

Elder Christmas Party Kicks Off Holiday Season

By Ron Karten

It was like Patsy Cline and Willie Nelson had come together for the evening.

Long time musicians Gene and Tribal Elder Patsy Pullin brought the old standards to life — pieces like Cline's "Walking After Midnight," the old Kingston Trio number, "Scotch and Soda" and the World War II-era favorite, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart."

Christmas time in Grand Ronde this year held on to a lot of the old while the Tribe's success is nevertheless everywhere to be seen.

This year, the Elders Committee held a drawing for a lighted bowl (won by Claudia Leno) and had gifts like umbrellas and candy dishes for everyone. One hundred

and thirty five Elders took part in this year's Christmas party, said Tribal Elder and Elders Committee Chair Arlene Beck.

Tribal Elder Gary LaChance cut the rug all night long while Tribal Council member Jack Giffen, Jr. dressed up like Santa Claus and made his rounds with gifts.

"It's hot inside this thing," he confided at one point. "Sweat's just rolling off this fat boy."

It was a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings and all the joy.

"Everybody enjoys themselves," said Tribal Elder and Elders' Committee member Tom LaChance. "A lot come to the party that you don't see too much. We just get together and have a good time." ■



"Remember When..." — Tribal member Steve Hudson talks with Elder Margaret Provost. Provost played a major role in the Tribes' Restoration.



Friends — Tribal Elders Darlene Reeves, (left), and Violet Folden share a laugh at the Tribal Elder Christmas party on Thursday, December 16.



Smooth — Tribal Elder Gary LaChance and Leonette Galligher make the most of the Pullins' music.

Near Death Tragedy Can't Stop The Performing Pullins

Before coming to the Tribe in 1999, Gene and Tribal Elder Patsy Pullin played their beautiful music for 15 years in Ketchikan, Alaska.

"Mostly bars up there," said Patsy. "We worked at the VFW post for a long time."

They were singing together before they married in 1960, and at that time, Gene already was playing with a band and Patsy just had some experience singing in church and in high school.

"He had a band," she said, "and I convinced him that he needed a woman singer."

Today, one hardly needs to mention, Patsy sounds more than a little like Patsy Cline, one of the great popular music singers of all time. Pullin did a cover of "Walking After Midnight" during the Christmas party that would have had Cline resting easy, wherever she is now.

To a passing reporter without much musical ability, Gene's voice sounded like a dead ringer for Willie Nelson's, but Patsy said he just had a head cold.

The Pullins recorded three albums in those early days, one of which was titled, "Walking After Midnight."

"They're all obsolete now," said

Patsy. "It should have given you the idea when I said, 'albums.'"

The resurgence of interest in Patsy Cline's music was nevertheless a big help.

"After her movie came out, 'Sweet Dreams,' I think I got ten years worth of work out of that."

The evening's work was all the more remarkable for Gene's recovery from a near-fatal head-on car accident in August, 2003. "He has somewhat recovered," said Patsy, "but still has surgery ahead to get the full elbow."

If Patsy Cline was an influence on Patsy, she said that her parents, both musical, had the biggest impact on her. Gene "was greatly influenced by Chet Atkins, who invented finger-style picking on the guitar," said Patsy.

Together, they raised four children with their music, and son Denver, a Tribal member, played with them for the Elders' Christmas



Performance Art — Gene, Patsy and Denver Pullin (from left) performed the old standards at the Tribal Elders' Christmas party.

Party. In fact, Denver has had bands in the past and though in between bands at the moment, he's still an active musician.

"He plays drums, bass, guitar," said Patsy, and their daughter, Tribal member Tracy Bing, has been singing around the Reno area for the last 12 years.

Throughout their careers, the

Pullins have played across the western half of the U.S., said Patsy.

Today, Gene is semi-retired as a result of the accident, and Patsy is in her "third career" as an Employment Coordinator in the Social Services Department.

"Being a mother and working in bars prepares you for social work," she said. ■

Photos by Ron Karten

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