

# **NATIVE AMERICAN CRAFTS AN ART, A TRADITION..... (AN INTERVIEW WITH GLADYS MUSCHAMP AND DELLA SHORT)**

BY: Teresa Miller

Recently I had the honor of interviewing Gladys Muschamp, Siletz Tribal Elder, and Della Short of the Modoc Tribe at Gladys' home. Together they were able to pass on to me a wealth of information that I would like to share.

Della Short often visits the Siletz area stopping to visit with Gladys and together they share techniques of basketry, beading and other traditional crafts which both have mastered but continue to expand and improvise their techniques.

Della graduated from Clark College as a Geologist. She studies minerals and says that it is interesting to realize that minerals and plants are linked in a way...where you find a particular mineral you will usually find a certain plant that will normally grow most often where that mineral is found. She teaches native crafts to those who show an interest simply for the joy of sharing her knowledge. Della enjoys taking part in dance competitions and says she usually places well in traditional dance. She has not started fancy dance yet but sees that in the future. Della makes all of her own regalia including rattles from deer hooves.

Gladys Muschamp, born to James and Ida Bensell, has spent most of her life here in the Siletz Valley where she and her husband George raised their two sons and have watched their grandchildren grow. Over the years Gladys has made innumerable Indian baskets (so many that an estimate was hard to arrive at). However, in Gladys' home you will not find a large display of her work, as she has given most of her work to others. What was there for me to see was beautiful, as you can easily see in the photo. I only wish the photo could have been in color to show more detail.

Gladys said that she learned to make baskets by watching her mother, Ida, and



Gladys Muschamp and Della Short



Baskets, Beadwork and Rattles...

her sisters as a young girl. However, she did not begin to make them in earnest until around 1955... the first ones were made to hold her sons marbles! Since then she has created baskets of all shapes and sizes including papoose baskets. Presently she is making raffia baskets small enough to hang from a car rear view mirror. Each one takes a full day to complete.

Gladys and Della explained to me the process of gathering and preparing the maidenhair, beargrass, hazel and spruce roots to be used in basketry. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find places to gather the items needed.

All this makes one appreciate the

extensive amount of work required not only today but in long years past to make a thing of beauty that was also a very necessary part of survival....for then there were no paper bags, glass jars, plastic bags or cardboard boxes. It also makes us appreciate those who have sought to preserve this art form enabling not only this generation but future generations to understand and enjoy a substantial part of their heritage and culture.

Thank you Della and Gladys for giving of your time and yourselves. Also, thank you to Francis Klamath for helping get us all together.

Pat Morrell, Siletz Tribe; Woody Patawa, Chairman of the Umatilla Tribe and Chairman of the Commission; Lavonne Edmo, Willamette Valley representative; and Bill Ray, Portland area Representative. Other tribal leaders present were Jane John, Siletz Tribal Council member, and Mark Mercier, Grand Ronde Tribal Chairman.

The Commission on Indian Services members and staff have worked toward getting an Indian policy statement from the Governor's Office and have been urging Governor Goldschmidt to formally recognize the government-to-government relationship between the state and the

tribes, similar to the Accord recently signed by Governor Gardner in the State of Washington. The Accord, signed jointly by the governor and twenty-five of the twenty-six recognized tribes in Washington basically affirms that the State of Washington, formally recognizes the sovereignty of each of the tribes and will address mutual concerns on a government-to-government basis. "This is a major breakthrough for the tribes in Oregon. Hopefully, the government-to-government relationship between the state and the tribes will continue to strengthen in the next administration," said Pat Morrell.

## **OREGON AMERICAN INDIAN WEEK**

Submitted by Pat Morrell:

On April 10, Governor Neil Goldschmidt signed two proclamations. One proclamation declared the week of May 13-19, 1990 as American Indian Week in Oregon. The other proclamation affirmed the government-to-government relationship between the State of Oregon and the recognized tribes in Oregon. In attendance at the signing ceremony were Commission on Indian Services members