

# Waheneka shares highlights of his past



In 1963 Grant received his Retirement Certificate from the United States Air Force after 21 years of service.

by Saphronia Katchia

Eighty-three year old Grant Waheneka was born October 6, 1911 at The Dalles, Oregon to Jake and Bessie Waheneka.

His grandparents were Jake Waheneka, Sr. and wife. His grandmother, Tye Pum, died when he was two-years-old. On his mother's side, his grandparents were Bob and Sarah Jones, Sr. Other relatives include his uncle Bob Jones, Jr. and Andrew Jones. Grant had four older brothers and a younger sister, Alice who was born May 31, 1915 and died May 19, 1916.

He remembers growing up as a "lonesome little boy" with four dogs and some cats. His grandfather taught him how to build bows and arrows and how to snag rabbits out of holes and also how to survive in the wilderness by killing birds and forest animals. He recalls his grandfather's knowledge of herbs, which ones were poisonous and which ones could be used for medicinal purposes. His uncle Andrew, before becoming ill from tuberculosis, taught him how to make peace pipes, braid horsehair, weave fish nets and the handling of guns for hunting and tracking certain kinds of animals. He also learned how to tell if tracks were fresh or old.

Looking back at the days when he began school, he remembers it being "some of the most lonesome days," being separated from his parents. At that time he did not know how to speak, "one word of the white-man language. Because we did not know or speak the language, we some times had to use our own language but not within earshot of school officials, if and when we were overheard speaking our language, we received a

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good strap whipping, making, asking or even ordering us, never to speak native again. I remember I was about 8 years of age when I started my education at the old Warm Springs Boarding School. I spent my fourth grade year attending the day school at Simnasho, riding horseback about six miles each way, come rain, snow, and/or warm weather." In 1926 he completed the highest grade, which at that time was sixth grade. The principal felt he was too young to stay out of school, so he went back for another year. He recalls school officials finding seventh grade books for he and another student. He also attended Chemawa Indian School. His parents would not allow him to attend Chemawa another year so he stayed home and helped with the chores such as farming and threshing the grain, wheat, oats and rye for hay in order to feed the horses and cows.

That fall, he and his parents spent time at other allotments along the Deschutes near Tule Lake feeding their stock. There they lived in a teepee with no running water, no outhouse or other modern conveniences. "Our bathroom was a sweat house." A nearby hot spring used for bathing.

"Everyday I walked about four miles to the Railroad Station at North Junction to buy the daily paper for a whole nickel, ten cents for the Sunday paper." The two railroads back then were The Great Northern and Oregon Washington Navigation, now known as the Union Pacific.

The first home his grandfather built was a log cabin with a fire place. His grandfather passed away in July 1927. Later, his father built a home from rough lumber which consisted of two rooms, kitchen and living quarters. It also contained a deep well for water supply. Transportation back then was by horse and buggy. Grant recalls buying his first car in 1926.

April 1929, a marriage between he and Fannie (Scott) Clydehawks was arranged by their parents. Their first child died at birth. Their second child is Faye Waheneka. She has eight children, and twenty-two grandchildren.

In the fall of 1929, he was first employed earning \$3 a day. There was a waterline being installed about three miles from the Agency headquarters to power a generator for the lighting system at Agency. He recalls in 1929, "Wall Street fell and all hell broke loose—jobs became scarce—some businesses went bankrupt—President Hoover received all the blame for the country going into the hardship."

He also recalls the presidential elections when Roosevelt was elected. Around 1932 were the Depression Years. No jobs or money. He was a shade tree mechanic, where he overhauled vehicles and all road equipment prior to enlisting into the U.S. Army Air Force.

March 7, 1942, three months after Pearl Harbor, Grant was sworn in as a Buck Private. After being sworn in, he was transferred from Portland to Ft. Lewis, Washington. There he performed a "battery of tests". His I.Q. was high enough that he was given a choice, he chose the U.S. Army Air Force. Less than a week later he was assigned to a new base in California, Lemoore Army Air Base.

His drill master made him a Corporal and defined him as a person who already had the knowledge of basics in the formations of marching. He was asked if he was a previous service man. He claimed it was from some World War I Officers who had taken positions with the Warm Springs Boarding School and drilled the students every Sunday. He was then removed from basics and assigned to the flight line as an Air Craft mechanic. A month-and-a-half later he was promoted to PFC. Another four-and-a-half months of PFC he was promoted to Corporal rating. At that time, Congress approved a pay raise for all

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Last February at Lincoln's Birthday Pow wow, the Queahpama family presented Grant with a buckskin vest and a trophy for being an "Honorable Warrior" in the U.S. Air Force from 1942-63.

Military Personnel. "I started drawing a big pay of \$60 per month" compared to \$21 as before. Working for the BIA Roads department prior to enlisting in the service he was earning \$90 a month as a boss.

From Lemoore he was reassigned to Douglas, Arizona. After nine more months of service he received a promotion to the grade of Staff Sergeant, and became a Flight Chief. He was occasionally placed on flying duties as a future Aerial Engineer.

He returned to the United States after World War II. "It was a happy day—of all happy days which I have enjoyed—this was over and above all of the happiest days I've known."

In 1945 he reenlisted in the service. He received additional training in mechanics and a flight engineering. "This was after the 'A' Bomb had been dropped over Japan. He served as a Flight Engineer, flying over the North Pole as a member of the Weather Reconnaissance Squadron. He was first based at Ladd Field Alaska in Fairbanks, Alaska. He was later transferred to Eielson Field, Alaska. When his enlistment expired with Weather Squadron he was assigned to a base in Oklahoma City. When that expired he reenlisted with his old wartime bomb wing, the 93rd Bomb Wing at Castle Field, California.

He and Fannie separated in 1946 and were divorced March 22, 1951, prior to him going back to the Far East. He departed for England to fight in the Korean War. He spent almost a year there before returning home. He was home less than a month, and was asked if he would volunteer to go back to the Far East, which he did.

A short time later he received orders promoting him to Technical Sergeant grade. When he returned to the U.S. he was assigned to a Photo Recon Squadron. There he had multiple duties. He soon was promoted to Master Sergeant, and was reassigned to Smoky Hill, Kansas.

November 13, 1951 he married Emily Henning, at

the Warm Springs Presbyterian Church.

His disabilities began to show and he was transferred to a hospital in Wichita Falls, Texas. There he spent nine months receiving treatment. When he was released from the hospital he was notified by two base medical doctors that he was to be discharged from the service with 30 percent disability. He told the Colonels, "I have given up the best years of my productive life to the Military Service and now I am about to be released with 30 percent—I think I am able

AFB Michigan, where he retired after 21 years of service.

He was offered a couple of high paying positions with the service; he turned them down to come home to serve

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Grant is eighty-three years old, he makes his home in Warm Springs with his wife Emily.

yet, that I can give a full day's work." The two Colonels discussed his condition and told him that he would remain in the service. "Happy day for me!"

He was then assigned to duties as a director of the B-29 courses of Air Craft Mechanics with both civilian and military instructors. Prior to becoming an instructor he had to go to base school to learn how to be an instructor. The courses offered hours of instruction toward a degree in Business Administration. He graduated with honors, second from the top in a class of 32.

After a few months he was transferred back to Chanute Field where he became Sergeant. A few months later he was transferred to Amarillo AFB, Texas to become the Director of the electrical phase of the Air Craft Units of B-52s. There he spent almost six years.

One day, Grant was ordered to report to headquarters with his military records. He was assigned a highly classified project six weeks later, to head up a brand new kind of training in St. Louis, Missouri. This new project was known to be the Space Program-NASA. He was assigned to develop a work manual for the mechanics. There the "Space vehicle" which took the men to the moon, was their creation. After completion in the Space Program he was reassigned to Wurtsmith

his people, which he did. He was appointed and commissioned by three different state Governors to serve the State government which included serving on Law Enforcement Council and Youth Commission by Governor McCall, the American Bicentennial Revolution Commission by Governor Straub, and the Historical Records Advisory Board. He also received a Commission to serve on the State Humanities Committee. He served the Boy Scouts of America and Festival of Arts as a board member.

For the Tribe he served on many committees and was elected to Tribal Council. He served two consecutive terms, May 1965 through April 1968. May 1968 through April 1971, he was appointed Chairman.

His religion is Washat. Activities he enjoys include doing the crossword in The Oregonian, everyday! He enjoys rebuilding bicycles and reading a lot. He also used to do mechanic work on cars.

He and Emily had no children together. They adopted Dolan, the son of Harrison Davis, when he was four while in Amarillo, Texas. There daughter is Marjorie Williams Waheneka. They have nine grandchildren besides the twenty-two Grant and Fannie have. Grant and Emily now have a great-great grandchild.