

O'odham basketball player reigns supreme on, off court

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — At 6, Wynona Peters was insistent.

And even though Grandma was often busy cooking dinner or doing chores at their home in Mission View RV Park, she always caved.

Grandma and her dark-haired, dark-eyed little basketball player often lost track of time as the girl launched two-handed shots into the night.

"We would plan on going for 30 minutes, and it would end up being like two, three hours," said Verna Miguel, Peters' great-aunt, but known as her grandma. "That's about all we ever did. I enjoyed it. I knew right from the start that she was going to be a big baller."

She was right. Peters, now a senior at Salpointe Catholic High School, is arguably the best girls basketball player in southern Arizona.

She also has become an expert in the Tohono O'odham tradition.

The 17-year-old is the tribe's reigning Waa Pow Princess and a member of the Waa tab basket dancers, a group that performed last July Fourth at the Smithsonian's Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

And thanks to her grandma and Tucson benefactor Dan Frost, Peters will head to college soon.

Peters would not offer any of this information without prompting. Her Salpointe classmates learned of her tribal honors only a few months ago, when she was profiled in the school's student magazine. She kept quiet about her achievements for more than three years.

"As O'odham people, we don't like to show emotion," she said. "We like to keep it inside. That's how we are."

Peters lives with the 59-year-old Miguel while her mother, Vivian, works. Her father, David, is a member of the Ak-Chin tribe. He lives on the reservation, in the town of Maricopa.

The family travels to Peters' games on money earned from operating an Indian fry bread stand outside the San Xavier del Bac Mission on Sundays.

Miguel enjoys watching her protege most. Miguel, who never had children of her own, taught Peters both basketball and O'odham tradition. Peters won the Little Miss Waa crown at age 5 after singing a song about four children who sacrificed their lives to stop a flood. She won similar titles at ages 10 and 13.

Peters was named Pow Wow Princess last March after a pageant that required her to display both traditional and modern O'odham talents. She's since represented the tribe at the Gathering of Nations Pow Wow in Albuquerque.

Peters sees herself as an ambassador for the O'odham.

"When I play basketball, I guess it's more exposure for me on the court. When I dance, I get more exposure for my tribe. Both of those things ... let non-Native Americans know who I am and what I stand for."

The once-shy girl has become a member of the Salpointe community, an exclusive group that few from her tribe have the opportunity to join. She was accepted to the school after attending grade school at the San Xavier del Bac Mission School.

Her tuition is paid for by Frost, an 85-year-old philanthropist who has long sponsored students from the mission

school. Frost first met Peters when she was in sixth grade; he has since followed her academic and athletic achievements closely.

"It brings joy to me," Frost said. "There have been some great kids to come through the mission school, but Wynona is very, very special. She has that maturity and spirituality about her."

"I don't know how she does it."

What basketball brought out in her, she gave back to the team.

Peters averages 16 points, 5.9 rebounds and 5.6 assists per game.

"She makes everything go," said Scott Moushon, the Lancers' first-year coach. "She doesn't ever get a rest, and she doesn't ever come out."

Those who know Peters the best paint her as a quiet, willful girl who exudes the grace befitting a Waa princess.

She will leave the reservation soon, and basketball. A hardworking student who has a 3.2 grade-point average, she's set on attending the University of San Diego.

"I'm close to everybody on the reservation, so leaving will be hard," she said.

Peters also will give up basketball to concentrate solely on school. She plans on returning to the reservation as a pediatrician after medical school.

Frost, her benefactor, has agreed to pay for all her educational expenses. He has accounted for Peters in his will.

"Some people just know who they are," Frost said. "She has this inherent wisdom, self-confidence and leadership. Because of what she is and how she is, she can be a great leader."

Sioux chief's descendants want his remains moved

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP)—Four descendants of Sioux Chief Sitting Bull want the bones of their famous ancestor moved from what is believed to be his resting place in South Dakota to the Little Bighorn Battlefield in Montana.

Ernie LaPointe of Lead, S.D., the spokesman for the four family members, said that for 50 years, Sitting Bull's grave on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation near Mobridge, S.D., has been neglected and dishonored. Now, LaPointe said, new owners of the property plan to exploit the legendary Lakota leader's memory.

LaPointe and his sisters, Marlene Little Spotted Horse Andersen, Ethel Little Spotted Horse Bates and Lydia Little Spotted Horse Red Paint, sent letters Wednesday advising government and tribal officials in North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana of their intent to have the remains moved.

"This is to notify you and other interested parties of family right and authority to re-inter our great-grandfather Sitting Bull to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Montana," it says. "We do this because North Dakota, South Dakota and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe have not honored their promise for proper care and maintenance of our grandfather's burial site."

Darrell Cook, superintendent

at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, said the battlefield has agreed to help LaPointe and his sisters.

"We recognize Sitting Bull's legacy and that it is at the Little Bighorn," Cook said.

Sitting Bull led an alliance of Sioux, Cheyenne and others in defiance of government orders to settle on reservations. His struggle culminated in the defeat of the 7th Cavalry at Little Bighorn on June 25, 1876.

The National Park Service and Sitting Bull's direct descendants have a long-established working relationship that dates to planning for the new Indian Memorial at the Battlefield, Cook said.

"I think that's why they felt comfortable coming to us about this," he said.

Sitting Bull, who was killed in a battle with Indian police in 1890, was originally buried near Fort Yates, N.D., in the northern part of the Standing Rock Reservation.

Sitting Bull's ancestors moved his remains to South Dakota in the 1950s, although some contend the bones were not his, but those of another man. Part of the site's attraction is the mystery and controversy.

The catalyst for the great-grandchildren's decision apparently was a proposal by the non-profit Sitting Bull Monument Foundation, which recently purchased the gravesite from a private owner. According to its Web site, the foundation's plans include preservation and protection of the gravesite and de-

velopment of an educational and cultural center and museum. It would also include a riverfront recreational development, amphitheater, snack bar, restaurant and gift shop.

LaPointe said he and his sisters were not consulted about the plans and don't want to see a restaurant and gift shops at the gravesite.

Reached by The Billings Gazette by telephone, Bryan Defender, a member of the Standing Rock Tribe and one of the founders of the Sitting Bull Monument Foundation, said commercialization was never his intent.

"Our motivation behind this is very sincere," he said. "The development is a very positive thing. The only thing I want to do is display our culture, our history in an authentic, positive way and to pay tribute to a leader who has never been properly paid tribute."

The foundation already has completed a major cleanup at the gravesite and has installed electricity and lighting.

LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, tourism director for Standing Rock, said Wednesday that she had not heard about LaPointe's letter. Her first reaction to hearing of his plan: "I don't think that's possible."

She said that although LaPointe has rights, he is not enrolled at Standing Rock and she doesn't know what rights he has on reservation lands.

Reservation drug dealer gets almost 30 years in prison

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP)—The son of a woman who has been accused of being the ring-leader of a cocaine trafficking ring on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation has been sentenced to almost 30 years in prison.

U.S. District Judge Karen Schreier gave Colin Spotted Elk 352 months in prison and urged him to do his best to live up to his potential after he is released.

Spotted Elk, 26, and his mother, Geraldine Blue Bird, have been convicted of conspiracy to distribute cocaine and of firearms and marijuana distribution charges.

Blue Bird's sentencing was delayed until next month.

Witnesses have identified Blue Bird as the leader of a ring that distributed at least 15 kilo-

grams of cocaine on the reservation and has resulted in 27 indictments to date.

At Spotted Elk's sentencing on Tuesday, a 15-year-old boy who had shot and killed another teenager at Blue Bird's home testified that he and other juveniles held money and distributed drugs for Blue Bird and Spotted Elk.

The boy testified that teenagers had packaged drugs with their parents, users traded firearms and sexual favors for cocaine, and toddlers had access to handguns. Schreier ordered that the juvenile be referred to by his initials, C.C.

C.C. said he started using cocaine at age 13 and often stayed at Blue Bird's doublewide trailer house in the Igloo Housing af-

ter dropping out of school in the fourth grade.

He said he helped "break up" marijuana that Spotted Elk sold and cut "papers" out of magazines that Blue Bird used to re-package cocaine for sale on the street. C.C. said he sometimes held marijuana or stacks of cash for Spotted Elk.

C.C. named several other juveniles who he said sold drugs for Spotted Elk or Blue Bird. He told of seeing two teenagers doing cocaine with their mother at Blue Bird's house.

C.C. is serving a one-year sentence for involuntary manslaughter at the Western South Dakota Juvenile Services Center. He has admitted pointing a gun and shooting his friend Apollo White Calf, 16, late in 2005.

Catawba author donates collection

ROCK HILL, S.C. (AP) — The author of a new book about the Catawba Indian tribe has also donated his collection of historical documents and other materials relating to the tribe to the University of South Carolina Lancaster.

"There's nothing else like this in the state, not this quantity," university archivist Brent Burgin said of author Thomas Blumer's collection. "Basically, Tom has created a body of work where none existed."

"It's a huge set of material related to the Catawba Nation,

history and other American Indian tribes in the area."

The collection includes 1,600 photographs and a series of taped interviews.

Blumer's latest book, "Catawba Nation: Treasures in History," will be released this week.

Cherokee group cuts acres for Goosepond cultural site

SCOTTSBORO, Ala. (AP)—In an effort to make a proposed cultural center on Goosepond Island more appealing to the Scottsboro City Council, an American Indian tribe has cut the size of the land it seeks to build the tribal complex on.

Leon Williamson, a member of the United Cherokee Ani-Yun-Wiya Nation, told the council Monday night the tribe wanted to build the center on 55 acres on the southern tip of the island,

mainly to educate people about the American Indians who once lived on the island.

Williamson said the tribe would eventually like to expand the site to the 300 acres it had initially requested if the project becomes a big tourist draw.

He believes the complex, including a museum, gift shop and veterans memorial, would attract thousands of visitors annually.

"There's no reason why Scottsboro cannot attract that

many visitors," said Garry Morgan, a council-appointed committee member.

But council President Keith Smith said the project demands more research. He said he was concerned that turning the land over to the tribe would lead to a gambling operation.

But Williamson said he and other tribal leaders vowed they would never pursue gambling, with education their main goal in creating the cultural center.

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