

Indians in Media, A Series

Edmo left a life on Burnside for poetry, TV career

by Carol Craig

Articulate words come from the small-framed man who tells of his life on skidrow. His experiences are also depicted in the poems he has written.

But his braids, traditional ceremonial Indian garb and "just keeping busy," have changed all that.

"Yeah, I lived down there on Burnside for a few years," he said. "I'd dig around for empty wine bottles, curse at the cops as they picked me up, and I even hung around PSU asking people for spare change."

For Ed Edmo, a Shoshone-Bannock tribal member, life has not been a dream. Born in 1946 in Owyhee, Nevada, on the Duck Valley Reservation, his family later moved to Celilo Falls, Oregon.

There he lived each day watching his father fish and learning customs of his people. That life was cut short at age 11 when the village was flooded, (by order of U.S. Government), creating The Dalles Dam.

From there, his family moved to Wishram across the Columbia River on the Washington side where he graduated from high school in 1964. He ran away from home seeking refuge in the big city of Portland, dreaming of becoming "somebody."

"I drank a lot when I was young and this guy gave me a ride into Portland and let me off at Burnside saying that I could find other Indians there."

"I tried going to college in 1964 but ended up goofing off instead," he said. Since then he has attended Northwest Christian College, the University of Oregon, Portland Community College and Portland State University.

But his road to education wasn't an easy one, as Ed describes his days on "skidrow". "I slept in telephone booths, on the sidewalk and anywhere I could."

It was at this time in his life



5-4-3-2-1-YOU'RE ON - Ed Edmo, a Shoshone-Bannock Indian, has turned the course of his life from drifting on Burnside to producing a monthly TV program and presenting his poetry publicly.

he began writing poetry, scribbling notes on scratch-paper. "This guy I knew who was a poet too, talked to me and told me he liked what I was doing. He would sit and talk to me and eventually talked me into going back to school."

"It was a combination of things . . . writing poetry, being recognized as a poet, and keeping busy telling other people that that is not the road to take," he continued.

Today, he is noted for his countless poems that have been published throughout the Northwest. He has worked as a tutor through the Indian Education Act Project in the Portland Public Schools teaching Indian children their culture, legends, songs and self-identity, as well as providing counseling to the students.

"It's hard for some of the tribal members to move to a big city. It's hard for them to

identify with the happenings surrounding them, I guess that's what happened to me."

Through his poetry he describes what life is like on Burnside. He constantly carries with him a "log" where he jots down his inspirations as the day progresses. "I was waiting for a bus and jotted down some thoughts," he explains as he displays some of his writing. The end result is sobering and touching.

His busy schedule has taken him to Indian Education programs teaching culture to Indian and non-Indian students. He also participates in alcoholism discussions, speaking to Indian inmates at the Oregon State Penitentiary.

Lectures and readings of his poems have been on his agenda for quite some time and he is in the process of writing his autobiography.

Edmo, a multi-faceted indi-

vidual, is also producer of a monthly television program, "Indian Time," on KPTV, Channel 12 in Portland.

His involvement in producing the Indian show came about in 1973 while a number of Indian people reacted to the "Daniel Boone" series on television. Remarks pertaining to Indians were made and members of the Urban Indian Council did not like what was being said.

After meeting with the personnel of Channel 12, a compromise was made with the station permitting the Urban Indian Council one half-hour per month to air their views through public television.

The first program aired in 1974 with Charles Johnson as director. Johnson contacted Ed for help with a program about Indian poetry. Ed was soon doing in-studio interviews, arranging studio time, choosing the format and writing the program.

Johnson with commitments in Alaska left, leaving Edmo as producer of the program. He was assisted by Lowell Curley. The two began a partnership, putting out Indian information for the public.

As producer and moderator, Ed has had input from Indians around the state. Indian artists, musicians, programs in Indian education, alcoholism discussions, traditional and culture events have aired since.

"We'd like more input from reservation Indians, but to date have had little response," he said. "But there has been positive feedback relating to earlier programs," he added, which excites him, "because it shows people are watching and listening to what we're saying."

Ed is also proud that recent programs have appeared on television listings in the Oregonian's "Click" tabloid in the Sunday edition.

A recent half-hour program explained PSU's Indian Support Program designed to aid Indian students who want to further their education.

He has been asked to read some of his poetry at PSU by invitation of Don Tye from the English department. Although the date is tentative, Ed says he always looks forward to speaking to groups.

The change in him is evident from what he describes of the past, though he professes, "it was a long hard road," which he still follows. He smiles and talks about his family.

Married for three years, he and his wife Carol have been blessed with a daughter. Proud of his Indian heritage, he passes that heritage along to daughter who he named Se-Ah-Dom, meaning "beautiful" in the Bannock tribal language.

A mere two years old, the daughter of Ed Edmo will learn many valuable traditions of her native people.

Teaching Your Preschool Child, Part Four

(This eight-part series was prepared by Betsy Sullivan, Reading Specialist for the Redmond School District. It contains many practical ideas for working with your preschooler to prepare him for school.)

Take time out for One, Two, Buckle My Shoe! Encourage your child to memorize and recite poems.

Poetry trains the ear to hear sound-alikes and beginning and ending sounds—an important first step toward hearing the phonetic sounds of letters and words. Rhymes introduce new words and ways of putting words together. Poetry with coordinating action also helps develop muscle and motor control — besides, it's fun!

Children love to hear and repeat the same things over and over.

BUSY SQUIRREL

The little, gray squirrel makes a scampering sound, (Wiggle fingers.)

As he gathers the nuts which fall to the ground. (Hold fingers high, then move them down slowly.)

He buries the nuts in a dark, secret place, (One hand over other fist-hand.)

And covers them over with never a trace.

The little gray squirrel always seems to know (Hands outstretched.)

That winter is coming and it's time for snow. (Hold fingers high and then lower slowly.)

LET'S MAKE A SNOWMAN

Let's make a snowman round and fat (Extend rounded-arms in front.)

On top of his head, let's put on a hat. (Tap top of head.)

Let's give him two eyes on his funny cold face. (Point to both eyes.)

In the middle, a nose, let's stick it in place. (Put nose in place.)

Let's give him a mouth that is big and wide. (Move finger across mouth.)

Then button him up with the snow inside. (Place buttons down center front.)

DEAR LITTLE TREE

Dear little tree, what will you do

When winter winds start to blow,

And all of your leaves fall down to the earth, (Flutter fingers.)

And your branches are filled with snow? (Arms outstretched.)

"I will be a house for a little mouse, (Tips of fingers together to make roof shape.)

Or a hole for a squirrel to hide. (Fingers and thumbs touch, round hands to make "hole".)

And my trunk will make a very nice place

For a skunk to sleep inside." (Hands clasped beside face.)

SNOWMEN

TALL AND SMALL

There was a great big snowman

Who was tall, t-a-l-l, t-a-l-l.

sonnel of Channel 12, a compromise

There was a little snowman Who was small, small, small. (Bend knees.)

Then the sun came out to play,

And all the snowmen went away.

Indian Educators to Meet to Implement Legislation

Indian educators, students, tribal community representatives and Bureau of Indian Affairs personnel will meet January 8-11 in Salt Lake City, Utah, to begin implementation efforts for two major pieces of Indian education legislation enacted in the closing days of the 95th Congress.

Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary Rick Lavis said that 12 Task Forces, selected through consultation with tribal councils and national Indian organizations, will work with a BIA steering committee to implement the Tribal Controlled Community College Act (P.L. 95-471) and Title XI of the Education Amendments Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-561).

Lavis said, "The Education Amendments Act calls for substantial changes and new developments in the organization and administration of Indian education programs both in public school systems and in BIA schools. In accord with our policy of Indian self-determination, we will be working closely

with the Indian community to accomplish the purposes of the legislation."

Lavis said the conferees would be identifying issues and resources, formulating action plans, and beginning to develop proposed regulations.

This will be the first meeting of the Task Forces. In early November, Lavis asked Indian leaders to nominate individuals to serve on the various groups which will deal with such issues as school boards, education personnel, student rights, funding formulas, education policies and other matters involved in implementing the new legislation.

A summary of comments and recommendations from BIA school administrators, made at an early December meeting in Phoenix, will be made available to the Task Forces.

Lavis has been given responsibility for managing the policy and planning actions necessary for implementing the legislation by the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Forrest Gerard.