

# Chemawa School Observes 70th Birthday

By Lester F. Cour  
Valley Editor, The Statesman

CHEMAWA, Feb. 18 — Pretty Indian maids, dressed in their native tribal costumes, ruled at Chemawa Indian school, Saturday when the institution four miles north of Salem celebrated its 70th birthday.

Queen Eleanor Charley, 17, of the Walla Walla-Yakima Indian tribe, is number one figure for the special ceremonies. A junior in high school, she has been at Chemawa 10 years.

Princesses in Queen Eleanor's royal court are Georgianna, 18, Craig, Alaska, a senior; Loretta Quaepts, 17, Pendleton, a junior; Isabelle Patchpe, 17, Nespelem,

Wash., a sophomore, and Martina Quaepts, 14, a freshman and sister of Loretta.

Chemawa Indian school, which today sprawls over 400 acres in the fertile Labish farm area, was founded at Forest Grove Feb. 25, 1880 by Lt. M. C. Wilkinson. The first buildings were located on a four-acre tract owned by Pacific University.

The school soon outgrew its Forest Grove site, and five years later was moved to its present location at Chemawa. The first class was graduated from the present school in 1886 after completing the equivalent of a sixth-grade course. In 1888, another two years were

added to the curriculum and the first grade school graduates received their diplomas. A 10th grade was added in 1924, and a full high school course was approved in 1927.

The school today includes more than 30 buildings, including classrooms, dormitories, staff houses, gymnasium and a dining room. Its picturesque campus is generously dotted with stately trees planted in the early 1900s.

Contrasted to the handful of students 70 years ago, Chemawa now has an annual enrollment averaging 600 pupils from Indian tribes of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, California, New Mexico and Arizona.

Operated by the federal government, the institution is headed by R. M. Kelley, who took over as Chemawa's 21st superintendent in 1947.

At the present time, Kelley is directing a well-balanced academic and vocational training program. Reading, writing and arithmetic are the main subjects, but boys and girls are also offered a full program of vocational subjects and athletic activities.

Students leave Chemawa each year with a knowledge of the fundamentals of carpentering, printing, mechanics, farming and home economics. Journalism students under the instruction of Beatrice Morse, eighth grade teacher, publish a newspaper and an outstanding yearbook, the Chemawa American.

The Indian race, famous for its outstanding athletes, furnishes Chemawa with top football, baseball, basketball and track teams. The Redskins have piled up an enviable record throughout the years in competition with Willamette valley schools.

Faculty members at Chemawa believe the destiny of Indians in the northwest is closely tied with continued existence of the school. The famous institution was threatened with sudden death by a congressional budget cut in 1948, but action by Willamette valley citizens restored the appropriation after a long fight.

Many noted Indian citizens are numbered among the school's graduates, and Superintendent Kelley believes many more outstanding leaders will leave Chemawa's classrooms in the future.



This is Chemawa Indian school's 1950 senior class. It is shown working during a study period in its modern classroom. In the background instructing a pupil is the 12th grade teacher, Beatrice Morse.



Probably the most eager among pupils at the Chemawa Indian school are these Navajo Indian children, shown receiving spelling instruction from their teacher, Mrs. Grayce Burley. The youngsters from Arizona and New Mexico are progressing rapidly under special instruction. None of them could speak English until this year.



This small group, shown in an old photo, is the 1904 graduating class at Chemawa Indian school. Standing from the left are Haynes DeWitt, William Blodgett, Lulu Beach, Jesse Crook and Percy Johnson; seated from the left are Ollie Sullivan, Faye Charles, Emma Williams, Cecelia Johnson and Blanche Davis. Several are still alive and residents of the northwest.



With more than 600 pupils and 50 staff members, the Chemawa Indian school is a community within itself. The photo, taken from the south end of the campus, shows the store and postoffice and several school buildings. A group of pupils are pictured walking from a class to their dormitory. (Photos by Lester F. Cour, Statesman valley editor.)



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