

and limbs. "Each went through their own hell."

"The eagle is the messenger of the Creator," Towner said. "We put on his feathers in hopes that we can become messengers of the Creator."

And when an eagle feather fell, Towner led a dance honoring the Creator, working through the process of retrieving the fallen feather.

"Some of you say little more than name, rank and serial number," said Bob Tom, "and that's good, and then next time you come, you leave a little more with us. The more you leave, the more you honor us."

Meanwhile, Bill Lovato of Salem-based OMAC Advertising filmed interviews with young Tribal members. He focused on where they think the Tribe is going and what they get out of the powwow, Lovato said. Pieces of the video will be put together for a showing at the November Restoration program.

As the veterans' introductions were capped with the playing of taps, Lovato finished an interview with Tribal member Bobby Mercier.

"One take!" Mercier said. "One take!"

When the introductions came for Tribal Elder Marce Norwest and his wife, Sharon, there were many takes.

"We're honoring Marce on this new ground," said Tribal Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy, "to remember all he did for the Tribe."

Vice Chair Reyn Leno remembered Marce as "a fellow combat veteran; a man I really respect."

"We hold our Elders in very high regard," said Tribal Council mem-



Tribal member Deitrich Peters dances during the noon Grand Entry of the 2008 Grand Ronde Veterans' Powwow on Saturday, July 12.

ber Steve Bobb Sr., "for their spirit and their wisdom. Marce is honored and admired. He embodies all the qualities we aspire to be."

"I modeled myself on Marce and Sharon," said Tribal Council member Val Sheker. "You're always in my prayers."

"Such an honor," Marce said. He and Sharon started the Veterans' Powwow in 1993 and built it until their retirement in 2004.

The drumming and singing began. Veterans and visitors, friends and relatives came from the sidelines in ones and twos and threes to shake Marce's hand, to wish Sharon well and to move to the end of the line for the dance around the new grounds. The line behind Marce and Sharon ultimately included almost everyone present.

Norwest, long a revered Tribal Elder and veteran, is now thin as a

wisp from a cancer diagnosed a few months ago. But on the powwow grounds, the soldier in Marce took over. He led the dancing, though it seemed like it was hard for him to keep up, even with his own pace.

"I told my cousin, Gene LaBonte, (when he took over the Veterans' Powwow from Norwest), you've got big shoes to fill," said Tribal Council member June Sell-Sherer. "Marce has little feet but big shoes." ■

Rife gives thanks for another walk

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

I said it was going to be an annual thing for as long as I can make it," said Tribal Elder Steve Rife, 58, a combat veteran of Vietnam with both the Marines and the Army.

He was diagnosed last year with lymphoma and bone cancer. Weight-wise, he is down 80 pounds.

Last year, when he made the walk for the first time, that was his Trail of Tears, he said. Last year, Margie, his wife, died of lung cancer. His sister and aunt also passed away. He did not want to make much of it, but his dog of 14 years passed away last year, too.

"This year," he said, "it's for the Elders and our ancestors."

He started on Saturday, June 28, with fellow veteran Bill Stam, 73, from Table Rock, about 265 miles south of Grand Ronde, the starting place of the Grand Ronde Tribes' 1850s Trail of Tears.

Rife's ancestors came from the area's Rogue River Band. The Rogue River Band now comprise one of Grand Ronde's confederated Tribes.

It was, physically at least, a repeat of last year's walk, going the same route, stopping at the same places for the night.

"Veterans get free access to all state parks," Rife said.

"We didn't see no rattlesnakes



Tribal Elder and Vietnam veteran Steve Rife, front, and veteran Bill Stam (Lakota) walk the final miles of their 265-mile Trail of Tears walk down Highway 22 in Grand Ronde on Saturday, July 12. Their walk was completed when they arrived at the new powwow grounds to participate in the 2008 Grand Ronde Veterans' Powwow. Rife and Stam are both members of Grand Ronde's Veterans' Honor Guard.

this time," he said, "but we were ready. We both had big sticks and we were ready for them."

"One thing we thought was strange, a doe lying by the side of the road in a ditch. We thought she got hit by a car, but she was just lying in the ditch water trying to get cool."

They found a cell phone and got

it back to its owner.

They found the contents of a wallet, got that back to the owner, and he left them \$20 in thanks.

"The sun turned blood red from the smoke in the California wildfires," Rife said.

"By carrying the Eagle staff, not as many people swerved at us or

called us names. A lot honked and asked if we wanted rides.

"This lady rode up beside me on a bike. She asked, 'Why are you carrying this Indian stuff?'

"I said, 'I am one.'

"I kept walking and she pulled ahead and then stopped again. 'No really,' she said, 'are you protesting something?'

"I said, 'No, I'm doing our ancestral Trail of Tears walk.'

"She shook her head and rode off. She wasn't interested because I wasn't protesting anything."

"It was blistering hot," Rife said. "A hundred and 12 at times. And then off the hot asphalt, it got to be 130 to 140."

"After a break," he said, "the first mile is pure hell. Then, I get my thinking right and it's easy going."

He returned to Grand Ronde on Wednesday, July 9, and on Friday morning he was helping set up vendor stalls for the Veterans' Powwow.

"I'll keep this up so long as God lets me," he said. "It's like I'm thanking Him for what time I have left." ■