

Walking On...

James Marvin Simmons

Nov. 19, 1951 – April 13, 2011

Tribal Elder James Marvin Simmons, also known as Jimi "Dexter" Simmons, walked on at the age of 59 on Wednesday, April 13, 2011, in Mountain View, Calif. He was a longtime resident of the San Francisco Bay area. The cause of death is unknown although it is believed to be respiratory complications.

Jimi Simmons was born Nov. 19, 1951, in Dallas, Ore. He was one of 13 children from Marie and Edgar Simmons, who met as two students at Chemawa Indian School. After the federal status of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde was Terminated in 1954 and the Simmons family was forced to separate, Jimi grew up in an institutionalized childhood, including St. Mary's Home for Boys, Children's Farm Home, McLaren and, later, the Oregon State Reformatory. At McLaren, the whispers among the boys was to make it to the river to be free, but finding freedom would not happen for a while.

James and his brother, George Simmons, were charged with murder of a Washington prison guard in June 1979. They both faced the death penalty. What ensued was a successful class action prisoner lawsuit against the state of Washington for violation of prisoners' rights. George Simmons was found guilty in 1980. Jimi Dexter Simmons was acquitted with the help of famed social justice attorney Leonard Weinglass, who defended Angela Davis, Daniel Ellsberg, Skyhorse and Mohawk, and Mumia Abu-Jamal, and from the support of the Simmons Brothers Defense Committee.

In the same year that Jimi Simmons was paroled by Washington Corrections, Grand Ronde was reinstated as a Tribe in 1983 and a new life began. Jimi needed to live outside the institution, but he was raised within its codes. He had almost no experience on the outside.

He married Karen Rudolph, the organizer of his Defense Committee, on Sept. 18, 1987. Jimi continued to be an activist and he supported many social justice and Native American organizations.

Karen and Jimi adopted Arthur Kalif Simmons (Hualapai) and Jay Ghost Simmons (Oglala/Lakota) and built a home in Los Altos, Calif., always trying to get three lives out of one. Jimi worked as a journeyman operating engineer. He loved construction. Jimi volunteered to stay home with the boys while Karen went to law school.

Never forgetting those behind the walls, Jimi Simmons went to California and Washington prisons to visit Indian inmates and advocated for American Indian religious freedom inside prison. He supported many indigenous rights organizations, such as the American Indian Friendship House, American Indian Film Festival, American Indian Movement, Bay Area Diabetes Coalition and the Brotherhood of the American Indians.

Jimi Simmons retold his story in the 2008 autobiographical film, "Making the River." Jimi won the Eagle Spirit Award and the Top 10 Bay Area Dads Award.

He is survived by his wife, Karen M. Rudolph; two sons, Arthur Simmons and Jay Simmons; brothers, Frank Simmons, Tyrone Simmons Sr., Robert Simmons Sr., Joe Simmons and John Stevenson; sister, Renee Simmons; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws and out-laws.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Marie Daniels Simmons (Muckleshoot/Yakima); father, Edgar Simmons (Grand Ronde); and siblings Ramona, Gloria, Raymond, George, Mike and John Simmons.

A memorial dinner was held Monday, April 25, and there was a showing of "Making the River" at the Grand Ronde Tribal gym. The program was hosted by the Grand Ronde Youth Prevention Program and Grand Ronde Canoe Family.

Funeral services were held 11 a.m. Tuesday, April 26, at the Grand Ronde plankhouse Achfa-hammi. A community meal and giveaway followed in the Elders' Activity Center.

Marlene Cross (Muckleshoot/Puyallup), Bobby Mercier (Grand Ronde) and Kevin Simmons (Grand Ronde/Muckleshoot) officiated and pallbearers were Donnie Stevenson, Keith Stevenson, Tyson Simmons, Tyrone Simmons Jr., Robert Simmons Jr., Wes Dilling, Kevin Simmons, Jeff Simmons, Max Simmons and Landon Simmons.

Honorary pallbearers were Allen Rudolph, Arthur Simmons, Jay Simmons, Robert Simmons Sr., Frank Simmons, Tyrone Simmons Sr., John Stevenson, Joe Simmons and Phil Lane Jr.



Arrangements were made by Adamson's Sheridan Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in honor of Jimi Simmons to Bill Wilson Center, 3490 The Alameda, Santa Clara, Calif., 95050, or The InterTribal Friendship House, 523 International Blvd., Oakland, Calif., 94606.

"To us, if you made the river, that was freedom. I guess I finally made that river." — Jimi Simmons in "Making the River."

For more information, contact Tyrone Simmons Jr. at 253-335-5357.

Gary Nathaniel Butler

July 4, 1952 – April 13, 2011

Tribal Elder Gary Nathaniel Butler, 58, a resident of Grand Ronde, walked on Wednesday, April 13, 2011, as a result of injuries received in an automobile accident.

He was born on July 4, 1952, in McMinnville, Ore., the son of Alton N. and Lois M. Leno Butler. He graduated from Dallas High School and attended Chemeketa Community College in Salem. He wrestled while in high school and took third place one year in the state tournament.

He was a logger for many years, working with the Littlejohn and Crown Zellerbach companies. He loved his nieces and nephews, and was always concerned with their well-being. He enjoyed the beach, picnics and drawing. Gary always had dreams of traveling away from Grand Ronde. He was known for his dependability and genuineness.

He is survived by his brothers, Alton Butler of Sheridan and Elvin Butler of Grand Ronde, along with several nieces, nephews and great-nieces and great-nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents and brothers Randy and Josh.

Viewing was held Wednesday, April 20, in the Dallas Mortuary Tribute Center. A funeral service was held Thursday, April 21, in the Grand Ronde Tribal gym. Interment followed in the Tribal cemetery.

To leave an online condolence for the family, go to www.dallas-tribute.com.

**Allen Dale Tobiska III**

Feb. 15, 1988 – April 19, 2011

Tribal member Allen Dale Tobiska, 23, walked on April 19, 2011. He was born on Feb. 15, 1988, in Everett, Wash., to Helen and Allen Tobiska. He graduated from Juneau-Douglas High School in Alaska.

Allen is remembered as the funny and charismatic man that he was. He enjoyed fishing, drawing, music and skateboarding. He loved his life, family and friends. He had great ambitions, but was called to the Lord before he could attain them. His dog, Chaos, was his close friend.

He is survived by his daughter, Anikka Mae Tobiska, who he loved so much. He also is survived by his parents, Allen and Helen Tobiska; sisters, Tiffany and Misty; brothers, Jesse, Carl and Daniel; grandmother, Rhoda Clark; aunts, Lori Neveau, Linda Kline, Sonya Connelly, Betsy Young and Cappi Satterwhite, along with other aunts; and uncles, Jeff Clark, Scott Clark, Randy Clark, Tim Lane and Floyd Daniels, along with other uncles.

He was preceded in death by his grandfather, Virgil Clark, and grandmother, Betsy LaBonte-Schaefer.

Visitation was held Thursday, April 28, 2011, at Dallas Mortuary Tribute Center. A funeral service was held Friday, April 29, in the sanctuary at the Tribal cemetery.

Dallas Mortuary Tribute Center handled the arrangements. Online condolences may be left at www.dallastrIBUTE.com.

