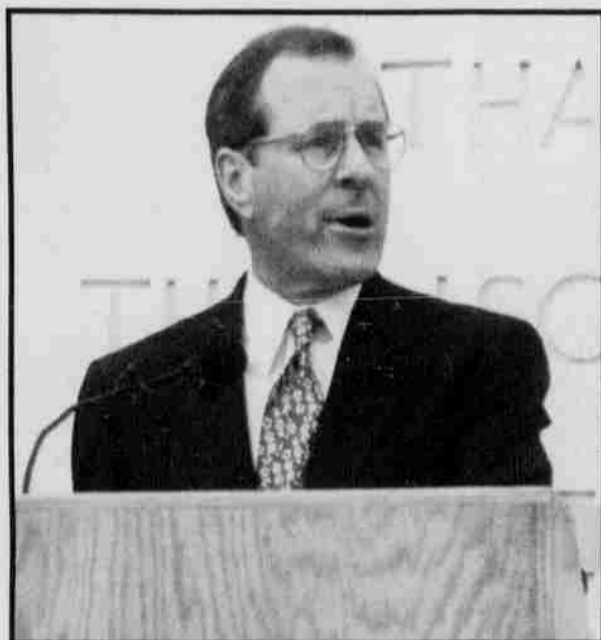


## 2003 Tribal Information Day At The State Capital



**The Governor Says He Recognizes Sovereignty** — Oregon State Governor Ted Kulongoski spoke at Tribal Information Day on Thursday, May 22. Tribal Information Day is an annual meeting between elected Tribal and State representatives with an emphasis towards advancing the understanding of Tribal issues. Kulongoski said he recognizes the sovereignty of Oregon Tribes and promised to work closely with Tribal governments in the future. Dozens of Natives from all across Oregon, as well as representatives from all nine Oregon Tribal Councils attended.

Photos by Peta Tinda



## Memories Are On The Menu At The Tribe's Memorial Day Dinner

■ Tribal Elders use the event to tell stories of days gone by.

By Ron Karten

The Memorial Day dinner held at the Tribe's Community Center looked like a lot of other meals. It carried with it, though, the memories of days gone by.

The cemetery is much the center — and Tribal members remember the sprucing up along with the running around — but the memories of those lost is mixed with the remembrance of big family reunions, which in some cases are the biggest reunions a family enjoyed all year.

The Holmes family has its own cemetery up on a hill behind Grand Ronde. "The family is up there right now, finishing their cleanup of the cemetery," said Tribal Elder Merle Holmes on the Friday before the Memorial Dinner. "It'll be ready.

"A lot of people, to keep their flowers fresh, they'll do it on Monday," said Holmes. "But our celebration isn't any different.

"It's a private cemetery," said Holmes. "On a hill. We never have to put the coffins

down in water. It's been there since the Civil War. It's been in our family's hands all that time. We're pretty proud of it. We try to take care of it. My uncles and aunts all have children there. The Holmes people go there. There's no charge for it.

"The only thing I can remember," he said, "my folks lived on the property at that time. I remember lots of people. It was about the only time of the year I'd see them. And there was always lots

of food, a chance to visit. That's what I remember as a little boy. It was a gathering time. And a time to sit down and eat. Talk about old times. A happy time. Everybody was glad to see each other. Usually, we'd just get together when we'd lose

did. Sometimes, it was Mom and Dad and us two kids; sometimes we had 25 people.

"I always thought it was neat when you got through, you could walk to the old part of the cemetery (where the grave stones go) clear back

to pioneer times.

"On the actual Memorial Day, we would go up to the old Clason Place (up near Mehama). A lot more relatives and cousins lived right on the river. We'd always have a picnic.

"My clearest memory is when we'd put the irises, lilacs, snowball, roses in the car for the cemetery. I remember the smell of the car (with all the flowers inside)."

Billie's husband, Tribal member Gene LaBonte, remembered that "we used to make flowers out of crepe paper and then dip them in wax."

He also remembered cemetery detail: "We'd just decorate a couple of graves and then get out." And: "We weren't allowed to run around in the cemetery." And at that age, he added, "I wanted to, bad."

"It seems like we had so much respect in those days," said Billie.

"I had fear," said Gene, now, all these years later, smiling.

For others, it was the details of the clean up operation at the cemetery that came to mind, the importance of the event for keeping the Tribe together, and maybe most endearing, the way the holiday became a time to pass down traditions and traditional knowledge.

"My parents told me, sometime, it would be my day (to pass on our traditions)," said Billie LaBonte.

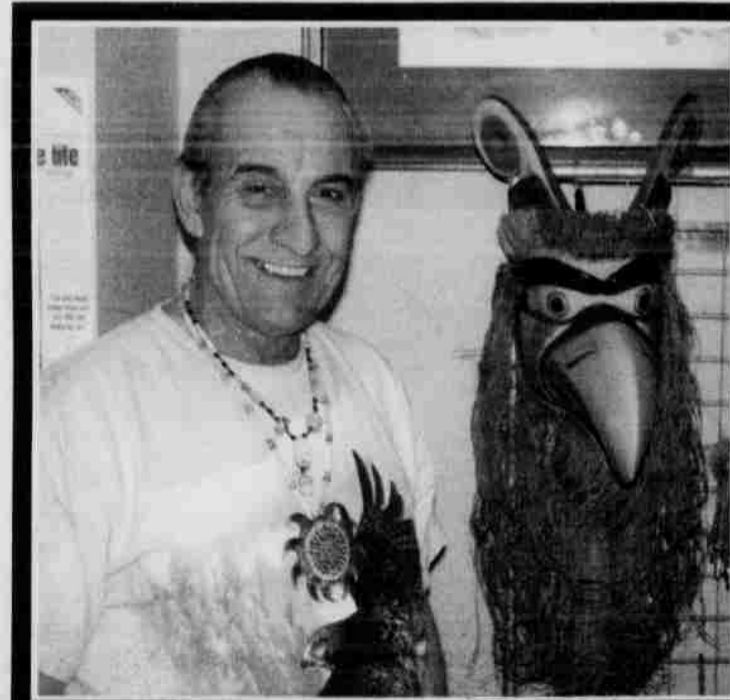


"Let's Eat" — Tribal Elder Herman Hudson, Jr. (center) is surrounded by fellow Elders at the Tribe's Memorial Day Dinner. The dinner was held at the Community Center on Saturday, May 24.

Photo by Ron Karten

somebody, which was a sad time. But this was a happy time for us."

"We always had lots of family," said Billie LaBonte, "lots of picnics. All my ancestors are buried in Fox Valley (between Lyons and Mill City). It's just an old pioneer cemetery with no caretakers. Mom and Dad were Johnny-on-the-spot taking care of the cemetery. It always took three or four trips. It was just what our family



**Native American Week** —

Indian arts and crafts were on display at the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino during Native American Week (May 19 - 23). Social Services Administrative Assistant Linda Jireck and Tribal Council member Bob Haller (right) check out some of the items on display. Examples of traditional basket-making techniques (left) were shown to the curious casino goers. Well-known local artist John Hawks (left) was there with his finely crafted goods, like this carved cedar eagle mask.

Photos by Peta Tinda

