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Smoke Signals

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UMPQUA ■ MOLALLA ■ ROGUE RIVER ■ KALAPUYA ■ CHASTA

Memorable day

Memorial Day 2008 features governor, speeches and first Tribal Ceremonial Harvest Feast

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Since early on Memorial Day, the Tribal cemetery on Grand Ronde Road was adorned with bright flowers and fluttering flags.

Beginning before 8 a.m., some 50 Tribal and family members and veterans from across West Valley gathered for the first in a series of events.

It was the start of an on-again, off-again chilly, rainy and sunny day that included an address by Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and the first Tribal ceremony held with fresh ceremonial meat.

The weather prompted Kulongoski's wife, Mary Oberst, to keep a hood over her head throughout the afternoon ceremony. Among a few quick-thinking Tribal Elders, Val Grout parked facing the Veterans' Memorial and enjoyed the ceremony from the comfort of her car.

"It was cold outside," Grout said. "I was warm and could hear everything."

The 3 p.m. ceremony honored veterans of all wars and coincided with the unveiling of inscriptions of some 53 new names, including Kulongoski's on the Marine wall of the Veterans' Memorial. He served in the Marines during the Vietnam War.

"The true test of our national character," Kulongoski said, "is not that we have sacrificed one day in a foreign land for our country, but it is

making sure that they have benefits every day when they come home.

"I would not be where I am if the GI Bill had not given me the opportunity to go to college and law school."

Kulongoski used his speech to support the Democratic version of a new GI Bill passed recently with a veto-proof majority in both houses of Congress.

In Oregon, Kulongoski said he is working with the Legislature on a GI Bill supplement that "will do all I can to honor Guard members."

Kulongoski's policy adviser Paul Evans said that the effort will seek to supplement education, employment, health care and housing needs for Oregon's 359,000 veterans.

The Grand Ronde Honor Guard, busy all day, started at the morning ceremony, along with other West Valley veterans and a 21-gun salute honoring those who have fallen in service to country. They went next to ceremonies in Sheridan and Willamina before returning for the 3 p.m. event in Grand Ronde.

At Grand Ronde, Tribal Elder and Army combat veteran Marce Norwest served as master of ceremonies. He has long been a driving force in keeping veterans' issues on the Tribe's agenda.

With his wife, Sharon, Norwest

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Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski delivers the keynote speech during the Memorial Day ceremony at the West Valley Veterans' Memorial in Grand Ronde on Monday, May 26.

Tribal Information Day a cozy affair

Youth have chance to meet the governor

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Grand Ronde Tribal member True Rimer, 10, asked Gov. Ted Kulongoski if he could be governor for a day on Friday, May 16, during Tribal Information Day activities.

The governor is an old hand at this game and slid right into storytelling mode, but more about that later.

Along with Kulongoski's slightly more formal address to Oregon's

nine federally recognized Tribes, a training session for state employees who deal with Native American issues and Tribal information tables set up on the second floor of the state Capitol in Salem, this year's Tribal Information Day was cozier than in the past.

The state's nine federally recognized Tribes made good use of the Capitol building, where the Grand Ronde Tribe and Spirit Mountain Casino sponsored breakfast and the Cow Creek Band of Lower Umpqua sponsored lunch for 400.

Guests, principally from the Tribes and state agencies, spilled down the

Senior Miss Grand Ronde Josie Faris dances as she leads other Grand Ronde Royalty at the closing of the Tribal Information Day ceremony on May 16 in Salem.

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Photo by Michelle Alaimo