

Tribal Elders Honored With Their Own Day

With Respect —

Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey, 97, honored as the longest living Grand Ronde Elder, also was the longest living Elder among the Elders of eight Tribes. She joined about 200 for this year's Elders' Honor Day in the Tribal gymnasium.

Photos by Toby McClary

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soup cans and bean cans, according to Tribal Elder Norma Lee, each covered with beads and filled with sprigs of wheat and grass and little pine branches.

"If I sit down," said Lee, "I can make three or four a day."

They were so beautiful, they kept disappearing from the tables.

The Elders also made key chains and hankies to give out.

Hundreds of gifts were spread across the front of the Tribal gymnasium. There were bamboo place-mats and birdhouses, photo albums and jewelry. Tribal member Jan Michael Reibach had donated 25 copies of his new compact disc, One Heart One Spirit, his award-winning flute music.

The Coos Tribal Elders made a gift to the Grand Ronde Tribe of a beautiful flute made by Artist Don "Doc" Slyter. Baskets of goodies came from other Tribal Elders.

Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte presented Dee and Wesley West, with Medallions of Honor for their grandson, James Wheeler, who is now in Iraq, and for three others in the family who have retired from military service.

Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison invited Shoshone-Bannock Storyteller Ed Edmo to the event. He told the "receptive" crowd four legends: a creation legend, a snake legend ("to show respect for all liv-

ing things"), a sun and moon legend ("for the prevention of incest"), and a Dashkahya legend ("for the protection of children"). Carol Edmo

took the day off from work to join her husband. Grand Ronde Elders Nora Kimsey, 97, and Albert Peters, 87, were the oldest on hand from Grand Ronde, while Coos Elder Grace

"There always seems to be somebody a little older."

"It kind of fooled me," said Peters, who also hadn't expected to be the oldest. But he added that he comes every year because "you get to see a lot of people you don't see everyday."

The tally of participants included 76 from Grand Ronde, 34 from Coos, 36 from Siuslaw, 16 from Coquille, 14 from Umpqua, eight from Suquamish, six from Siletz and three from Swinomish. Altogether, 193 Tribal Elders signed in and the gym was filled.

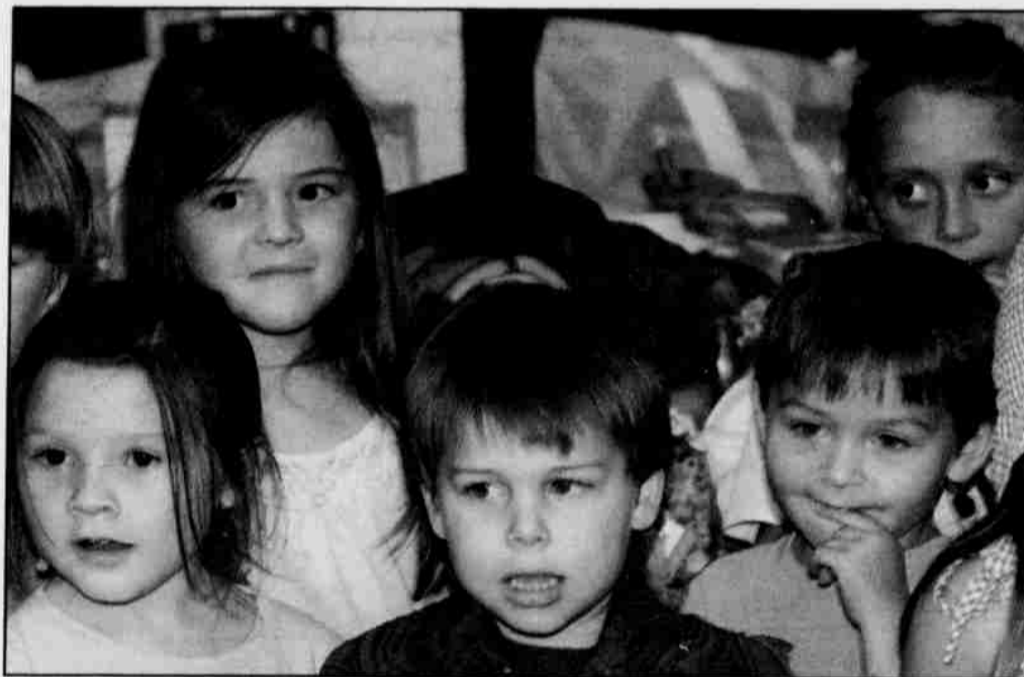
Tribal members Bobby Mercier and Travis Mercier and Yakama Tribal member Bubba Sohapp made up the drum group, and also led the preschoolers in song.

Wayne Chulik (Tlinget), Norris Merrill, and Tribal Elders Gene and Butch LaBonte presented the colors.

Tribal member Egypt Leno served as emcee.

The morning welcome enticed the Elders to "laugh as much as you can. We all know laughter is what brings us healing."

And so they did. ■



Little Performers — A host of Grand Ronde pre-schoolers regaled the Elders with song.

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Brainard, 93, and Coquille Elder George Deos, 79, were oldest of visiting Tribal members.

"I was surprised," said Brainard.



Tribal Elder Leon "Chips" Tom



Tribal Elder Gene Hudson