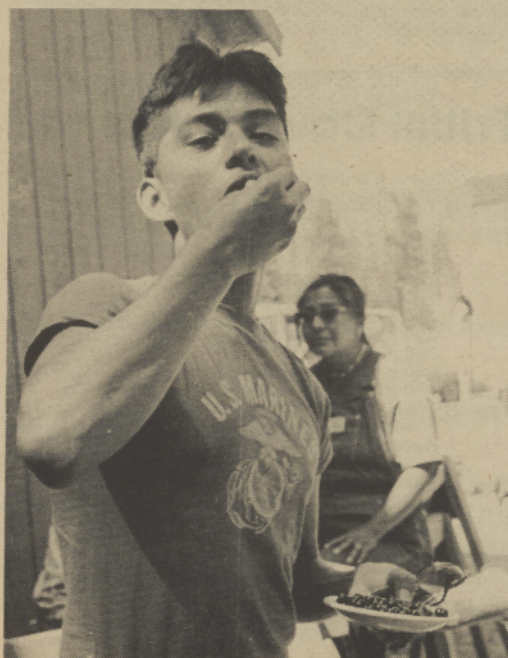


Feast remains part of tradition in Warm Springs



Religious ceremonies begin long before the day of Huckleberry Feast. Women who pick the fruit prepare themselves by fasting and prayer. Young people accompany the elders learning the songs and the true meaning of Huckleberry Feast. These ladies performed the services commencing picking the Huckleberries near Government Camp.



After religious ceremonies are over huckleberries can be freely eaten. Keith Moody relishes a small plate of the wild fruit. Spilyay Tymoo photo by Shewczyk

As in the days long ago Huckleberry Feast remains a part of the religious and cultural traditions of the Indian people of this area. Preparations for the feast begin weeks in advance of the event. Fasting prayers are necessary to cleanse the body and mind, according to tradition.

Only good thoughts must enter people's mind while picking the bounty of huckleberries given to the people by the creator. This is passed on to the folks who share the feast.

"People used to live with nature," says elder, Prunie Williams. "They lived to be over 100." Now, she feels, many people do not adhere to religious ceremonies. They will go out and eat the huckleberries before prayers and services are held. They fail to acknowledge that thanksgiving is due the Creator for providing food for the people, she says.

Prunie Williams, along with many of the community's elders, feel that the children need to be instructed in these religious beliefs. "They have no

motivation," Prunie says, "because they have forgotten all of these things." She goes on to say, "Children need to know they are a part of this culture and have this heritage." The children need to be taught these things throughout life, she says.

The modern society has overridden many of the spiritual values, Prunie remarks. Her personal feelings emphasize spiritual teachings as taking first place in her own life. She says, "I will probably get my doctor's degree someday," but as far as spiritual culture, "I don't forget it. I live it daily. My table is my altar."

Huckleberry Feast is only one of several religious days throughout the year where Indian people gather to give thanks for their bounty. It is time when reflection is made on spiritual life and physical well-being. Prunie mentions, Huckleberries were created by our Creator to help us with our daily life and to use as a spiritual food. The mountains breathe on the huckleberries and they ripen with the strength that goes into them."