

# The Eclipse Experience Touched Everyone

by Sandy Rangila

It wasn't your average Monday morning, February 26. Here on the reservation people clustered in groups with boxes on their heads from about 7:40 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. And some just huddled in front of their TV sets to watch this area's last total solar eclipse of the century.

Dawn came twice to the reservation that day, and confused birds, caught away from their nighttime roosts, flew in circles squawking in alarm.

Totality, or complete darkness, lasted for less than a minute. But it was long enough to cause the light sensitive streetlights to come on in Warm Springs. And the effect was powerful enough to make most mortals realize how small and insignificant they are.

To have a good view of the eclipse, sun-watchers on the reservation had only to step outside. Unlike Portland and Goldendale, the reservation skies were clear and offered an unobstructed view of the entire phenomenon.

Most people felt an unexplained need to be with other people during the event. Despite the vast open space and variety of accessible areas on the reservation, folks apparently wanted to share their experience as it was happening.

Zane Jackson was one of the few who watched the eclipse alone. In describing his experience to Edith Danzuka, he said that it had been pretty eerie. He had driven his 4-wheel drive to the top of a steep plateau near Dry Hollow, and as he shivered

in the darkness of totality, a lone coyote howled in the distance.

Hundreds of years ago, the Indians along the Columbia River also felt the need to gather in small groups during the time of the eclipse, according to a legend related by Verbena Greene at the Warm Springs Grade School. An ABC (Ch.2) television crew was at the school Monday morning to film Verbena telling two eclipse-related legends to Ms. Anderson's 6th grade class. The coverage appeared on both the 5 p.m. news and on the 7 p.m. eclipse special that night.

Verbena's message was that we should not take for granted what our Creator put here for us. "An eclipse is a time for us to stop and give credit," she told the class. "What would happen if we lost the sun?" she asked.

Monday, although everyone knew the sun would reappear, reactions and emotions varied during totality. Some people cheered and whooped, others hopped from foot to foot in excitement, and some even cried. Others likened it to "a religious experience."

All but a few were surprised at how quickly it grew dark, and at how rapidly it was light again. People's shadows seemingly raced along the ground, reaching grotesque proportions just before totality.

Most knew they would probably never see another total solar eclipse during their lifetime. That, coupled with the sheer beauty and magnificence of the spectacle, touched nearly everyone in some personal way.

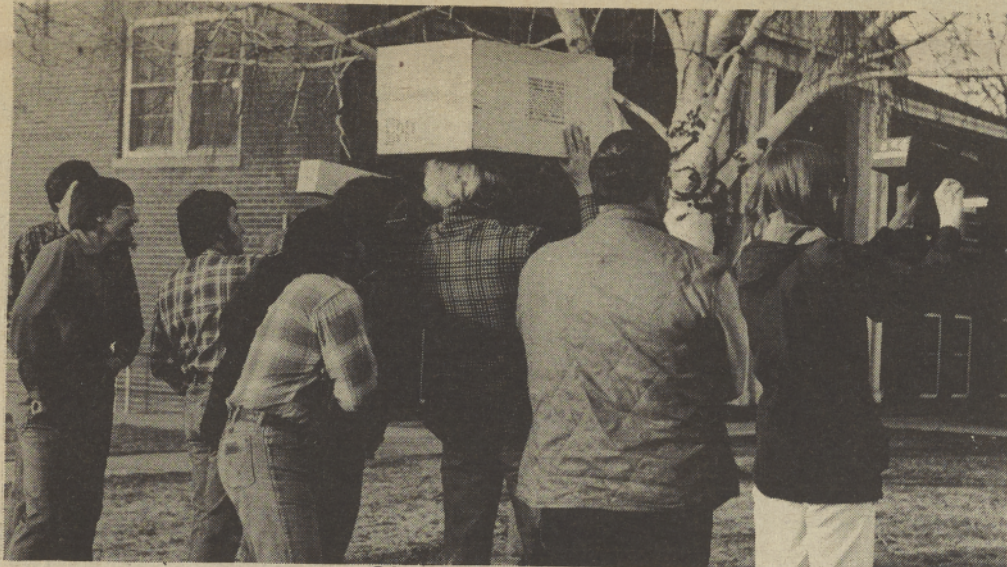


Sharing an Eclipse Legend

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Slide Show?



Shadow Boxing



Sun Worshippers



Peeking Around