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Digging roots, a lifetime commitment

By D. "Bing" Bingham
Spilyay Tymoo

Suzie Slockish and Nola Queahpama have been designated root diggers for the last 30 years. It's not an easy job and it didn't happen by chance.

"I've been digging since 1971," says Nola Queahpama. "My father passed away at that time and my mother [another designated root digger] was in mourning. I was chosen to go in her place and I've been there ever since."

Once chosen, you're a root digger for life. Slockish was chosen about the same time.

"My mother's position as a root digger was given to her by her aunt," says Slockish. "She wanted to put me in training so she put me in her place. I've been there ever since."

Root diggers gather the first foods of the year. They are the only ones designated to gather them before the feast. It is a sacred time, a holy time.

"A big part of preparing for the Root Feast is having the belief that what you're doing is for the people, but even more important than that, you're working for the Creator," says Wilson Weva Jr. "A lot of those people were appointed for life because they knew in their heart what the meaning was of the food we eat - how holy, how sacred those foods are and what they mean to our life."

Knowledge of the sacredness of food isn't enough. A root digger's mind and heart need to be clear and clean. That takes preparation.

"There's a special time that we go



Nola Queahpama prepares roots.

Bing Bingham/Spilyay

to the longhouse, on the Sunday before the feast. We all show ourselves to the Creator," says Queahpama. "The leader says a prayer for all of us that we will be taken care of and have good luck when we dig or pick."

There's also a memorial service for people who have lost loved ones. It's a time of cleansing, to release the grief. Queahpama continues: "The teaching is that you don't handle food with bad feelings. You should always handle food

with a kind heart, a good heart. That's one of the strong teachings in our culture, because you will make people sick if you handle the food with meanness and bad feelings."

During the memorial service, the root diggers have a crying ceremony (where the tears flow freely) before the memorial dinner. Afterwards, they have the giveaway, where they let go the last of their negative feelings.

However, the cleansing doesn't stop there. Each root digger continues at home, prayers and sweat lodge. It's the same as the memorial service, but done in the privacy of their home.

Sometimes the cleansing and mourning don't work because there's too much grief.

"It depends on a person's loss and if they have that difficult feeling. The person has to make up their own mind about going root digging," says Slockish. "If it's difficult for them, they find someone to go in their place and then they'll continue on the next time they're ready to go."

She continues, "I'm in that situation now. I just recently had a big loss, so I'm holding myself back from root digging because it's difficult for me to carry on these things without thinking bad thoughts. My sister has been going so I put her in my place. It's just up to us - whoever feels fit to go and take this role on because it's a big role, it's a lot of work, it's a lot of preparation. You can go a whole week to prepare for a feast."

See ROOT DIGGERS on 14

Composite Products expands to Asia-Pacific

By Colleen McGraw
Cascade Business News

The Confederated Tribes have cause for celebration. In December 2003, an agreement between Warm Springs Composite Products, maker of fire door components, and a Central Oregon-based global trade management and consulting firm confirmed Composite Product's expansion into Asia-Pacific markets.

The two-year contract calls for the consulting and marketing firm, HPG Worldwide, to travel overseas on behalf of Composite Products. The firm will examine markets and make connections with prospective customers, represent Composite Products at international trade shows, arrange financial terms and relationships and secure payment plans and complete trade, distribution and project management services.

Warm Springs Composite Products has been a supplier of fire door components for 11 years. The company is one of only two such suppliers nationwide.

Tectonite, a light mineral-based component that goes into the fire door products, is a durable, heat and fire resistant product that is exceptional for tooling. Composite Products' fire door components are fundamental in the fabrication of high rise commercial or industrial buildings.

According to a report released by HPG Worldwide, their fire-rating specifications are foremost in the world.

"We have been growing significantly over the past few years here in the U.S., this is the next logical step, moving into Asia-Pacific," said Duane Darnell, chief executive officer of Warm Springs Forest Products.

Taking on the endeavor alone would be overwhelming, said Darnell. "With HPG Worldwide we can count firmly on their many years of experience in the region and their numerous business and government contacts throughout Asia-Pacific."

The seed for the expansion to Asia-Pacific was planted in October 2003, said Kimo Dejon, president of HPG Worldwide.

At that time, he and Darnell began to discuss the possibilities and implications of Composite Products expanding into mainland China. The Asian nation's increasing economic boom, and HPG Worldwide's years of experience within that market, made the agreement a logical step forward for Composite Products.

"We believe that Composite Products has significant potential in all major markets of Asia-Pacific," said Dejon. "Composite Products has a unique product line of superior, certified fire rated door products and accessories which are used in commercial and industrial construction worldwide."

HPG has nearly twenty-years of experience in major Asian-Pacific markets. The firm specializes in assisting small to medium-sized enterprises in the U.S. extend their business into those markets. HPG's international staff includes trade professionals whose task it is to develop and maintain a network of distributors, government officials and business leaders throughout the U.S. and abroad. The company also works in association with the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, Small Business International Trade Program and numerous U.S. and foreign government trade offices.

Tribes continue casino discussion at Gorge

By Raelynn Ricarte
Hood River News

The Confederated Tribes have publicly unveiled their conceptual designs for a casino - should one be built there - in Cascade Locks.

The 500,000 square foot building would cover 25 acres in the existing industrial park just east of town.

It has been deliberately engineered to blend with the surrounding viewscape, according to tribal officials.

The plan was accomplished by recreating the long and low look of a tribal fishing village; the facade of the structure is broken up with varied angles and concave entrances that fea-

ture basalt rock, natural wood and waterfalls. The scenic theme includes a main corridor that resembles a "winding river" and extends to the end of the western parking lot.

The walkway is interspersed with cascading fountains next to rock columns depicting ancient petroglyphs and wooden walls that are interwoven in historic basket designs. The tribes wanted the gaming facility to serve not only as a recreational center but a "cultural museum" to educate visitors.

"These concepts are part of an ongoing conversation reflective of the history and love of the lands along the Columbia River which have been a

central part of our tribal heritage for over 10,000 years," said Garland Brunoe, chair of the Tribal Council.

A look at the potential \$225-\$300 million project was given on April 5 to the Cascade Locks City Council and the Hood River County Board of Commissioners.

However, tribal leaders were quick to point out that the realization of the plans was dependent upon the approval of Gov. Ted Kulongoski. They also reminded local officials that they were prepared to move ahead with schematics that had already been drawn for the 40-acre trust parcel just east of Hood River if necessary.

The tribe has formally requested that negotiations begin with Oregon's lead official to site a gaming center somewhere in the Gorge. Kulongoski has the final say on whether a casino can be constructed on off-reservation lands within the state.

"We're moving forward on all fronts because the tribe has such a desperate need - now it depends on the governor," Brunoe said. He was joined in a public discussion of the issue by Dennis Karnopp, tribal attorney, Greg Leo, public and government affairs counsel, and Jeff Ford, chief executive officer for Kah-Nee-Ta.

See CASINO on page 14

Much has changed for students at high school

By Ashley Aguilar, Spilyay intern

Freda Wallulatum was the first Native American from Warm Springs to attend Madras High School. Native students attended MHS before Wallulatum but they were not enrolled members of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

Sid Miller and Levi Greene of Warm Springs followed Wallulatum a year later and there has been a steady stream of local students attending MHS ever since.

That was 60 years ago and the scenery has changed a great deal since then. Many things that affected people's lives in the 1940s don't even exist today.

It is interesting to take a look back and see how times have changed.

Wallulatum broke the ice by attending high school in Madras and thanks to this tribal elder we can share our cultural heritage with people from many backgrounds. Madras is now recognized as being one of the most diverse schools in the state.

There wasn't much diversity at the school during the 1940s. There were no Hispanics at the school and only a handful of Native Americans. Wallulatum came from a different background than the other students and her unique characteristics proved popular.

"Everyone loved Freda, she was well received," said Lala DaLude, a friend.

Some people want to believe that prejudice was

a big part of society, but that did not come until years later.

"All the girls loved her long black hair," DaLude went on to say.

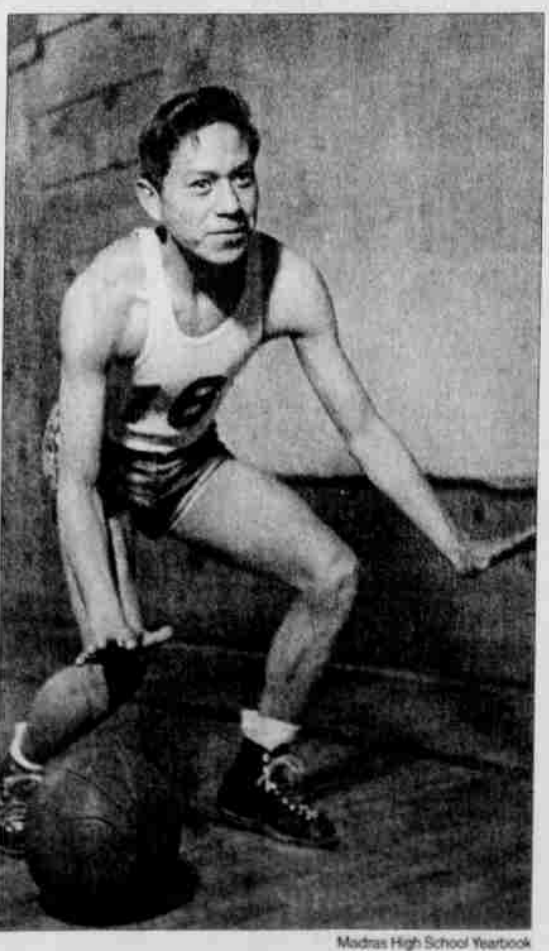
Madras High School was called Madras Union High School when Wallulatum enrolled, a name that would fit better today because there is more diversity uniting the student body.

Another interesting fact is that the high school was actually located at what is now known as West Side Elementary.

Some say size doesn't matter, and if that's the case it won't be a shock to learn there were only 34 students at the high school when Wallulatum was a student. Transportation to and from Madras was by bus, which wasn't even half full most of the time. The road was paved but the landscape was different.

Today, when driving to Madras, the traveler sees cattle, sheep, hay fields and various crops growing along the way. But in the 1940s the irrigation system was not in place. There were very few houses or farms, just desert. Things have changed a lot over the years.

Today Madras High School is about one-third Native American. Hundreds of students from Warm Springs have graduated from MHS and many have gone on to college or used their education to find employment. Miller, one of the first graduates, went on to be a founder and the first publisher of Spilyay Tymoo.



A young Sid Miller is pictured here on the basketball court at the high school. He was one of the first tribal members to attend and graduate from MHS.

Madras High School Yearbook