

TRIBAL MEMBER NEWS

Gilbert Towner 1929 – 2009

Enselsun, Gilbert Towner of 103 Ash Ave., Lapwai, Idaho. Born Dec. 25, 1929, to Leslie and Louise Towner in Siletz, Ore. He was the middle of three children.

Gilbert peacefully passed away at his home on Feb. 21, 2009.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his elder sister, Clara. He has one surviving brother, Mike Wertin of Portland, Ore.

He went to public school in Siletz prior to entering Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Ore. He entered the U.S. Marine Corps in 1947. He served in the Korean War, earning a Purple Heart for his participation at the Chosin Reservoir. He was discharged from the Marine Corps in 1952 and settled in Portland.

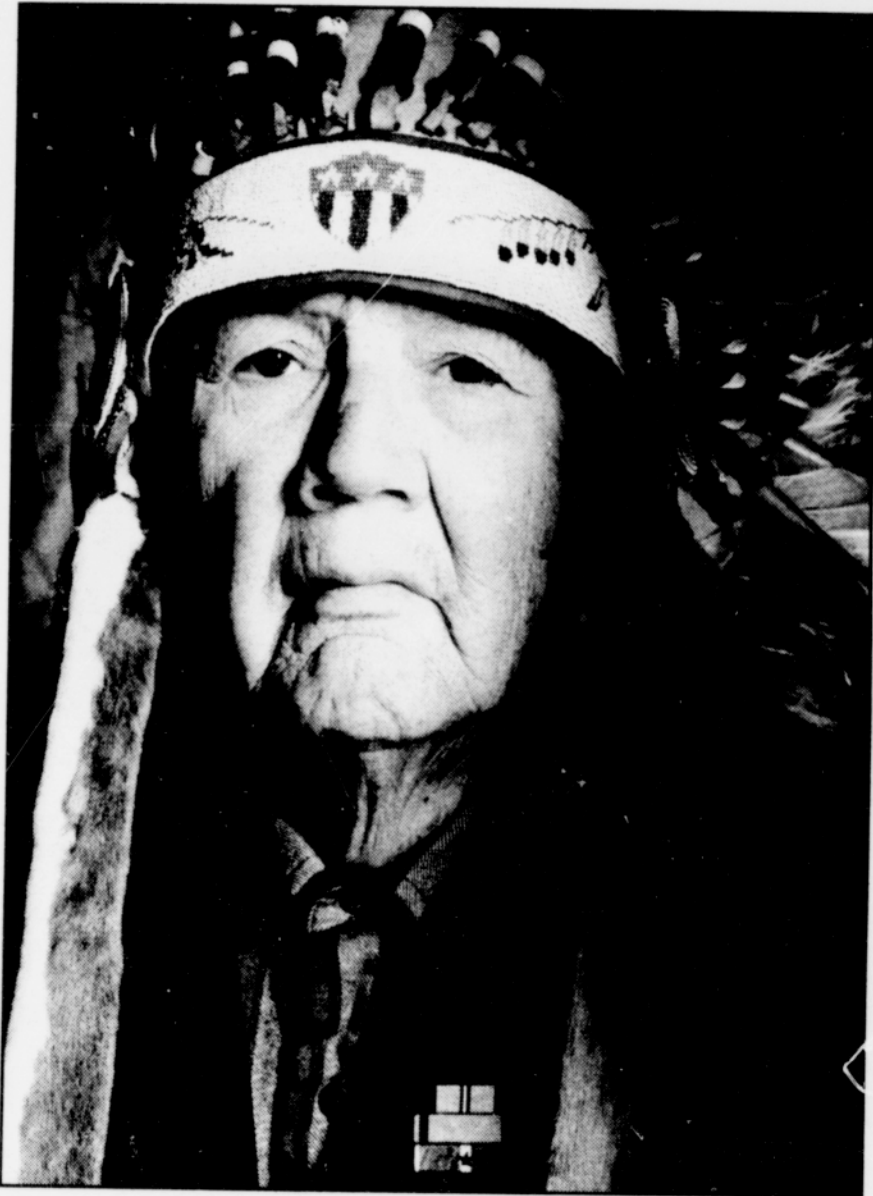
Gilbert married Lena Logan and has two children, Louise Towner-Slure and Wilber Towner. They later divorced. He married Beverly Rose Owens and has one child, Susan Lynn Towner. They later divorced.

Gilbert met Geneva Greene, his wife of 29 years, while she was attending a work-related conference in Portland. They were married Dec. 28, 1979, in Spaulding, Idaho. They have one son, Thomas Elgin Towner. He accepted Geneva's five children as his own.

Throughout his life, Gilbert participated in many cultural activities and clubs. He was a member of the Bow and Arrow Club in Portland, president of Chief Joseph & Warriors Pow-Wow Committee in Lapwai and vice president of the E-Peh-Tes Pow-Wow Committee in Lapwai.

Gilbert also was an officer of the National Indian Council on Aging and local-area representative of NICOA, to name a few. He was very active in restoration of his Tututni language in the Coos Bay area. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Lewis Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho.

The dressing was held at Brower-Wann Funeral Home in Lewiston, Idaho. The family transported him to Siletz for seven drum service and a sunrise burial in Siletz.



Send Us News

Siletz News is looking for information about Tribal members similar to the articles you see on these pages, positive news about you or someone you know.

Here's an example of what we'll include on these pages: births, graduations, awards, the Armed Services, weddings, anniversaries and deaths.

Contact information is on page 2.

Victorine Estella Simmons (Harrison) 1930 – 2009

Victorine Estella Simmons (Harrison) was born June 19, 1930, in Logsden, Ore., and passed away at the Evergreen Care Center on Feb. 9, 2009, in Portland, Ore., after a long illness.

Victorine was born and raised in Logsden, attended Siletz High School and Chemawa Indian School. After moving to Portland she became a waitress and soon after met and married Lewis "Mick" Martin in 1948. They had one daughter.

Victorine was a homemaker and also worked for Elmer's Pancake House. She and Lewis "Mick" were avid hunters and clambers. Pretty much do-it-yourselfers, they loved to entertain and often gathered with Vicki's sisters' families to celebrate holidays and family events. They divorced in 1963.

She married Bob Harrison in 1965, who preceded her in death in 1995. She was an Elder member of the Tribe and lived her adult life in Portland.

Vicki was one of five sisters and one brother. Over the last several years, three of her sisters – Ileana, Minetta and Annabelle – preceded her in death.

Vicki is survived by her son, Robert Nelson Harrison of Portland; daughter, Andrea Johanson of Beaverton, Ore.; one sister, Frances Severson of Astoria, Ore.; and Lester Simmons Jr. of Siletz, Ore. She also is survived by six grandchildren, one great-grandchild plus a host of nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

A memorial service was held at the Portland Area Office on March 21.

Robledo a Real Chess Champ

by Katy Kaady

Damian Robledo, a fourth-grade student at the Creative Science School in Portland, Ore., has made it to the state chess championship finals. He has been playing chess through his school since he was in second grade.

Damian was one of the top 10 students from his school and went on to the regional championships. In the regional competition, he won three out of five matches, making him one of the top six players from his school to make it to the state championships.

The state chess competition (an all-day event) was held at the Oregon Convention Center on March 13. Damian competed with students throughout the state.

The Portland area office staff and Damian's family and friends would like to congratulate him on his accomplishments in the state championships.

List Your Business in STBC Directory

The Siletz Business Information Center/Siletz Business Loan Program of the Siletz Tribal Business Corporation is currently developing a business directory listing businesses owned by Siletz Tribal members.

The directory will provide potential customers with information about how to contact the business, location and types of products or services it sells.

If you are a Siletz Tribal member who owns a business and would like to be included in the directory, please contact:

Cynthia Farlow
SBIC Manager
2120 NW 44th St., Suite D
Lincoln City, OR 97367
541-994-2142 or 877-564-7298
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Tribal Elders Help Preserve Rare Languages

by Shelby Martin of The Register-Guard in Eugene, Ore.; originally published Feb. 8, 2009

When his foreign language instructor says something, University of Oregon freshman Carson Viles knows it's important to pay attention.

"I might never get a chance to hear that phrase again," he said.

It's true. Viles is taking Yakima Sahaptin, one of a family of American Indian languages spoken along the Columbia River and offered for the first time this year at the UO. The class, taught by native speaker and Yakama elder Virginia Beavert, is not a typical foreign

language class. There are no textbooks, no study-abroad programs, no dubbed TV shows and the instructor is one of only 200 people who can converse in the target language.

Viles knows the importance of hearing native speakers such as Beavert.

"It's the only way you can sound right," he said. "You hear how they speak and when they pause."

Viles grew up in Eugene and graduated from Willamette High School. He's a member of the Confederated Tribes of

Siletz and he's a linguistics major with a particular interest in Indian languages.

Much of the reason for the disappearance of Indian languages lies in government-run and religious boarding schools in the 1880s through 1920s. As part of a philosophy to "kill the Indian and save the man," children were rounded up and sent to schools where they were expected to discard their clothing and hairstyles, convert to Christianity and speak only English. Many were punished severely for speaking in their native languages.

Viles is one of a new generation trying to reclaim his family's language and culture. "It's up to young Indian people," he said.

And they need help from elders like Virginia Beavert.

Now 87, Beavert grew up speaking a variety of Indian languages and said she didn't realize they were imperiled.

"I never worried about it – I thought everybody knew how to talk," she said.

She was born in a bear cave in Eastern Oregon after her father's hunting party got stranded in the snow.