

Wood family feasted during vacations on NW history

WEAVING continued from front page

Hudson, back to her mother, Martha Jane Sands, whose bronze statue has welcomed many to Spirit Mountain Casino over the years.

And along with her father, Monte Wood, a farmer whose family dates back to the Oregon Trail, the Wood family has feasted during vacations on Northwest history.

"My parents were really into it," Stephanie says. "And I fell in love with it."

Stephanie remembers that early on, with the start of grade school, she used to dress in regalia and dance at powwows then held at what is now Willamina Middle School in Grand Ronde.

So, when University of Oregon students started telling her about what the university possessed in the museum collection, she dropped by, describing links to her own Native past. They invited her to become a tour guide.

"It's a strong Native community here, and I was welcomed into it," she says.

Along the way, she has discovered what is important to her. "I don't look Native," Stephanie says, "and a lot of us don't look Native, but people have to realize that we're still here. In all different shades. It doesn't matter what we look like on the outside. It's what's inside that matters."

Stephanie's educational focus is Cul-



Photo courtesy of U of O Natural and Cultural History Museum

Jennie Michele, known as "the last Clatsop," made many baskets during the late 1800s and early 1900s. They are among the baskets being studied by Stephanie Wood at the University of Oregon's Natural and Cultural History Museum.

tural Anthropology, and for this last year of undergraduate work she has an internship that will keep her busy for almost 400 hours before it's over.

In fact, said Lewis, because so much of the collection remains unstudied, the basket work that Stephanie is doing came about mainly because of her interest in it.

"It's like a family telling their stories," she says. "Each weaver has her own designs, like a trademark. If a basket's been tightly woven versus if it's been loosely woven, it might mean that it was made in a hurry. Maybe the rim of a basket is made of two or three different materials. Were the materials chosen inten-

tionally or were certain materials left out?"

Through the mysteries, Stephanie says, "It's like an outline of their life. If a person didn't have enough of one kind of material, you have to ask, 'Why? Was it their class or social status?'"

Stephanie is studying the work of at least four different Grand Ronde basket weavers. Some names are kept confidential as, for example, when confidentiality was requested by those who donated the baskets. The work of passed Tribal Elders Kitty Tom and

Jennie Michele, however, are among the university collection.

Michele, known as "the last Clatsop," according to historical documents, is among the most famous Northwestern Indians to be photographed in the period of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Kitty Tom is related to Tribal Elder Bob Tom and Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom.

"It makes me proud to be who I am," Stephanie says. "With each basket (we identify), they'll be able to say, 'This is so-and-so's basket,' giving light to the weaver, recognition for the work she's done."

Columbia Basin Basketry Guild

representative Lynn Beard, museum Collections Manager Elizabeth Kallenbach, museum Director of Collections Pam Endzweig and Margaret Mathewson, who teaches basket weaving to Grand Ronde Tribal members, all work with Stephanie among the baskets. They discuss what certain designs mean. They photograph, and thus digitize, the collected works.

As Stephanie sees graduation in sight, she says that she wants "to go back to the Tribe and give back." She thinks about being able "to educate future generations, community members and nonNative Americans about our culture. I always wanted to go and work for the Tribe."

Stephanie is the first in her family to graduate from college, she said. "Growing up, I never thought I would," but the support of the Tribe made it possible.

She also studies Chinuk Wawa. She likes to bead and does leatherwork, and she is "getting back into women's traditional dancing."

And coming from a farming family, she also drives combine when the crops are ready.

The work and the culture are about money in one way to Stephanie: they pay for essentials, including her education — but there's something more in Wood's experience.

"It's not about money, education or health care. That's not what makes us Indian," she says. "It's if our heart beats with the drum." ■



A Call for Tribal Member Artists' Portfolios

The Cultural Resources Department is putting together a pool of qualified artists for future projects. If you are interested, please submit a portfolio of work of all artists in all mediums with your contact information to the department.

Please send materials to:

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