

Simnasho school lures crowd to awards program

by Cynthia Stowell

The crowd gathered on the windy playground of the Simnasho School June 5 would not have appreciated knowing that they almost didn't exist. Two years ago budget trimming threatened the tiny school, causing speculation as to how long the district could afford to keep its doors open.

But the Simnasho School survived, and the awards program that brought dozens of students, parents and community leaders together to honor its fourteen pupils, was also a tribute to the school and its contributions to Simnasho and the district.

Simnasho is on the map and in people's minds thanks to an ambitious group of kids and talented second-year teacher who put no limit on their imaginations. Thinking it would be nice to have the governor at their awards program, one student simply dashed off a letter to him and was tickled to get a call from Atiyeh's office on the day before the program, even though it was to inform the class that the governor couldn't make it.

It's been a year of firsts for the one-room school. The first annual Simnasho Mini-Marathon was the most spectacular, establishing a 13.1 mile run between Simnasho and Kah-Nee-Ta. Their trip to Disneyland and San Diego was the first big excursion from Simnasho and it was made possible through the children's own year-long fund-raising efforts.

Simnasho also had its first classroom exchange with Madras, giving second-graders



PASS IT ON - Butch David amused his fellow students by passing a good-bye letter for Sandy Rhodes over his head. The two fourth graders received letters from the 1st-3rd graders they are leaving behind as they must move on to other schools for the fifth grade. The "Simnasho Award" as it was dubbed, made its debut at the special awards program held at the school June 5.

Spiliay Tymoo Photo by Stowell

a chance to go rock hunting around the rural school and learn about their neighbors 40 miles distant. Teacher Rich Little even swapped classrooms for two days with Buff Elementary teacher Margee Woods, figuring it was time for his students to experience a different personality.

It was Miss Wood's sixth grade class who were the special guests on award night. Superintendent Darrell Wright told both classes,

"These kids from Simnasho and Buff will make things happen." Councilman Larry Calica of Simnasho commended the "partnership" that had developed between the reservation and the school district, a partnership that "starts at a young age." He noted that the last time he had seen as many people outside the Simnasho school was when the school was dedicated—when he was in the third grade. "It's

good to feel the wind and have people here to share it with," he said, referring to the chilly breeze that kept people huddled in blankets.

Mr. Little, happy to see such a turn-out of people from different spheres, told the audience, "The kids know you care because you're here. Knowing that you care, they're more willing to try. They might succeed or they might fail, but they're not afraid to take risks."

Students had to work for

their awards. After Simnasho elders Matilda Mitchell and Sylvia Wallulatum offered a prayer, the student body sang a worship song in the Indian language. Later in the program they offered two English songs "This Land is Your Land" and "It's a Small World"—that pursued the theme of sharing.

The Buff sixth graders in turn performed songs called "Time" and "Let There Be citizenship, drug and alcohol, students and the audience."

Awards presented to the Simnasho students included citizenship, drug and alcohol, 4-H, and a multitude of ribbons earned by kids at a recent track meet in Paulina for small schools.

A special feature was the "Simnasho Award" which was an exchange of letters between the two fourth graders and the rest of the students. Butch David and Sandy Rhodes are "graduating" from Simnasho to attend the fifth grade in other schools.

Guest speaker Clement Azure of the department of Education aroused many memories for the older folks in attendance by recalling the not-so-good old days when Simnasho and the reservation were a lot more distant from Madras than they are now. Azure was a supervisory education specialist—a euphemism for a principal—for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Warm Springs in the early sixties.

After the ceremony, shivering people hurried inside for refreshments where they had an opportunity to look at a bulletin board full of Simnasho accomplishments, and most important, get to know each other.

From the High School Counselor

Make up credits at summer school

Those students who must make up graduation requirements credits should apply for

summer school as soon as possible. The director of the Summer School Program is

Francis Thorpe, who can be reached at the W.S. Skills Center, 553-1653.

Congratulations to all seniors who graduated from Madras Senior High and other students who graduated from other schools. Hope the best of success to all of you.

During the past school year I

have enjoyed the students very much. Many students had strong personal concerns and others had academic and attendance difficulties. Yet, improvement in delivery of services to the above areas is needed. Ways and means are being explored for next semester so that any student

difficulties can be recognized as soon as possible. Effective methods of rectifying the matter will be needed with cooperation from all available sources. This hopefully will resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction.

HAVE A GOOD SUMMER!

Imagine saying good-bye to a second family after 15 years

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leadership and social maturity by making an assortment of extra-curricular activities available to students. The dormitory program is crucial in this development.

A second home

As a residential student, Clinton grew up in O.S.S.D. dormitories. From brushing his teeth to budgeting, Clinton learned living skills that should make life after graduation a lot easier. During his senior year, Clinton lived in an apartment-style section of the dorm, sharing housekeeping with other older boys. Here he learned how to make and adhere to a home budget, shop for food and clothing, clean house, and cooperate with roommates.

Clinton's tentative plans for the next year bear the mark of O.S.S.D.'s influence. He speaks of going to nearby Chemeketa Community College and living in an apartment. But he admits that he doesn't know what he wants

to study and so far no application has been made. It is hard for Clinton to see beyond the summer.

Clinton looks forward to backpacking around Mt. Jefferson with his wood-working teacher Mr. Hammer-schmidt and traveling to California with Mrs. Bolf, his close friend and "adopted" mom. His ties to the school are strong and not easily broken.

While Clinton has a father and seven brothers and sisters in Warm Springs, he has through the years developed another family and home in Salem, where he has spent nine months of every year since 1964. The death of his mother Sally last winter further confirmed the importance of his second family.

Imagine saying goodbye to a "brother" with whom you've roomed for fifteen years, a "father" who has counseled you many late evenings for four years, and a "mother" (or "brat mom" as Clinton calls her) who has had lunch with you every day for a year and

taken you home on weekends when Warm Springs was too far to go. Separation is posing a problem for not only Clinton but for those who have grown to love him, indicated dorm counselor Jim Haynes.

Communication talents

Clinton must also say good-bye to comfortable communication and an understanding environment. After the first few years of struggling to learn a language picked up easily by hearing children, Clinton relaxed into the "total communication" that O.S.S.D. promotes—the combined use of conceptual signs, finger spelling and voice.

But taking up life outside the school will mean more struggle. The simple act of making purchases can become difficult and tense, and trying to convince "normal" people that a deaf person is competent and qualified can be discouraging.

Clinton's teachers feel he has a good head start, however, Public speaking instructor Mrs. Lee says that Clinton's

speech, while a bit "breathy", is clearer and more easily understood than many students' vocal efforts. In fact, so well has Clinton learned to speak that it's usually hard to keep him quiet, said Mrs. Lee, except when he's having a bout with shyness.

Mrs. Bolf commended her "brat son" for his dogged efforts to understand and be understood. "He doesn't turn off to people when he's having trouble communicating with them," she remarked. If his voice and gestures fail to get the message across or someone's lips are especially hard to read, he will resort to writing notes or using an interpreter, but he will not give up.

Life in Warm Springs has been an exercise in communication, even among family members, several of whom do not know sign language. Clinton ventures into the community with interpreters, usually sister Carolyn who also has a hearing impairment.

But ultimately Clinton's success in the hearing world

will depend on his own inner resources.

Like every other graduate, Clinton faces a critical point in his life when the lessons of the first 18 years are put to the test. Like every Indian graduate, Clinton has reservation and non-reservation worlds to choose between or bridge. And like every graduate of the Oregon State School for the Deaf, Clinton must decide whether to tune into the world outside or retreat into silence.

Just as Clinton strains to listen to rock music through borrowed headphones, he appears willing in other ways to make the effort to live a "normal" life. Armed with communication and living skills acquired from school and the warm social experience of two family environments, Clinton is bound to make the transition gracefully.

He did it once before at the tender age of four. And with his characteristic smile, his creative flair, and the courage it took to get this far—he'll probably do it again.