

Letters

Dear Editor,

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all the people who took the time to send me flowers and good wishes recently. I'm doing better and feeling good.

Gene LaBonte
Roll #348

Dear Ron,

I have never complimented a reporter for an article they have written, let alone written a compliment letter. I read your article (*Smoke Signals*, "Warrior Interrupted," 12/15/2003 issue) and was moved by it. I found it was objectively written but very compassionate. Congratulations on such a fine piece of writing.

Tom O'Brien
Polk County Sheriff's Deputy

Dear *Smoke Signals*,

My name is SGT Athena Cook of the 324th Military Police Battalion which I have been serving with since February 2003. We are currently deployed in Iraq. As a medic I do what I can to keep us safe and unharmed. Sometimes it does not always work, but I try. I would like to know if you would place an ad in the *Smoke Signals* for my family I left behind in Maryland and Kansas. I want

"I serve in the Army so that one day my children will not have to."
~Athena Cook

them to know that I'm alright and that I miss them every second of every day. I hope someday soon I will be back in their loving arms. I have married a wonderful man, Jeremy, who sends me the *Smoke Signals* when he can. I love reading about the lives of the Tribe. Also, let my loved ones know that they are everything to me. They have all given me their love, trust and respect all of my life. Thank you. Without their support I do not know if I would have made it this far. I also left behind two very important parts of my life, my children. Cheyenne is 7 years old and Michael is 1 year old. Some days are better than other days when I think of what I have missed in their lives. I serve in the Army so that one day my children will not have to. I want to give them the freedom to choose their life path. One day they may understand the sacrifice that I had to make for their freedom. And yes, I do believe that about everything. I believe in freedom.

SGT Athena Cook
324th MP BN
Roll #4829

Dear *Smoke Signals*,

News from Tikret, Iraq! Hello my family in Chehalis, Washington, my wife Debbie, sons Matt, Alan and my daughter Jennifer. I love you.

To the rest of my abundant family members, you know who you are. I am a Stryker Technician with the Stryker Bergade stationed in the area of Tikret, Iraq. I'll be home in about a year, hopefully sooner.

Love you all — God Bless!

John Young
Roll #2569

(Mother, Betsy Schaefer (LaBonte) Astoria, Oregon; Grandmother, Ester LaBonte, at peace with God, laid to rest at the Grand Ronde Cemetery.)



Dear *Smoke Signals*,

My heart was beating with an enthusiastic pace as the day arrived for the hand drum class at the Vocational Rehabilitation Portland Area Office. (PAO). I give thanks to Joanne Carr and Bobby Mercier for their dedication to spend all day with the local Tribal members on May 22, 2003. I also thank the Education and Culture Departments for the dedication and funding to the Tribal members in the Portland area so that they feel do not feel left out of their arrival; we all were. Bobby was very instructive in his way in presenting the process and we all pitched in to eagerly listen, learn and begin.

It was a day that built community among Portland Tribal members. Everyone was in agreement that it was going to be a special day and something special was going to be achieved. That special item was an Indian hand drum. The emotions ranged from the soaking tanks to setting up the tables and tools. Everyone set aside their differences and became one Tribe for one goal.

The process of making a drum took patience and skill. Bobby was only one person, but it seemed that he was pulled into 20 persons once the drum was taking on a life of itself. The excitement became overwhelming and the atmosphere became filled with anticipation to see the finished product. I commend Bobby for his patience and assistance with everyone.

My finished drum has become an important part of my heritage and culture now. I have already used it in ceremonies and have even had a chance to drum and sing with Bobby on a cultural trip to the top of Spirit Mountain. I have taken it to a Native Christian conference and have sung one of the songs that was taught to the VR group by Tony Johnson. It has inspired me to want to learn more and teach my children the importance of the drum and the songs that come with it. I will one day make a drum with my boys, so that they will have their own and one day they will make a drum with their children and pass on the songs they have learned.

With respect,

Jon A. George
Roll #1631

SMOKE SIGNALS 2004 DEADLINES

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Thurs., Feb. 5	FEB. 15
Fri., Feb. 20	MAR. 1
Fri., Mar. 5	MAR. 15
Fri., Mar. 19	APR. 1
Mon., Apr. 5	APR. 15
Mon., Apr. 19	MAY. 1
Wed., May 5	MAY. 15
Fri., May 21	JUN. 1
Fri., Jun. 4	JUN. 15
Fri., Jun. 18	JUL. 1
Fri., Jul. 2	JUL. 15
Mon., Jul. 19	AUG. 1
Thurs., Aug. 5	AUG. 15
Fri., Aug. 20	SEP. 1
Fri., Sep. 3	SEP. 15
Fri., Sep. 17	OCT. 1
Tues., Oct. 5	OCT. 15
Wed., Oct. 20	NOV. 1
Fri., Nov. 5	NOV. 15
Wed., Nov. 17	DEC. 1
Fri., Dec. 3	DEC. 15
Thurs., Dec. 16	JAN. 1, 2005

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