

# Family escapes White Swan fire

By Duran Bobb  
Spilyay Tymoo

On the Saturday before St. Valentine's Day, the wind began to blow and that's where it all started.

"It was mad," tribal member Gladys Heath said. "There were things flying all over the place. But it got worse when the word of mouth started that there was a bad fire going on somewhere and that things might get worse."

A chimney fire ignited late that morning and spread to a nearby wood chip operation.

Emergency calls began flooding switchboards as early as 1:30 that afternoon.

The wind that day blew as hard as 70 mph. And the word of mouth was about a house fire on Hitchcock Lane in White Swan.

"There was no warning at all. It seemed like one minute, we heard about the fire and that it might be heading our way...and then the next, we barely had enough time to get outside. Barely had time to dash down the main street."

With flames all around, Gladys and her family made their escape. Houses were burning on both sides of the post office. And the family had a moment to look back to see their 4-bedroom house engulfed in fire.

"There was no time at all. We had to move. I didn't stop to grab anything, that's how fast it all happened. I think now, we're lucky to get out of the house at all."

As firefighters tried to douse the flames, the strong wind redirected the stream of water from hoses. "The wind was so strong you couldn't walk in it," Yakama Nation Fire Management Don Jones said.



The family, Katie, Gladys Heath-Sam holding Cameron, her husband Thomas Sam, Samantha, and Mya (from left), lost their home in the White Swan fire.

"Just imagine running for your life through that wind, plus the fire," Kirby Heath, Gladys' father, said.

As the family escaped on foot, the roadblocks went up.

"By then it was a voluntary evacuation," Gladys said. "Once you got out, you couldn't go back in. We just had the shirts on our backs then."

Families were taken to churches, school gyms, longhouses. "Thank God people were able to stay there. They said to wait until they got the fire under control, then they'd let us start going home again."

Sunday, the day after the exodus, the families were allowed to return. There were still about 100 firefighters in White Swan.

"They were still putting out the fire on the other loops," Gladys said. "None of it felt

real. There were downed power lines. Some areas were still blocked off, but they let some people in to see the damages.

"It was all gone. There was nothing but a pile of ashes where just a few days before I was serving dinner. We lost everything...clothes, toys, family pictures. Our home was all gone."

"Family is what makes a home," Kirby said. "I could never replace my daughter or one of my grandkids, so I'm thankful that they made it out. The other things will come back to them, eventually."

Board by board, it will cost an estimated \$4 million to rebuild the 18 homes in White Swan. Even more homes were permanently damaged by the fire. 120 people are homeless.

But after a time of tragedy comes the reminder of the hu-

man heart.

The Ramsey Family, who owns the popular Cougar Den, made the single largest donation to the victims in the form of \$25,000. Locally, Sandra Danzuka and Danny Martinez gathered items donated by Warm Springs tribal members, and transported the much-needed items to Yakama. Tribal council also approved a substantial donation to the Yakama people on behalf of the Confederated Tribes.

"Thank you," Gladys said. "There's still so much work. I can't believe it. What the people are doing means more than just a shirt or a pair of pants, it means being one step closer to being where we were before the fire. That means a lot."

For now, Gladys and her family are living in a motel room.

# Sentencing in murder case delayed

By Duran Bobb  
Spilyay Tymoo

The sentencing hearing for Jolena Jean Warner and Antonio Brito has been delayed until April 11.

Just two days prior to the court date, prosecutors informed the victim's family about the delay.

"I want the people to know," Neda Wesley said, "the sentencing will be a very large part of closure not just for our family, but for all people who have been touched."

Late on the morning of September 24, 2008, Jolena Warner, 27, caught a ride to 1306 Eagle Way. There, she told a tribal member that she had murdered Lucinda Stwyer, 24, mother of three children. Warner had the victim's cell phone, purse, and rings.

Later that day, at 2:27 p.m., authorities responded to a call from Ken Lydy, then the Supervisor of Fire Management, regarding a possible fire near Trout Lake. Fire management personnel responded and discovered the crime scene.

At 9:20 that evening, Warm Springs detective Aaron Whittenburg interviewed the tribal members who spoke with Jolena Warner. They outlined a terrible scene, described by Warner.

Six days later, Warner surrendered to federal authorities in Portland. She

was accompanied by her attorney.

On Oct. 1, 2008, Warner made her initial appearance on a criminal complaint, charging her with murder in the first degree for the premeditated killing of Lucinda Stwyer. On the same day, family and friends gathered in memorial of Stwyer.

"She wasn't a bad person," Kelli Langnese, a friend of Stwyer's said. "She did what she had to do to take care of her family."

"They could have robbed her and beaten her up," Eric Langnese said. "They didn't have to murder her."

Prosecutors are recommending a minimum sentence of 25 years to life for Warner.

Her accomplice Antonio Brito is also charged in the murder.

"Warner's accomplice wept in court," Neda said. "Please don't send me out of state, he said. I have family and they wouldn't be able to visit me if I went out of state. I have children who need to see me," he said.

"Well... Lucinda had three children too, I thought. You took her away. They have to visit her now from the graveside."

Sentencing is scheduled for April 11, 2011, at the Mark O. Hatfield Courts in Portland.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant US Attorneys Scott Kerin and Pamala Holsinger.

# Huge jump in Calif. salmon predicted

(AP) - California could see a return to a full-length coastal salmon fishing season this year with biologists forecasting a tripling of the fish's ocean population, state fish and wildlife officials said last week.

The agency is projecting 729,000 salmon in coastal waters in 2011, up from a 2010 projection of 245,000 fish, Department of Fish and Game spokesman Harry Morse said.

If actual salmon numbers come anywhere close to the latest forecast, West Coast salmon fishermen could see their first good catch in years after cancelled seasons in 2008 and 2009 and a shortened season in 2010 led to hundreds of millions of dollars in losses, according to department estimates.

"Good news for a change," said Fish and Game Deputy Director Sonke Mastrup. "Salmon numbers are projected to provide some real opportunity for sport and commercial

anglers." The department announced the preliminary figure Tuesday at a meeting in Santa Rosa. Federal regulators next week will evaluate the data and come up with a final number to make recommendations on the length of this year's season, Morse said.

The department cautions the actual number of salmon counted by the 2010 season's end was fewer than half what was predicted. Estimates are based on information about the number of salmon that returned to spawn in California rivers, the number of fish spawning in state salmon hatcheries and a sampling of the current ocean population.

The prediction for this year's ocean population is based mainly on the number of adult Chinook salmon in the Sacramento River fall run, which despite being smaller than expected saw a return to more normal levels after major drops in 2008 and

2009. The department of fish and game calls the Sacramento River fall run the "main driver" of coastal commercial and sport salmon fishing.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council is set next week to consider its recommendations for the length of this year's salmon season, with a final decision set to come later in the spring.

California fish and game officials are making preparations based on expectations that the season could start as early as mid-April off the Humboldt County coast in Northern California, Morse said.

Some fishermen worried that despite the higher number of salmon heading upriver, the fish must still traverse the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta before returning to the ocean. Environmentalists and fishermen blame pumps in the delta that channel water to many of the state's farmers for the salmon's sharp decline.

# Casinos revenue falls for first time

(AP) - An economist says that for the first time, revenue has fallen at American Indian gambling casinos nationwide.

Alan Meister says in the Indian Gaming Industry Report released last week that casinos generated about \$26.4 billion in 2009, down 1 percent from 2008. He says

the decline was triggered by a recession that forced consumers to cut spending.

The report noted that more than 200 Indian tribes operated nearly 450 casinos in 28 states. Revenue from food and beverages, lodging, entertainment and shopping declined 4 percent to \$3.2 billion in 2009.

Meister says public policies

that restrict Indian gambling helped slow the rate of revenue growth before the recession.

Meister says the highest revenue growth in 2009 was in Alabama, Alaska, Nebraska and Wyoming. Revenue declined at Indian casinos in Arizona, Connecticut, Iowa and Mississippi.

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