

A Powwow Champion's Scrapbook

As if collected and told by Masami Danzuka, six year old powwow dancer

December 1

I wasn't going to dance in any of the contests at the Widespot Mini-powwow this year because my mom and I decided that it wouldn't be fair - that I should let another little girl win.

December 2

By Saturday night I couldn't stand it any more and I begged my mom (she's "Tootsie" Danzuka) to let me compete in the open shawl contest. Wearing my finest beaded outfit, I danced as gracefully as I could and guess what - the judge picked me for first place.

Later when I got the envelope and after I shook hands with all the other champions, I ran back to the bleachers to show Mom. She put the money in a fan shape and it looked like \$900! But Mom said it was \$75. We put it in my buckskin bag and I forgot about it. I don't care much about the money as long as I can buy a pop once in awhile.

The rest of the time at the powwow I danced all the warm-ups and the social dances and watched the contests. I felt funny standing far away and watching the "six and under" circle dance. I imagined myself out there dancing. (But, anyway, the judges chose the girls I thought were good.)

This summer I got to dance at a lot of powwows - nineteen in all. Mom keeps track of all my wins. She says I won fifteen first places, two seconds, one third and one fourth. She calls me "champ", but really I'm just Masami and I love to dance!

December 3

Yesterday and today a newspaper lady with a camera followed me around everywhere I went. Do you know all the parts

of her camera are made in Japan? I told my dad (his name is George) who is partly Japanese. He is also part Warm Springs. Mom is a Yakima Indian. I'm enrolled here in Warm Springs.

Anyway, that lady came to my house this morning before the powwow when I was in my bathrobe! She took pictures of Mom dressing me and of me brushing my teeth and practicing my steps to the tape player. Why does she pay so much attention to me?

Mom told her all about my outfit. When I decided I wanted to dance, my great grandparents Watson and Tillie Totus gave lots of advice. Tusha told Mom I must have eagle feathers, a sign of freedom, in my outfit. Alla said I should have mirrors and other shiny things to reflect people's faces when they look at me - then they will see how they are feeling (jealous or proud or happy). They both said there must be a lot of blue in what I wear.

So Mom listened carefully and worked hard and beaded a beautiful outfit with cut beads, even though she said she didn't know what she was doing.

It takes forever to get dressed because there are so many parts of the outfit and Mom fastens every part real tight so it won't fall off and disqualify me during a contest. The hard judges look for that.

I didn't always have such a pretty outfit. When I first started, it was plain because Mom didn't know if I'd keep on dancing.

It seems like I've been dancing forever but I only started when I was 4 years old -

that was almost two years ago at Satus. My mom couldn't find me and got worried, but the whole time I was out in the arena trying to dance.

That night my grandma (who is Edith Sampson) made a real simple windress and shawl for me. Then I could really dance.

I practiced hard and by Pi-Ume-Sha time I was ready. I surprised everybody and won the six and under circle dance. That was the beginning, I guess.

Lots of people have helped me since then. My grandparents Donny and Edith and my great grandparents have been behind me all the way. People like Rudy, Annabelle, and Trudee Clements and Ada Sooksoit also help out by believing in me.

The drummers even help. I like to dance near the drums so I can learn the songs and keep the beat. I've gotten to know the drummers and sometimes they play my favorite song for me. When I win they make lots of noise.

I don't know what I'd do without my mother. She's with me every step. Sometimes I feel like I boss her around a little bit, telling her I want this, I need that, let's go to this powwow or that powwow. But really she's the boss. I do what she says - she's like my manager!

When I dance I like to look at Mom's face. She lets me know how I'm doing because she's always watching. Even "champs" need their mothers, I guess.

My dad is funny. He's the one who really helps me at home. He doesn't like to go to powwows except the ones we travel to. But he gets so nervous and sweaty

before the contests that I have to get away from him or I'll get nervous!

My sister Kimiko who is 16 also dances but she doesn't like to compete against me. She's more interested in basketball, anyway.

I guess things kind of changed around my house when I decided to dance. I was the first real serious dancer in my family, so my folks put everything into it. Mom is making sure I learn the old ways so she takes me root digging and berry picking. I listen to my elders and watch them because they have a lot to teach me.

I guess I've changed, too. Now I practice everyday, all the time! At powwows I watch everything and at home I try new steps. I have a tape recorder so I can take the dance songs home with me. But sometimes I don't need them because there's music in my head. When I start dancing down the aisles at the supermarket Mom gets embarrassed!

Dancing well is fun but it's nothing to get a big head about. I just do it because I like it. Some girls get jealous and wish I'd break a leg but I just want to be friends with them. During warm-ups it's nice to have a friend to dance with. We can try out new steps together.

Being a champ could be lonely if you let it be. But isn't a powwow supposed to be a time to have fun with other people?

It's time to go to the longhouse now. There won't be a contest for me today but I like to be there to listen and look and feel the excitement. My Japanese name Masami also means "joyful" in Indian - and that's how I feel when I'm dancing.



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I won \$75 at this year's Widespot Powwow. My prize money gets saved in a bank.



I have a special tape recorder for taping powwow music and practicing at home. That's how I teach myself to dance.

Story and Photos
by
Cynthia Stowell



It takes my mom about an hour to get me ready for a powwow, partly because I run away to practice dancing or brush my teeth or play with my doll and partly because she has to fasten everything on real tight so it won't fall off during a contest.



See how shy I was at last year's Widespot Mini-powwow?



Now look how proud I am!



It was hard to watch the girls circle dance contest from far off, but my mom and I figured it was time to let somebody else win.