

Deafness not a disability for Jason "Kid" Smith

Editor's Note: *Spilyay Tymoo* has had the opportunity to work with Jason Smith this summer through the summer work program for college-bound students. The 20-year-old has added a new meaning to the word communication for us all. Most of us take our ability to hear and speak for granted and working with Jason has caused us to consider the difficulties a deaf person must face when out in the hearing, speaking community. Jason has shown us that overcoming disabilities is possible and that you don't necessarily have to speak or hear to be "normal."

If you didn't know him, you'd never know Jason was deaf. He's just like any other young adult his age—he likes to play basketball, lift weights and eat. The only difference—he can't hear or speak.

Jason was five months old when he contracted spinal meningitis. The illness left him deaf and silent but otherwise "normal." Knowing that Jason would require extensive

training as well as a special education to "make it" on his own, Jason's dad, Lloyd Smith, Jr., enrolled him in a deaf school in Portland at the age of three. Jason and his dad made twice-weekly trips to attend the Portland school to prepare him for preschool at the Oregon School for the Deaf in Salem. At the age of four, Jason was enrolled in OSD's preschool program, living on-campus five days a week. Jason spent the next 16 years attending the school and graduated this past spring. According to his dad, Jason's graduation was delayed a year because he hadn't made up his mind as to what he wanted to do in life until he was more than half way through his junior year. 509-J School District paid Jason's tuition at OSD because he was a Jefferson County resident.

Jason adjusted well at OSD. He found that he was not alone—there were at least 10 to 15 other kids his own age in similar situations. Lloyd says Jason "missed home, but the school made him feel

comfortable. He always wanted to come home on weekends but was eager to go back" when the weekends ended. As he grew older, Jason's grandfather, Lloyd Smith, Sr., who lived in Independence, spent time with him.

Jason excelled in sports at OSD. He played for the school's varsity basketball and football teams and ran and threw the shot for the varsity track team while in high school. During his senior year, Jason was named MVP offense in football for the league and was All-American All-Mentioned for deaf schools. He played in the Western States Basketball Classic for the Deaf four years. He also played in the West-East All-Star Shrine game in LaGrande his senior year. Throughout his high school career, Jason scored a total of 47 touchdowns, 10 of which were completed in non-league play.

During his senior year, Jason took college orientation classes at Chemeketa Community College. This fall, he will attend Clackamas Community College in Clackamas and earn a one-year certificate in auto body. Next fall, he plans to attend the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York and major in fine arts. At the NTID, Jason will be able to earn an associate of arts or bachelor's degree in three to five years. A cooperative work experience program enables students to become employable. The school also offers sports. Jason is already planning to take part in rugby and lacrosse.

Jason's auto body certificate will help him earn money during holidays and other school breaks and will open the doors to other careers and educational possibilities. Lloyd wants Jason to have a "well-rounded education," one that will earn him a living and be interesting to him at the same

time. Tuition at NTID is high and Lloyd hopes to obtain grants and a tribal scholarship for Jason when the time comes.

Jason will live independently when he attends Clackamas this fall, an endeavor that would shake the confidence of many 20-year-olds. Not Jason. He has said he will be "brave and happy" living on his own. It's time, he says, to "go on my way." His dad will be taking landscaping classes at Clackamas and will be able to see Jason occasionally.

Communicating with Jason is easy, for the most part. He either writes his messages, signs, uses facial expressions or body language to talk with others. He says his English is "weak" and reading what he has written as communication is sometimes difficult to understand. He limits his writing to a minimum, offering just enough to get his point across. Sometimes it totally confuses the reader. Weak English is a product of learning and using sign, says Lloyd. Signers take and make shortcuts to make communicating easier. The other three forms of communication make it much easier to understand him.

Jason also reads lips very well. He learned, he says, when he "was a kid." He was able to "catch" words and lip movement. His teachers at OSD taught sign language accompanied by lip action. He says learning sign language was easy. Age and experience have made signing even easier for him.

Lloyd says that Jason's other senses are keener than a hearing



A caricature of Spilyay Tymoo reporter Bob Medina demonstrates Jason's sense of humor and keen eye.

person's. He can "feel" when someone is looking at him to get his attention. He can read other people's body language and facial expressions very well.

Jason can put pencil to paper and create astonishingly beautiful, and amusing, drawings. His artistic talent is no doubt a symptom of being deaf. What better way to express yourself, when voiceless, than with a drawing? Remember the old adage, "A picture is worth a thousand words"? Jason is

unassuming when talking about his artistic capabilities—they're works that aren't special to him, but more than special to those of us who view them.

What has us, at *Spilyay*, in awe, is that Jason does not remember hearing a phone ring, music being played, a TV chattering incessantly or a horn honking. Yet, he maneuvers through life and around Warm Springs as if he's totally "sensed." He is not handicapped by any means. The word does not, and probably never will, apply to him.



Jason's senior portrait from OSD.

A "BIG" thank you to those firefighters who saved my house. There were fire tanks outside my home. And with their extra efforts I still have a home. Thank you.

Adeline Miller

Mistreatment at Credit department angers client

To the Editor,

Has anybody, other than myself, been treated with disrespect and been kicked out of the Credit Department? As I've been talking to people, I've heard a few stories. This incident happened.

I received a letter to come in to take care of a credit matter. So, I made the time to go down to take care of it. As I waited to be seen, I sat and visited with one of my uncles, an elder. He was waiting to find out about his loan. Soon, an officer came out, a male, non-tribal member, and yelled at my uncle that he wasn't eligible for anymore loans and discussed his loan problems with him in a loud tone and in full earshot of others waiting to see a loan officer. My uncle was clearly embarrassed and angry at being treated with the total lack of privacy and professionalism as should have been given to any member of the tribe and especially a tribal elder.

The way my uncle was treated should have tipped me off about what

awaited me. Sure 'nuf, when it came my turn, I walked in and this same male, non-tribal member, was on the phone and typing on the computer. I sat down and waited for him to acknowledge me. When he did, it was with the same tone and disrespectful words and voice he'd used on my uncle a few minutes before. This alone made me boil. I informed him that when he could talk to me in a more professional manner I'd return. He got worse mad. He turned on me with those dead eyes and said, "Hey Lady! Blah, blah, blah..." I got up to leave. Just then another officer came around the corner and kicked me out of their office.

Now, tell me. With this hostile environment, in what is supposed to be a professional tribal office, do you

expect me to ever step back into this place again?! No way! Now they're threatening civil action against me. Make up your mind. I'd be glad to come talk with you, to make arrangements on any matter, but I refuse to let you talk down to me or yell at me or treat me with disrespect. I think the credit department owes my uncle and me an apology. A little respect goes a long way.

I'm sure tribal council didn't give you permission to belittle, harass, kick out or embarrass tribal member while you go about collecting, did they? As a tribal member, I object loud and clear to such terrible treatment of us tribal members. Get professional and use tact!

A tribal member,
Myrna Frank-Ferguson

Kamloops leaders visit reservation



Kamloops tribal council came to Warm Springs on August 6-9, to get ideas on a variety of tribal and business topics, such as schooling, water rights, the mill, education, taxes and how the Warm Springs tribes deal with those issues. There were seven council members along with chief Manny Jules.

Chief Jules stated "the main purpose of this visit was to learn how other tribes deal with problems." "we are very similar in many ways such as you, WS tribe, have a resort, mill, the forestry, and other small businesses, like as we do." "The Kamloops have an industrial park with over three hundred businesses and a resort with a golf course, also adding with future developing in the planning, we wanted to see how a successful tribe maintained its success." Also adding "its nice to look at what the experience has been like and get good stepping blocks on setting our own programs up." Chief Jules stated "we get taxed 18 million per year, so we also wanted to get more information on how the Warm Springs Tribe deal with this problem and to see what we can use to solve our tax problems, so we can get some of the money back to our people." "land is an important issue for us because we want to reclaim some of the land that belonged to the Kamloops."

While in Warm Springs the council members visited Indian Head



gaming, Kahneeta, Fish Museum, WS Plaza, Health and Wellness center, ECE, Culture and Heritage and Natural Resources.

Member recalls fire of 1937: Lives altered

To the Editor,

In 1937, a lightning streak from the heavens created a fire that was so devastating it consumed a great portion of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. The lands that were affected were the mid- and southern-part of rangeland, timberland on the Miller Flat Bench, Upper Shitike, Tenino and the Metolius Bench. The fire raced across the reservation, jumping the Metolius River and burning the Green Ridge Forest and Grandview areas south of the reservation. The path of the fire led to destruction of many homes, cattle, horses, timber and other personal property. Judge Jerry Brunoe took it upon himself to access the aftermath only to find himself destroying many animals that were burned, blinded, starving and suffering.

The consequences of this fire had many of the residents relocate to the Agency area. Thus, the creation of Hollywood. Many of the older people lived out the rest of their lives in this make shift little shanty town. Most never returned to their ranches or to rebuild. The Wolford Canyon community of several families never returned. To this day, the canyon remains desolate.

In a recent visit to the canyon, where I was raised, there was only

silence. The memories linger, but the echoes of the canyon are quiet. No children to play in the small spring water pools. So sweathouse fires to heat the rocks. No deer hides soaking. No buckskin tanning. No gardens. No wheat or hay growing. The only remains found were my grandmother's hid scraping pole, maybe a rusted farm harrow plow and a busted canning jar deteriorating from a half-century of weathering. The only survivors of this canyon are five huge ponderosa pine trees. When the wind blows, their needles seem to whisper "we're still alive."

After the fire, some of my horses returned to the ranch, starving and rail. I reached into the last pan full of wheat and gave each horse a handful, while under my breath I whispered a painful goodbye. Never to return to our Wolford Canyon Ranch, my childhood dream of becoming a rancher and a fur trapper of mink, river otter, martin, coyote and beaver had vanished with the fire.

Our way of life was completely altered. The yearly treks to the Brittenbush huckleberry fields, root digging areas, wood gathering, etc., ceased. Even the fluent speaking of the Sahaptin language fades into obscurity. The only method of trans-

portation for two years was on foot because we had no more saddle and workhorses. In the 1937 fire, we had no place to go. There was no Red Cross and Longhouse to evacuate to. There was no outside assistance and no modern equipment to suppress the fires. You were considered very fortunate if someone gave you a used flour sack full of straw for a pillow or mattress or a piece of half rotted canvas to cover up with when it came time for sleep.

For those who were victims of the Simnasho Fire, we console you in your loss of property. My son Easton, also a victim, lost his entire automotive body and fender repair shop along with construction, framing, concrete and reforestation equipment, as well. Many of you are still young enough to rebuild and start life anew. My prayers for you ascend to our God: The Creator of all good.

George W. Aguilar, Sr.

PS: I'm again saddened to hear that the area of Wolford Canyon has been considered for a garbage disposal site. My main concern is the unpolluted spring streams cascading down this canyon. What will happen? Will it become unfit for livestock and wildlife? Does it include polluting the Shitike Creek? What are the other consequences?

Landowners workshop scheduled for November

The Indian land working group, along with the Fallon Paiute Shoshone, Walker River, Pyramid Lake tribes and the Intertribal Council of Nevada will co-host the 6th annual Indian Land Consolidation Conference. The conference is scheduled for November 13-16th at the Flamingo Hilton in downtown Reno. Special focus will be given to problems faced by tribes and Indian landowners related to allotted lands. As in the past, the conference will also provide participants with a unique opportunity to learn about tribal models and activities in the area of Indian probate, land ownership

data collection, tribal inheritance codes and land acquisition opportunities.

A revised "draft legislative proposal" developed by the Indian land working group will be presented. The proposal includes provisions for estate planning services; trust lands records management; removal of barriers to real estate transactions; a tribal and individual Indian land acquisition fund; and a federal probate code.

Policy issues impacting land ownership and resources will be addressed. These will include the impact BIA downsizing on real estate

and probate services related to Indian land as well as the class action suit which was filed by individual Indian landowners over mismanagement of their IIM (Individual Indian Money) monies which are derived from trust funds.

Tribal representatives will analyze the opportunity tribes may have to negotiate the return of federal lands in light of the disclosure earlier this year that documents verifying \$2.4 billion worth of the tribal trust funds transactions cannot be found and it appears that the government will not provide a full monetary compensation.