

# 2004 Year In Review

By Ron Karten

**S** *Smoke Signals* opened 2004 with news that tells us more looking back now than it did back then. We published a letter in the January 1st issue from Tribal Elder Merle Holmes. He praised the positives in our community, and thanked various staff members for their good work. It meant a lot to Tribal members then, but looking back, knowing that Merle has since walked on and that these were among his last public comments, the words are more definitive than ever about what he considered important in life.

Along with Holmes's passing, the Tribe this year lost many other Elders, including Verna Larsen, Orville Leno and Merle Leno.

In fact, the Tribe spent most of the year in mourning over the deaths of many Tribal members and many non-Tribal members who were an integral part of the Grand Ronde community.

Also this year, Tribal Elder Merle Holmes held a traditional naming ceremony for his son, Jim. For many in the Tribe, this was the first time they had seen a naming ceremony.

Also in the Letters section in that first issue, Tribal member Frank H. Hostler II, wrote to the community from service in Iraq: "My fellow members, I ask you if you are proud



Photo by Brent Merrill

**Rare Occasion** — Tribal member Jim Holmes, with blankets, gave away the blankets and much more during the traditional naming ceremony. At far left was Jim's father, Tribal Elder Merle Holmes, who sponsored the ceremony, and Taawlee-winch, a Wasco Band of Warm Springs Elder, who led the ceremony. Sadly Holmes, one of the original restorers of the Tribe, passed away earlier this year.

Ronde early this year to balance the load between the two towns' post offices.

Western Oregon University held a pow-wow in January that drew 10 drum groups, 50 dancers and hundreds of spectators.

Tribal member Erik Estrada, a Medical Corps Specialist, also reported back from Iraq. He was on hand when the sons of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein were killed.

Tribal Elder Kenneth Lafferty

at Spirit Mountain Casino.

The Tribe was awarded a \$500,000 Indian Community Development Block Grant to help with a project that will include the widening of Grand Ronde Road.

The Tribal Community Fund that has distributed more than \$25 million to community groups since starting in 1997 received a Regional Cooperative Project Award from the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments.

Tribal member and Executive Casino Host Tammy Cook got a big hug from Wayne Newton.

Tribal members Jon George and Bryan Langley were honored for 12 years of service to the Tribe. Karen Larsen and Linda Mann were honored for 10 years of service.

Chemawa Indian School in Salem hosted a pow-wow celebrating 124 years of teaching.

The Tribe turned to a self-funded health care insurance plan this year. Administered by United Medical Resources, Inc, the new plan is expected to save the Tribe more than \$1 million annually, and provide a



Photo by Peta Linda

**"Welcome"** — Andre Heinz, the stepson of former presidential candidate John Kerry, was at the Grand Ronde Pow-wow this year stumping for the Oregon Democratic Party. Here Heinz (left) talks with Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy (center) and Vice Chairman Reyn Leno.

of what, who you are, look into your children's eyes and tell them you love them!" Today, those words mean so much more because Frank is back home safe, his job done well.

*Medicine Winds News* named Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy as "Woman of the Year." In the current issue, we profile Nakima Kerchee, Editor and Publisher of *Medicine Winds News*.

The Grand Ronde Station and Convenience Store opened at the end of 2003 but the news went public in *Smoke Signals* in the year's first issue.

Willamina sent 22 addresses — including the casino's — to Grand

retired after four years of patrolling Tribal properties as an employee of ProStar Security.

Tribal Elder Don Day graduated from the University of Oregon using Chinook Wawa credits for his foreign language requirement. This was the first time, as far as we know, that Chinuk Wawa was used to fulfill a university language requirement. Day received a bachelor's degree in Anthropology.

Tribal Elder Claudette Parazoo left Tribal employment this year to live on the Tulalip Reservation with family.

Elvis, or somebody who looked and sang just like him, appeared

new educational service in PRIDE, (Preventing and Reducing Illness through Detection and Education), a free offering providing confidential nurse health education.

The Willamina High School girls' basketball team reached the playoffs for the first time in the school's history. Later in the year, the school's volleyball team, starring many of the same athletes who played on the basketball team, took third at state.

The Spirit Mountain Lodge began an expansion this year that will more than double the number of rooms. The project is nearing completion now and will open for business in 2005.

The Tribe removed the casino complex from the community water system to be served by a newly built facility that treats water from the south fork of the Yamhill River. The \$1.65 million project provides plenty of water for the lodge expansion and the community system now also has plenty of water for the foreseeable future.

Tribal member Pattie Tom Martin received the annual Comerford Award from DePaul Industries, given to those making outstanding contributions in assisting the disabled.

Oregon Women Veterans, some 300 strong, met in the Tribal gymnasium for the group's third biennial conference.

Nike hosted the first of what may become a national program of Native fitness training sessions at its headquarters in Beaverton. The sports apparel maker also hosted basketball teams from the nation's four Indian schools this year, and also this year, Nike Native American Business Manager Sam McCracken (Red Bottom Clan of Assinaboine) spoke with students in the Tribal Education Center.

Tribal members attended a Na-

**See REVIEW on next page**

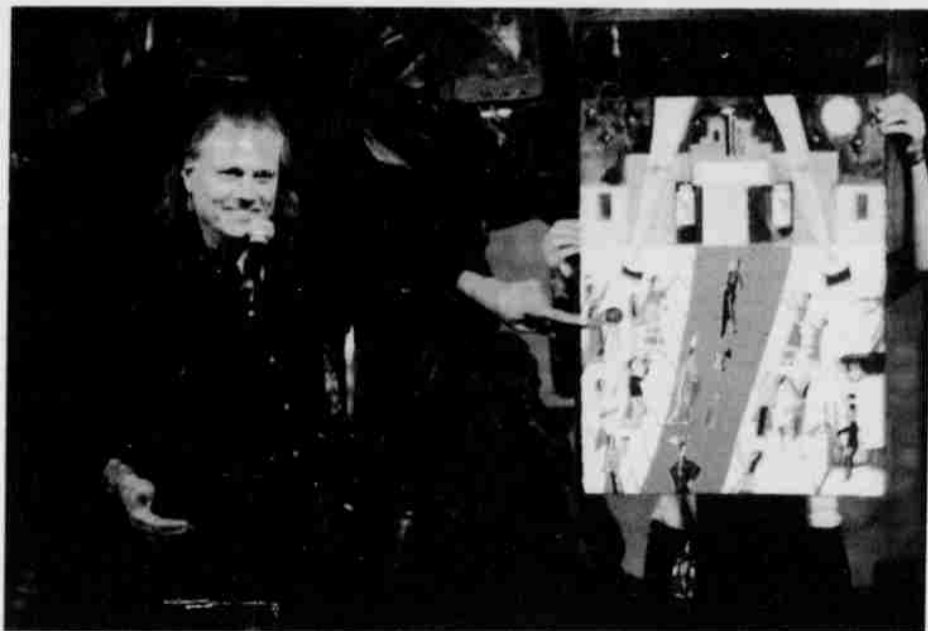


Photo by Brent Merrill

**Gathering Tribes** — A delegation of Grand Ronde Tribal members attended a fund raiser hosted by the Native American Film Institute to raise money for a movie about the life and times of the legendary Native Actor Will Sampson, who starred in the 1975 film "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest." Native artist Michael Horse (above) donated several paintings to the fund, which raised \$13,000 for the making of the film.