

'Blessed day' honors Native American ancestors

MEMORIAL DAY
continued from front page

started the Veterans' Powwow in 1992 and ran it annually through 2003, when they turned the duty over to Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte and his wife, Billie. Gene today also is a member of the Governor's Commission on Veterans' Affairs.

"Let's take time to bow our heads and pray for (the victims of) 9/11, Katrina, the tragedies in China, the tornado victims. ..." Norwest said.

He brought the Tribal Honor Guard in and introduced piper and Army veteran David Twine of Amity, who played "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes.

Veteran Loyd Abbott, chaplain for many area veterans groups, prayed for "our fallen heroes, our Armed Forces serving today, our local heroes, police and firefighters, and all gathered today."

Nicole Mann, granddaughter of Gene and Billie LaBonte, sang the national anthem.

"This is truly a blessed day," said Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy, "to honor and pay tribute to all Native American ancestors who also loved and gave their lives for this land.

"We continue to be an honorable people in partnership with one another. We teach our children what this means because we're a strong, proud people."

Kennedy said that with people suffering around the world, "What separates us from the other creatures is we can be touched, we can feel for other people. Our job is to care for one another.

"The governor is a friend of the Tribe, and I won't forget that."

"The meaning of this memorial is what's behind it," said Tribal Vice



Cook Technician Kevin Campbell, left, serves a bowl of elk stew to Tribal Elder Marce Norwest at the first Ceremonial Hunt Feast in the Community Center after the Memorial Day ceremony on Monday, May 26. The meat used to make the stew was from the first animal killed using ceremonial hunting tags.

Chairman Reyn Leno, referring in part to "all the bake sales. Think of all the stories (that come out of the Armed Services), and they're what make the memorial so much larger.

"I'm glad to see all the kids today. It is important that they understand what these statues and flags mean. We need to tell the stories over and over again, because they're what keeps (the experience) alive."

"It's always an honor to be among the vets," said Tribal Council member and Vietnam-era Marine Corps veteran Steve Bobb Sr.

In 2002, Bobb and Tribal member

Brent Merrill made the 265-mile walk from Table Rock to Grand Ronde to honor the Trail of Tears endured by Tribal ancestors when they were force-marched to the Grand Ronde Reservation.

Bobb and Merrill also raised money for the West Valley Veterans' Memorial that has since been the centerpiece of Tribal veteran activities. Bobb also designed the memorial.

"We all get that lump in our throat when we hear the national anthem," Bobb said. "Vets always wear their emotions very close to the surface."

"I remember when this was a

patch of grass," Merrill said of the site where the memorial now stands. "Now, it's sacred ground."

Merrill named some two dozen Tribal Elders and members, alive and passed, who were instrumental in honoring Tribal veterans. They included his uncle, Tribal Elder Tom Bean, who passed away in December 2007; Elder Merle Holmes, who passed away in 2004; Lewis Younger (see related story in this issue) along with many Lenos and Grouts, and, of course, Marce Norwest.

First ceremonial feast

After the Memorial Day ceremony, the first Ceremonial Harvest Feast was held at 4:30 p.m. in the Community Center. It fed some 300 Tribal members and guests.

The ceremonial elk that provided the meat for the day was taken by rifle on May 10 by Tribal member Tyson Mercier. It yielded 400 pounds of meat.

Tribal member Kristy DeLoe prepared 100 pounds as both an elk stew and an elk spaghetti sauce for all those who shared in the Tribe's ceremonial dinner.

"Looking back on the events that led to this historic harvest, they played out perfectly," Tyson Mercier said. "The Grand Ronde Tribe was given ceremonial hunting rights; being one of the first of seven elected to the Ceremonial Hunt Board; being the first randomly drawn for the very first ceremonial elk tag; being the first to take a ceremonial animal on the first Saturday after receiving the tag. I think luck had a little to do with my involvement."

Mercier thanked the efforts of many others. He named "the council's hard work, the Fish and Wildlife Committee and CHB, policies and planning, who we all need to thank for these new rights.



Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison visits with Gov. Ted Kulongoski after giving him a copy of her book "Standing Tall" following the Memorial Day ceremony at the West Valley Veterans' Memorial in Grand Ronde on Monday, May 26.

Photos by Michelle Alaimo



Members of the Grand Ronde Honor Guard post the colors during the Memorial Day ceremony at the West Valley Veterans' Memorial in Grand Ronde on Monday, May 26.



Tribal members, family and guests filled the Tribal Community Center to participate in the first Ceremonial Hunt Feast on Monday, May 26.

53 names added to West Valley Veterans' Memorial

Names added to the West Valley Veterans' Memorial on Monday, May 26, were:

Marine Corps: Alan S. Ream, Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Eric Hansen, William E. Felt, Walter A. Ramage II, Jason Hermens and Daniel W. Gurr.

Air Force: Kiamichi Isham, Alva N. Jackson, Justin T. McDonald, Donald S. Taylor, Nora L. Smith and Bill Stam.

Navy: Donald L. Shenk, Robert C. Duncan, Dennis Ellis, David E. Fox, John R. Bauhach, Robert C. Godfrey, Max H. Gordon, Richard Hedrick, Michael A. Ostensen, Alvin W.

Hilderbrandt, Kenneth G. McIntosh Jr., Robert C. Morey, Ivan L. Petersen, Roy Pomroy, William J. Soderberg, Arthur W. Soderberg, George Davis, Wes Weathers, Ira M. House and Bill White.

Army: Emery J. Billings, Bryan B. Bigham, Wayne Chulik, Kenneth W. Green, John C. Henderson, William H. Hurl, Charles E. Miller, Darrell K. Miller, Robert Olson, Michelle R. Ring, Curt Russell, Ernest Schmidt, Jimmie L. Shaw, Larry F. Parker, Christian M. Tinney, Ernest Walden, Curtis L. Wright, Clifford Day, Max Hoffman and Victor H. Banke.

Even before the first feast started, Tribal member Shonn Leno announced he had taken another ceremonial animal, a deer, for upcoming Tribal events.

Five more Tribal hunters are ready to rotate into the woods for their chance at bringing home a ceremonial meal.

It was a day during which many words were spoken, but Tribal member Joel Rock summed it up.

"Powerful," Rock said. ■