

Tribal members have played many roles in shaping the Chemawa

CHEMAWA continued from front page

will require considerable tact and perseverance ... A non-compliance with this order may be made a reason for discharge or for withholding rations and supplies ... and if they become obstreperous about the matter, a short confinement in the guard-house at hard labor with shorn locks should furnish a cure

"Indian dances and so-called Indian feasts should be prohibited. In many cases these dances and feasts are simply subterfuges to cover degrading acts and to disguise immoral purposes. You are directed to use your best efforts in the suppression of these evils."

Even at 18, Jones saw clearly into the future. In his valedictory speech, also reported in Harrison's biography, he said:

"As the Indian was brought to bay, he looked around and saw the white man everywhere. He has submitted to the inevitable, and is now beginning to know that ... the white man's God ... intends that all men should be brothers. Instead of looking on the white man as an enemy, we turn to you for help. Will you be our brother?"

From then until the present day, the Grand Ronde Tribe and Tribal members have played many roles in shaping the Chemawa Indian School community.

Jones's daughter, current Tribal Elder and longtime Tribal Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison, said that her father did not like the school much and did not want any of his children to go there.

It was an Indian military school then, said Harrison, and her father felt that the authorities were "so mean and rigid." The military period lasted into the 1930s.

By the late 1930s, however, when

three of Jones's six children had attended, the military orientation was ending, and, in the years following, would begin to value Indian customs. Like many who went to school there in the years after, Harrison found Chemawa much to her liking.

"For me," she said, "it was a lifesaver — taking me from foster homes to a place I belonged. And that seemed to be the feeling of many others who went there." She attended Chemawa beginning in 1939 and graduated in 1942.

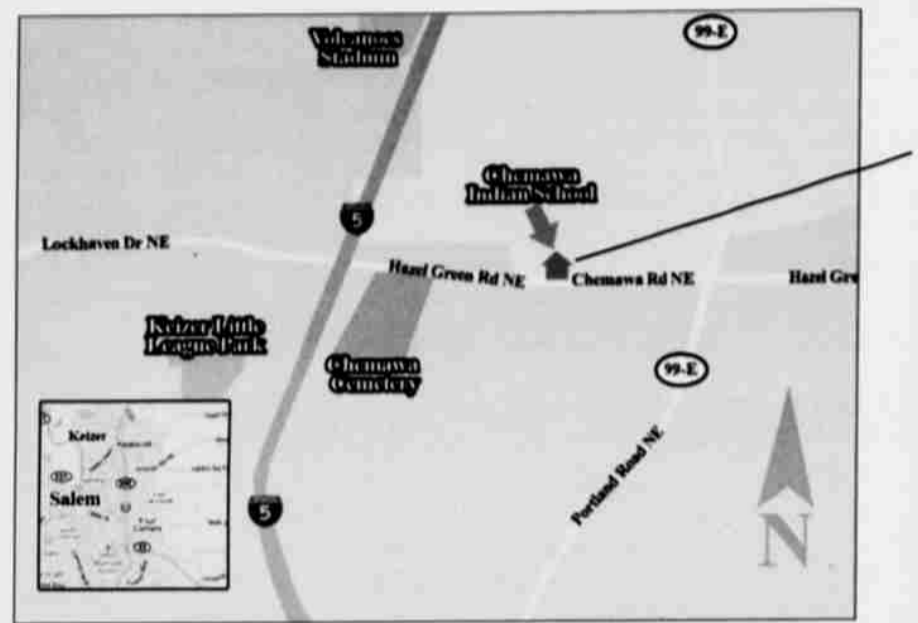
The 1942 Chemawa yearbook, "The Chief," had the following entry: "Kathryn Jones — 'Jonsey'; Alaskan-Rogue river, Siletz, Oregon. (inaccurate BIA description, said Harrison; should be Molalla for Tribal affiliation and not Siletz as a home designation); Vocation: Home economics. Activities: House council 41-42, YWCA 41-42, Reporter 42, School cheerleader 41-42, Junior play, Senior play, Annual staff, Girls quintette 40-41, Glee club 40-41-42, Home room president 42. Motto: 'A quitter never wins and a winner never quits.'"

Tribal Elder Dorothy Greene had a similarly positive experience. She attended starting in 1936 and graduated in 1940.

The 1942 yearbook had a "telegram" from Greene (nee LaBonte) in the "Class Prophecy" section: "Taking my all-girl orchestra to Hawaii Stop I am really getting 'Brown' — Dorothy LaBonte."

"It was very good because I learned to cook there," said Greene, "and how to sew, and home economics where we built things."

For some, like Greene, the Indian



Map created by George Valdez

school looked better than neighborhood life in Grand Ronde at the time.

Greene attended at the recommendation of her grandmother, former Tribal Elder Caroline LaBonte Jeffries.

"Things were too wild (at home), I guess," said Greene.

For others, like Tribal Elder Leon "Chip" Tom, hometown life was more appealing. He also attended Chemawa in the late '30s and early '40s. "I don't believe I made it a year," he says. "I didn't want to be away from home."

And it was no wonder. Tom attended Willamina High School where he lettered in three sports and played on the town baseball team with Tribal members much older. However, he noted that his sister, Marcial, who passed on at age 21, succeeded at Chemawa.

She used to say, "You had a roof over your head and three meals and a pretty good education. She went the four years and graduated."

"I thought it was probably the nicest program that the government provided for the Tribal people in the

Pacific Northwest," says Tom. "When I was there, we had Indians from all over the state. Educational, vocational, you could weld or plumb or paint, be a carpenter, work in the barber shop."

He did not like how hard they made him work. "When I did work," he says, "they had me shoveling coal. I emptied the cars that come in. Or manure," but adds, "You got exercise. You built your muscles up. It was a little bit dirty, but I thought it was a good program to make people understand that they had to work."

For many Elders, it was a benefit to attend Chemawa with family members and friends.

Greene recalls Grand Ronde Tribal members Dorothy McKnight Lawe, Minnie Menard, Leonard Vivette ("a wonderful athlete"), Pauline LaBonte and Loree Vivette as classmates.

Harrison jotted down a list of more than 20 Tribal members she remembers attending Chemawa, including Clifford Day, Verna Riggs Larsen, Clyde Sorenson, Biff Langley, Marge Lafferty McAbee, Norma Lafferty Lee, Lewis Riggs, Jo LaBonte, Chip Tom and his sister Marcial, Margie Menard,



This scene greets people as they enter the main building where classes are held at Chemawa Indian School in Salem.

John McKinney, Ivey McKinney, Dorothy Jones Track, Harold Jones, Georgia Renfro, Russell Jeffers and Ira Jeffers.

In 1939, she remembers, former Tribal member Clifford Day was among Chemawa students recruited to act in the 1940 Spencer Tracy classic, "Northwest Passage."

"When they came back," says Harrison, "They were well-dressed and had Mohawks, like they had in the movie."

At the same time, the legacy of corporal punishment and sexual and emotional abuse at boarding schools generally were carried forward into new Indian families for generations. The practice of sending Indian children to work as domestics and yard workers in the homes of local families during summer months kept children from their families — too often abusive families in alcohol- and later drug- and gang-fueled communities — all through their youths.

This lack of family connections is frequently named in academic lit-

erature as a contributor to trauma in Indian communities that has stretched over generations. It left many without parenting examples for their own children, and only in recent years are groups like White Bison and The Boarding School Healing Project starting to address these issues.

Harrison, however, recalled living with "a wonderful family" during summers that wanted to adopt her, though she told them she did not want to leave her friends and the family she had created at Chemawa.

Former Tribal Elder Orville Leno, on the other hand, ran away from Chemawa three times, according to his son, Tribal Council Vice Chair Reyn Leno.

"Positive and negative can happen at the same time at the same location, and that's the way it was at the boarding schools," says Tribal Elder Bob Tom, who lived on the campus in the 1950s when his parents worked there.

The story was somewhat different for Bob Tom and others, like Herman Hudson Jr., both Tribal Elders today, who lived on campus with parents employed by the school. The children attended public school

nearby in Salem, and yet joined in with the boarding school students in many social ways.

Children of Chemawa staff were not permitted to attend school at Chemawa to avoid favoritism.

Herman Hudson Jr., who lived on the campus from 1930-42, when he joined the Armed Forces, says, "I'd never had a flush toilet or electric lights until I moved to Chemawa." He remembers the Chemawa basketball team with a laugh. "Every time they scored a basket, they had another jump ball," he says.

His father, Herman Hudson, a former Tribal Elder, worked at the school as a bus and truck driver. And the senior Hudson was not alone among Tribal members in helping shape the school as faculty and staff.

Former Tribal Elder Emanuel Hudson, Herman's cousin, served the school as Guidance Department head for a time, and of the school's dormitories for another period during the 1950s and '60s.

A 1956 "Chemawa American" newsletter reported, "Mr. E.B. Hudson made the presentation of certificates to boys who were selected as outstanding citizens in the boys' dormitories." Later in the same newsletter, the report Superintendent's Home Open to Employees on Sunday Afternoon, April 8, notes: "During the afternoon Miss Betty Langley, Miss Mayme Tedlock, Mrs. Emanuel Hudson (italics added), and Mrs. James MacDonald poured."

A benefit of schooling at Chemawa, Bob Tom says, "was that Indians from different Tribes went to school with each other."

"At one time, you could look at Tribes in the Northwest and you would see Chemawa graduates on Tribal Councils, in top administrative positions. The leadership of Northwest Tribes were all coming out of Chemawa."

"Northwest Tribes got along much better than Tribes of other areas because of Chemawa. It was a positive benefit for the Tribes."

Long Tribal connection to Chemawa

The Grand Ronde Tribe's long and deeply held connections with Chemawa were more personal in

the early years, though they have turned political as the Northwest Tribes have grown and prospered.

Bob Tom, like many others, remembers a lot of the personal joys.

"I was born at the hospital there. Both of my parents worked at the school." His father, former Tribal Elder Abraham Tom, worked on the farm and in construction. His mother, Aurilla Tom, was a baker for Chemawa, and baked for each meal, with a break in between.

"There was a real intermingling, kids and families," he says. "Really, the employees and their kids would go to school plays and sports functions. It was kind of a close-knit community."

Between dairy and pig farms (the pig farm was called "Pigville"), orchards and row crops, the school was almost self-sufficient, say Tribal members who lived there.

In the evenings, says Kathryn Harrison, they would let the students pick fruit from the orchards. As growing adolescents, she says, "We were always hungry. It wasn't like home where you could go into the kitchen and get something to eat."

But things changed as the years went by. Many Northwest Tribes, including Grand Ronde, found better schooling opportunities for their children in their own communities, and Chemawa began recruiting Navajos in Arizona and New Mexico, says Bob Tom.

The yearbook for 1959-60 showed a graduating class made up of students almost entirely from Arizona and New Mexico with one from Utah.

The school that had at one time served mostly Northwest Tribes changed to serve about 50 percent Northwest and 50 percent Navajo. Later, it served almost 100 percent Navajo, and later still, it changed again to a 50/50 mix of Navajo and Alaskan Natives, Tom says.

By the time Louis King (Oklahoma Seminole), now Spirit Mountain Community Fund's Program Coordinator, joined the staff at Chemawa in 1989, some 60 different Tribes were again represented

See CHEMAWA continued on pages 12



Photo courtesy of Kathryn Harrison

Harry Jones, second row left, a late Tribal member and father to Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison, was valedictorian of his class in 1910 at Chemawa Indian Training School.



In her dorm room, Tribal member Nakoosa Moreland prepares to pack her regalia to show in her Performing Arts class at Chemawa Indian School in Salem recently. Moreland is Senior Miss Grand Ronde and has been dancing at powwows for years, so her teacher asked her to share her regalia with the class.



Photo courtesy of Kathryn Harrison

Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison, known then as Kathryn Jones, middle, was a member of a septette group at Chemawa Indian School in 1940. The group entertained at various receptions and activities on campus and entertained at clubs and organizations in the surrounding area. Their programs consisted of modern music, Tribal songs and Indian dances.