasting social progress against seemingly insurmountable odds."

Perhaps that statement is the greatest testimony to this noble and generous man. Indeed, you make a living by what you get and a life by what you give. Art Bensell gave until he could give no more. He died quietly, with grace and dignity, in 1988 and is buried not far from where he was born on top of Government Hill. Some men give to their families and others to their place of work, some to their church or other ideology. Art Bensell, however, started out on a path to improve the simple lives of his fellow tribal members, but in the end, he touched the heart of America by helping to undo the wrong imposed more than 100 years ago upon a proud and noble culture.

Heidelberg College is honored to present the first-ever Outstanding Alumni Award in memory of Arthur S. Bensell, who changed forever, for the better, the lives of Native Americans across this country. Here to accept the award is Art's niece, a member of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz, Rosemary Landis.



Leslie Lundy, a candidate for Little Miss Siletz, is shown with Sen. Gordon Smith. She attended a reception for Sen. Smith at the Yaquina Head Interpretive Center in Newport, Ore., on July 3.

**See more
Tribal Member News
on page 22.**

Tribal Member News Wanted

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Give us a few details and we'll write the story. Or if something has been written about you, send us a copy and we'll get permission to print it in Siletz News. Send us photos and we'll be sure to get them back to you. Don't worry - we'll still keep the birthday, anniversary, and holiday wishes on the back page.

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