

Hall of Fame Awards Banquet Speech

My name is Delbert Bell and I live in Springfield, Oregon. In March of 1980 while I was an Area Supervisor for the Tribe in Springfield, I started thinking of the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame in Lawrence, Kansas. I already knew about the Hall of Fame, because I have a cousin already enshrined there, Mr. Ruben Saunders. I started thinking again of who in our tribe would be eligible and deserve to be nominated, only one man came to my mind, Mr. Arthur Bensell. I heard a lot of Mr. Bensells athletic ability, so I started on the road to nominate Mr. Art Bensell to the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame. I started my correspondence with Mr. Turner Cockran about eligibility, requirements, who could nominate a person and so on. This went on for a couple of years then we lost contact. In January of 1985 I again contacted Mr. Cockran and sent for a nomination form. We then contacted Heidelberg College, in Kansas where Art played ball. I received a lot of press clippings from Art's old college newspaper, and decided Art had met the requirements to be nominated to the Hall of Fame, so at that time the Bell family nominated Art. The American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame Board of Directors met in May of 1986 and Art was selected to be enshrined in the Hall of Fame to be held in Lawrence, March 28, 1987.

Art chose me to make the presentation and what an Honor that was. For my speech I did a lot of research work and read a lot of newspaper clippings, and newspaper articles. I took all of the information I collected on Art's sports career and other achievements and put them together in a book, so that I would have the documentation to back my statements. I would like to present to you the speech I made at the Hall of Fame Awards Banquet:

Thank you Mr. Rodgers, Good evening Enshrinees, Honorable Governor, Board of Directors and to you the honorable guest. My name is Delbert Bell from the Siletz Nation in the State of Oregon. Welcome to the Indian Athletic Hall of Fame Awards.

I would like to start by saying I'm not the gifted speaker as all the people I'm surrounded by tonight but this is a great honor for me to be up here to make this presentation and honor a great man, Mr. Bensell.

I've had very few Hero's in my life time, my father Arthur Bell, my cousin Ruben Saunders, my friend and leader Mr. Arthur Bensell. They always had a kind word, words of encouragement and words of wisdom. I appreciate and respect them for that, I always remember them.

As most of you know most all great athlete's were gifted with size, speed and natural ability. Well, Art got short changed in size so he made up for that with his ability, hustle, desire, the challenge and the love of sports. He started out his athletic career in Siletz Grade School and through his High School years he played in all the Sports that were available to him and he excelled in all of them.

In 1928 he was selected to the Oregon All State Team in Football. He then received a scholarship to Ohio State, so he packed his bag headed to the State of Ohio. He was a 3rd team end his Freshman year.

He then transferred to Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio, where he also started out as a sub, but came out a All-Star. Art stood 5'6" and weighed 150 lbs. but he worked hard, hustled, and never gave up.

He earned a starting position his Sophomore year. Nothing could stop him, until he was injured his Senior year. In 1933 Art made Honorable Mention on the Ohio All State College team. Then in 1934 he made the Collegiate Ohio All-State Team. That year he also had the honor of being selected as Honorable Mention on the Little All American Team. In my opinion the thing that prevented 1st team was being injured his senior year.

I've read and seen clippings, sent to me by Heidelberg College, of Heidelberg Indian End, Big Chief Bensell, Heidelberg's Chieftian, 30 Little Indians and the Chief. They believed in him and so do I. Art graduated from Heidelberg College but his life didn't stop there. He always aimed for the top from the Honors he won as a Football Player he went on to become a Coach, High School Principle, teacher, Mayor of our town of Siletz, grocery store owner, our Tribal Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Tribal Council Member and a Tribal Leader in General.

Art has been selected to various boards throughout the State and also to Native American Boards throughout the Northwest, he belongs to many organizations, been given

many Honors and words of praise such as by you the Board at the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame, by the Ex-Governor of Oregon, different Tribal Leaders and Chiefs. Art is the only Native American to be awarded the Distinguished Service Award in the State of Oregon. So Art, I stand among giants singing my praise of you, but what a honor it is. I will honor and cherish this night forever.

In closing I would like to quote a article from Art's College Newsletter which states: A TOAST TO OUR CAPTAIN CHIEF BENSELL A FULL BLOODED AMERICAN INDIAN, FOR EVERY MAN WHO PLAYED BALL WITH HIM WILL REMEMBER HIS CONSTANT SMILE WHICH WOULD BECOME CONTAGIOUS, TOAST A GENTLEMAN AND SPORT.

I would like to add to that toast Art's ability, hustle, leadership, desire, his understanding of mankind, not only in sports but life in general. I have known Art for all of my 48 years of living, so I truly know he is one of a kind.

Now I would like to present to you the man I have been talking about: Would you please help me welcome and congratulate one of the newest members to the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame. I proudly present to you from the Siletz Nation in the State of Oregon a man I admire and respect Mr. Arthur Bensell.

Mr. Bensell on behalf of the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame, I am proud to present to you this plaque for you to cherish and put with your other prized possessions and awards. It signifies your Election and Enshrinement to the Hall of Fame, on the basis of your high standards and excellence in athletic competition, which has brought Fame and Honor to yourself and Indian people.

I also present to you this Hall of Fame ring, wear it with pride. Congratulations Art, and I am privileged to extend the congratulations of the Siletz Tribe of Indians.

Art you have worked hard for these awards, you have earned the honor to walk tall and with dignity for many years to come.

I have a lot of people to thank for making my trip possible, first my father Arthur Bell and my mother Angeline Bell who have passed on, even though the man I was at times my parents never gave up on me and were proud of me. Next Arthur Bensell, all I did was the paperwork and follow up, Art did all the work on the Athletic Field, he deserved this Honor as my speech indicated. Next the Bell Family, without their financial and moral support I don't know if I could have made it, they were there when I needed them and I thank them. I would like to thank Mrs. Ruth Bensell, Rose & J.J. Hudson, Mary Alice Muncey, Pauline Ricks and Maxine Rilatos for their support and prayers, they knew how nervous I was. A Special Thanks to Marlene Stuart, the daughter of Maxine Rilatos and the late Robert Rilatos. Marlene now lives in Kansas, and put me, Pauline, and Maxine in Kansas Heaven with her hospitality. I will always love, remember, and respect Marlene and her Family for the hospitality they showed us. Next, Alice Werth and Toni Matt for getting my raffle set-up, Phil for allowing me to sell tickets at the staff meeting, Tony Whitehead and the Bingo Commission, the Eugene and Springfield Indian Community, and everyone who bought raffle tickets, Tina Jones and Darlene Carkhuff for their help.

A Special Thanks to those people who donated raffle prizes, Alice Werth, Toni Matt, Randy and Pauline Ricks, Caroline and Carlene Easter, Mrs. Leone Hanson, JoJo and Clarice McKnight, Little Miss Siletz, and Frank Stangill. Kristi Bayaa, Shirley Strickler, and Bonnie Peterson who set up the Indian Fry Bread Sale, and all of the people who helped with the sale. Karen Bell for letting Sara Bell be my daughter who I dearly love, and who made me believe in myself again because she is the inspiration of my life. Last but not least Mr. Ed Ben, when he honored me at the Tribal Council meeting he made tears come to my eyes with his kind words and gifts. Ed made me understand and be proud of myself again, I will never be able to thank him enough for that day, I appreciate it Ed, Thanks Again.

Now I would like to tell you about our trip. Pauline, Maxine and myself all left on March 19th, and Art, Ruth, and Mary Alice left on the following day. I would like to add that Pauline, Maxine and myself all paid for our own trip. When we landed in Kansas City, Marlene picked us up, and all of us including Marlene and her family went to dinner. We flew half way across the United States and ate Seafood for dinner, but it was delicious and we all enjoyed ourselves. Everyone stayed up late visiting, except me. The next day we went out to the Airport to pick up Mary Alice, but the people from the Chamber of Commerce allowed her to ride with Art and Ruth. We then headed to Lawrence for the Banquet, we were introduced and met a lot of nice people, including, Will Rodgers Jr., who was the Master of Ceremony, Sonny SixKiller, Turner Cockran and a lot of Indian athletes who are already in the Hall of Fame. We then returned to Kansas City to do some more

visiting. Up the next day at dawn and off to Haskell for interviews, we thought were for Art, but ended up being Art, Mary Alice and myself, which was a surprise to me. After the interviews, all seven of us loaded back into Marlene's Station Wagon with me and Maxine in the Jump Seat, and we headed to Kansas City to do some shopping. After shopping everyone except me went to watch Tom and Marlene's son play soccer. I missed his game because I was nervous and decided to work on my speech and try to psyche myself up for the presentation at the Awards Banquet. When everyone got back from the game we loaded up in the car again and headed to Lawrence, Kansas for the big night, the Awards Banquet. We had Mary Alice worried because she was afraid we would be late, but we weren't.

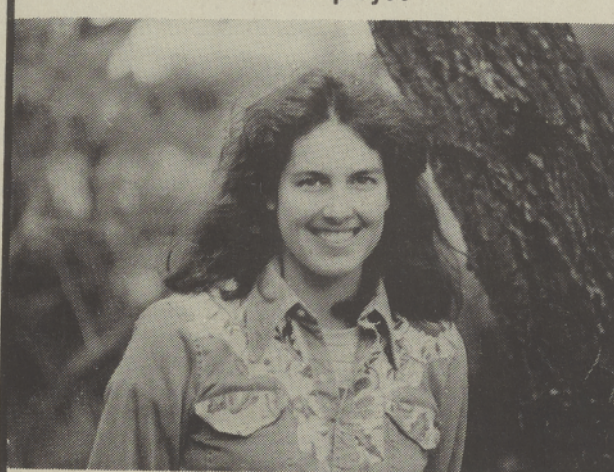
At the Awards Banquet I was a little nervous, but couldn't quite believe how calm I was. I believe now it was because of the prayers and the wonderful people I was surrounded by. I was more worried at the time about falling off of the stage (because I had an end seat) than about the presentation. When Mr. Will Rodgers Jr., introduced me my heart jumped but I was calm inside, I guess because I was so proud to be there to honor such a great man. I gave my speech and presented Art with his plaque, there was a mix-up with the rings, so I didn't get to present Art with his ring, but he got it later in the program. When I introduced Art, he gave his acceptance speech, and received the first standing ovation of the night. When Art was presented with his ring, he said he would accept and wear the ring not only for himself but for his tribe. When the awards were over I was sitting on the stage thinking, it's over, I made it, and I was still calm and couldn't believe it. I signed a few autographs then got off of the stage and let the greats like the Senator of Kansas Mr. Pearson, Sonny SixKiller, Art Bensell and Will Rodgers Jr., do the writing. As we were sitting there waiting for Art, I was thinking how grateful I was that Art had been able to receive this honor in person, because of the six enshrinees, all but two of them had passed on. After the awards we looked all over Haskell Indian School to find the Pow-Wow where they crowned "Miss Haskell", we finally found it at about 11:00. Marlene came up to me and said, you have to go up front and introduce Art to the crowd, she approached the Pow-Wow committee to do this. I introduced Art to the crowd (another surprise). Art was well received and he danced the Oklahoma Two Step. Art, I think you better leave that up to the younger generation next time.

We then went back to Kansas City with Marlene and I was laying there thinking, "It's over, we did it." I was still proud of Art, myself, everything, and everybody, and I was still calm. We said a heartfelt good-bye to Marlene and her family and boarded the plane home. While in the air I got to thinking of how proud I would have been if my Mother and Father had been there, and how proud of me they would have been. Then I realized they were there, that's why I was so calm, my pride and honor is being their son. I was sitting there looking out the window at their images and thoughts and tears started to fall. I didn't even bother to wipe them away because I thought it would end my memories of them, but that will never happen, again thanks Mom, Dad and Art.

If I missed someone's name I am truly sorry I can't remember everybody involved, but you know, and I know, I deeply appreciate it.

I would like to close by reminding everyone that on April 26th, the Sacred Lands Committee is sponsoring a Memorial enshrinement Banquet for Art. I hope to see everyone there, and again I thank each and everyone of you who made this possible for me.

New Employee



Karen DeBord
Inventory Forester