



# 30th Annual Restoration Celebration

Nov. 22-23, 2013



Smoke  Signals

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## Nov. 22, 2013, marks 30th anniversary of Tribal Restoration Diamond anniversary a time to remember members who made it so

By Dean Rhodes

*Smoke Signals editor*

**N**ov. 22, 2013, marks the most important day in modern Grand Ronde history: the 30th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan signing House Resolution 3885, which became Public Law 98-165, the Grand Ronde Restoration Act.

President Reagan's signature officially ended 29 years of the federal government not recognizing what many Grand Ronde Tribal members knew deep in their hearts – that they were Native Americans and the federal government had responsibilities to uphold because of that status.

"The fact that the federal government doesn't extend recognition doesn't mean that you're not a Tribe, or not indeed a government," said Don Wharton.

In the late 1970s, Wharton founded Oregon Legal Service's Native American Program, which assisted terminated Oregon Tribes pursuing Restoration.

"The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde existed as a Tribe and a government; they just didn't have federal recognition," he said.

At its Diamond Anniversary of Restoration, members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde have much to celebrate and be thankful for.

Spirit Mountain Casino unveiled in May 2008 its fourth major expansion since opening in 1995. The proceeds from that successful gaming enterprise provide the financial foundation for important educational, health and social benefits for more than 5,200 Tribal members today.

Since the Tribe's 25th Restoration celebration in 2008, the Tribe has participated in the five Gathering of Oregon's First Nations powwows, created and held in late January to remind Oregonians that the state's history did not begin with statehood and that Tribal members have lived in what is now Oregon since time immemorial.

Tribal flags were added to the Walk of Flags area at the state Capitol in Salem in 2009 and Grand Ronde had its ceremonial hunting rights re-authorized by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2009 as well.

Recently, the Tribe has seen the return of its ceded lands at Rattlesnake Butte near Junction City and at Chahpam on the North Santiam River near Stayton.

Culturally, the Tribe is resurgent. More and more Tribal youth participate in powwows and learn to speak Chinuk Wawa in school. Tribal members young



Photo courtesy of Land and Culture Department

**From left, Tribal members Marvin Kimsey, Margaret Provost and Merle Holmes started the Tribe's Restoration effort in the early 1970s.**

and old learn traditional crafts, such as basket weaving and making hand drums, through Land and Culture classes. Tribal youth have participated in the annual Canoe Journey experience since 2005 when they first paddled to Elwha in Port Angeles, Wash.

In addition, the Tribe started holding a First Salmon Ceremony in December 2011 and held a First Salmon Ceremony in West Linn in 2013, marking the first time in 130 years Tribal members held such a ceremony on the banks of the Willamette River.

Also, the first Coming of Age ceremony was held in more than 100 years for a young Tribal woman in 2013.

The Tribe constructed a traditional plankhouse – Achaf-hammi – at the new Uyxat Powwow Grounds near Fort Yamhill State Park, which held a grand opening in September 2010. Plans are under way to build a cultural center/museum to display Tribal artifacts and teach visitors about Grand Ronde history at the former middle school, which the Tribe purchased in 2011.

And there's much to look forward to as Tribal Council and Tribal members seek to improve Tribal services and diversify the Tribe's economy. Just earlier this year, the Tribe became a minority owner in SAM Medical Products in Wilsonville and purchased Shasta Administrative Services in late 2012.

Remembering the Restoration effort, the almost 30 years of Termination and the tortured history of the bands and Tribes that form the foundation of every living Tribal member is appropriate at 30.

### Tribes rounded up

In the early 1850s, the ancestors of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde signed seven ratified treaties with the federal government that ceded most of

western Oregon, from the California border to the Columbia River and up the Columbia River Gorge to Mount Hood in return for promises of a reservation.

Members of several Native American Tribes and bands were rounded up by the U.S. Cavalry and walked under armed guard to the Table Rock Reservation near present-day Medford in 1853-55. The area was a temporary gathering place for Native peoples before the 33-day, 265-mile journey north to the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation that occurred in February and March of 1856.

Chief Bogus, late Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey's grandfather, died on the march to Grand Ronde, which occurred during cold and wet conditions. In all, eight Tribal members died and eight were born on what would become the Rogue River Tribe's Trail of Tears.

Grand Ronde ancestors who lived in the Willamette Valley spoke dialects of Molalla, Kalapuya, Clackamas, Chinook and other languages from neighboring Tribes. Those from the Rogue River Valley spoke dialects of Athabaskan, Penutian and Hokan. In all, Reservation residents spoke more than 25 different dialects from at least four different language families when they arrived in Grand Ronde.

The only Native language in common was Chinuk Wawa, which became the primary language for most reservation residents. While many of the ancestral languages were spoken for generations after relocation, eventually Chinuk Wawa became the common Native language for the Tribe and today is the recognized Native language for Grand Ronde. (In 2012, the Tribe published a new Chinuk Wawa dictionary, "Chinuk Wawa: As our elders teach us to speak it.")

Despite relocation to the supposed safety of the Grand Ronde Reservation,

the assault on the Tribes' ways of life continued unabated by the influx of white settlers to Oregon.

The 69,100-acre Grand Ronde Reservation granted by President James Buchanan's Executive Order in 1857 survived only until the value of the timber and mineral resources were recognized.

The 1887 General Allotment Act divided 33,000 acres of the reservation – almost half – into 270 allotments of land to Indians at Grand Ronde. The goal was to make farmers out of Indians and the act allowed Tribal members to live on their land tax free while it was held in trust. At the end of 25 years, the land was transferred from trust status to fee status and became taxable in an attempt to allow the Native families to eventually own the land.

However, most of the allotments went out of Indian control with "alarming rapidity," according to the Tribe's 1985 Reservation Plan. "This was true not only at Grand Ronde, but across the nation wherever allotments had been made under the General Allotment Act."

In 1901, following negotiations initiated by federal Indian Inspector James McLaughlin, the federal government declared 25,791 acres "surplus," and purchased it from the Indians for \$1.10 an acre or a per capita of \$72. Much of that land was then sold to local timber interests.

Many of the allotments that remained in Tribal member possession were eventually lost as indecipherable tax laws pushed some Tribal members to forfeit their land, while others sold out, raising money to survive. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs would sell Tribal lands and not allow children to inherit the land.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1936 enabled the Tribe to again purchase land on which to build homes for Tribal members on the reservation. Six ranch properties and one building site totaling 537 acres were purchased by the Tribe with IRA funds.

For those who stayed, life was hard.

Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey remembered making baskets to take to McMinnville in a horse-and-buggy to trade for clothes. She remembered long trips to Dallas to purchase groceries, as well as washing clothes in local creeks and catching crawfish and boiling them in tin cans.

Many Tribal members were sent to Indian schools and adopted by non-Native families, threatening the Tribe's heritage

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by disconnecting the youth from their history. However, many who attended Chemawa Indian School in Salem, such as Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison, report that it was one of the great formative experiences of their still-young lives.

In 1954, when the Western Oregon Indian Termination Act was enacted by Congress, the 69,100-acre reservation granted to the Grand Ronde Tribes in 1857 had dwindled to about 400 acres. Congress passed the termination act under its plenary powers and without any vote or consent by the Grand Ronde Tribe.

The federal government pursued Termination because it wanted to free Tribes from any further federal management, which had kept the Grand Ronde Tribe in poverty conditions from the beginnings of the reservation. Two years later, in 1956, all Tribal land had been sold. Federal services, such as health care, ceased, and all accounts were settled between the Tribe and the federal government.

Tribal members, then numbering 882, each received a one-time check of \$35—a payment that was supposed to replace their identity and pay for their rights under the treaties.

## Termination era

Termination came in the name of freeing Indians from reliance on the federal government, allowing them to join the fabric of American life on an equal basis with other Americans, but it also meant that the Grand Ronde people would no longer be acknowledged as Indian people and would have no rights on their reservation lands.

For almost 30 years, Tribal members were virtually a landless people in their own land.

Or, as Elizabeth Furse, former Oregon Congresswoman and director of the Institute for Tribal Government at Portland State University, said, “It was right after the war at a time when the U.S. was trying to save money. The federal government did not want to be in the Indian business.”

Termination also had the added consequence of opening vast Indian lands to development by timber and farming interests.

Furse said it was no coincidence that the head of the U.S. Department of the Interior at the time was former Oregon Gov. Douglas McKay, who had many friends in the timber industry who coveted the lumber on Native lands in Oregon, particularly the Ponderosa pine owned by the Klamath Tribe in southern Oregon.

Without federal support systems, the Grand Ronde Tribe languished and many Tribal members moved away in search of jobs. Tribal Elder Dean Mercier moved to Brookings in 1959 to feed his family while Tribal Elder Leon “Chip” Tom moved his family to Colorado as part of a federal relocation program.



Photo courtesy of Kathryn Harrison

**An early post-Restoration Tribal Council included, seated from left, Kathryn Harrison, Dean Mercier and Russ Leno, and standing, from left, Frank Harrison, Merle Leno, Darrell Mercier, Mark Mercier, Candy Robertson and Henry Petite. The Tribal Council met in the dining room of St. Michael's Catholic Church in those early days.**

“People had to relocate to survive,” recalled Tribal member Margo Mercier.

The relocation program tried to get Native Americans to assimilate into the dominant culture and through several generations of inter-marriage dilute Native blood so much that there were no longer Indians, thereby ending the government’s trust relationship and responsibilities.

Within homes and families, individuals worked hard, predominantly in the logging industry, and families helped each other maintain Tribal traditions. Those who remained in the Grand Ronde area fondly recall a tight-knit community.

“We were more or less trying to survive,” said Tribal Chairman Reyn Leno. “There was no money in those days. There were hard-working people here. Everybody worked.”

Tribal Council member Cheryle A. Kennedy remembered her grandmother, Pauline Johnson, preparing lamprey, collecting berries and weaving baskets, as well as speaking Chinuk Wawa.

Several Tribal members recall Elders speaking Chinuk Wawa not as an educational exercise, but to ensure the younger members of the family didn’t know what they were saying.

“We would go around and visit in those days and soon as the old folks got together they would start talking jargon,” recalled Tribal Elder Russ Leno. “They would be laughing and pointing at us.”

Reyn Leno remembers learning a few words of Chinuk Wawa from his grandmother. Knowing some Chinuk Wawa words was a qualification to eat at the family dinner table.

Annual, well-attended picnics held at the Tribal cemetery on Memorial Day brought Tribal members who had moved away back home at least once a year.

## Seeds of Restoration

As the Civil Rights movement for African-Americans reached a crescendo in the mid-1960s and Native Americans started insisting on social justice as

well, President Lyndon Johnson officially spoke out against Termination as a federal policy in 1968. His successor, Richard Nixon, supported Indian self-determination as a federal policy.

The work of Grand Ronde Restoration had the humblest of beginnings. The year was 1972 and Nixon sat in the White House while the Vietnam War continued in southeast Asia.

Tribal members Marvin Kimsey, Margaret Provost and Merle Holmes attended a meeting held by the Association of Urban Indians in Lebanon and were subsequently inspired by other Tribal restoration efforts, such as the Menominees in Wisconsin, which became the first restored Tribe in the nation in 1973.

The trio of Tribal members—now known as a housewife and two truck drivers—didn’t know exactly what had to be accomplished to achieve Restoration and there was no ready source of funding for such a time-consuming effort. During the first few years, Tribal Restoration was an after-hours, part-time project.

All that remained of the once-large Grand Ronde Reservation was the Tribal cemetery of approximately 2.5 acres that contained a 24-by-24-foot green shed. In June 1975, the Temporary Council of the Grand Ronde Indians started meeting. The first Treasurer’s Report delivered by Vicki Lawrence said the Tribe had a balance of \$2.27 in its bank account.

Between 1975 and 1979, few substantive gains were made, but those four years produced a core group of Marvin Kimsey, Merle Holmes and Margaret Provost, as well as Patti Martin, Vicki Lawrence, Darrell Mercier, Dean Mercier, Russ Leno, Les Houck and others who began laying the foundation of Tribal Restoration.

It also produced long-lasting alliances with Furse and Wharton of Oregon Legal Service’s Native American Program and Congressman Les AuCoin, Sen. Mark O. Hatfield and Oregon Gov. Victor Atiyeh.

And a milestone of sorts occurred in 1979 when the first seven acres of new

Tribal property—the front part of the cemetery—were purchased for \$3,250 per acre with money made at Tribal fundraisers. It came with an office building that soon became the nerve center of Restoration efforts.

Also in 1979, the Tribe received a \$90,000 grant from the Administration for Native Americans, which allowed it to hire five full-time employees to work on Restoration.

Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison returned to Grand Ronde in 1980 with Restoration experience under her belt, having helped the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians on the Oregon coast secure federal recognition in 1977.

“The biggest issue we had was money,” Harrison recalls. “Every general meeting was a bake sale or a raffle. People were buying things from each other to raise money. The Elders always gave us their full support. I remember Esther LaBonte; she was on Social Security and every month she gave us \$20.”

The effort drafted Tribal children, too. Dean Mercier brought in his daughter, Jackie Mercier Colton, who drove in from Amity to help. She, in turn, drafted her children. Mike and Doug Colton remember picking huckleberries at South Lake for making jam that would be used to sell fry bread on the side of the road.

Children also served as waiters and waitresses at pancake feeds at which their parents were cooks.

Former Tribal Council Vice Chair Angie Blackwell, daughter of Candy Robertson, remembers being the dishwasher at many of the fundraising potlucks.

As the 1970s continued, a growing core of Grand Ronde Tribal members worked on Restoration and spent long days and nights in the crowded cemetery office, with neither heat nor plumbing, one phone line and a donated typewriter.

Their work was intent on satisfying the congressional criteria for federal recognition, namely that the Tribe ex-

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exercised ongoing governmental functions; proving the Tribe consisted of a community of Indians belonging to a formerly recognized Tribe; and that the Indians still lived in their aboriginal territory, maintaining their customs and language; and were poorer than the surrounding adjacent nonIndian population.

With the help of a \$9,000 grant, Jackie Provost, Margaret's daughter, was hired as secretary and conducted a census of Tribal members, going door-to-door to determine how many Tribal members lived in the Grand Ronde area. In addition, a trailer purchased from Russ Leno for \$50 was set up at the cemetery to help families register.

Meanwhile, Margaret Provost sought the support of other Tribal leaders, attending powwows and cultural events. The Tribes, including the Warm Springs, Siletz, Coos/Siuslaw/Lower Umpqua and Cow Creek, wrote letters of support to Congress and persuaded the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians to allow the Grand Ronde Tribe to join before being federally recognized.

To meet the federal criteria, Tribal members held governmental meetings, powwows and cultural ceremonies. They worked to certify blood quantum, document those who still spoke Chinuk Wawa and collect income numbers. In 1980, the first Grand Ronde Royalty was crowned with Queen Jackie Provost and Princesses Margie Lafferty and Jackie Mercier Colton.

Locally, Tribal members dispelled unsubstantiated rumors and overcame opposition from neighboring communities, garnered the support of other Tribes and convinced Congress that Restoration would not be a Pandora's box, opening the way for illegitimate claims.

"There was that doubt," Kathryn Harrison recalls. "People hadn't heard of us. They thought Grand Ronde was in eastern Oregon."

Amongst all this, Tribal members pursued grants for funding and held fundraising activities, such as roadside fry bread stands and selling homemade jam made by Tribal Elders.

To garner community support, they contacted churches, clubs and scores of organizations. Before steady funding arrived, Marvin Kimsey quit his job to devote more time to the effort.

Tribal Elders, such as Ila Dowd, Velma Mercier, Wilson Bobb and Esther LaBonte, held bake sales and donated money.

Margaret Provost recalls that every time there was a meeting, there would be a bake sale.

"If things didn't sell, they bought from each other," she says.

A nonprofit corporation was formed, and by June 1982, the Tribe had raised \$250,000 to fund Restoration efforts.

The hours were long and the work tedious enough that sometimes Restoration workers thought about quitting.



Jackie Mercier Colton Whisler

"When things went wrong, I would ask Margaret, 'Whose idea was Restoration anyway?' " Harrison recalls.

But Tribal members pressed on.

## Restoration testimony

Furse and Wharton represented the Tribe as legislative liaisons. Slowly, momentum built toward a date in Washington, D.C., before Congress.

Meanwhile, an interim Tribal Council was elected, composed of Chairman Marvin Kimsey, co-Chairman Wink Soderberg, Secretary-Treasurer Jackie Colton (Whisler) and members Kathryn Harrison, Merle Holmes, Dean Mercier, Eula Petite, Jackie Provost and Margaret Provost.

By 1982, Harrison, who had worked on the Siletz Restoration effort, had become lead community organizer, mustering support for federal recognition and convincing opposition groups of the inherent justice of Restoration.

Opposition from fishing and timber organizations was first neutralized and then turned into support. Community concerns about losing land and increasing tax rates were quelled through educational meetings. In the end, the Restoration effort received more than 100 letters of support from community members, business owners, state and county representatives, and Elders of the Tribe.

Restoration leaders, such as Merle Holmes, Dean Mercier and others flew to Washington, D.C., on their own money to meet lawmakers and lobby for Restoration.

Congressman AuCoin, impressed with the Tribe's ability to enlist community support, submitted the Grand Ronde Restoration Bill on Sept. 14, 1983, while Sen. Mark Hatfield did the same in the Senate. Oregon Gov. Vic Atiyeh and assorted Polk and Yamhill county commissioners voiced their support for a restored Grand Ronde Tribe.

In October 1983, Marvin Kimsey, Jackie Colton, Kathryn Harrison and her children, Frank and Karen, along with Furse made their historic trip to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Karen was a 16-year-old junior at Willamina High School when she testified.

Harrison, now 89, remains proud



Merle Holmes

that three-fifths of those who went to Washington, D.C., to testify on behalf of Tribal Restoration were members of her family.

They all spoke convincingly on behalf of restoring the Grand Ronde Tribe to federal recognition.

"They testified on the issue of justice," Furse recalled. "It was very impressive testimony."

The Restoration Bill passed through the House of Representatives with 57 letters of support and none in opposition. It sailed through the Senate under Hatfield's legislative guidance, receiving approval on the chamber's consent agenda on Nov. 11, 1983.

All that remained was the president's signature. Grand Ronde Tribal members had to wait 11 agonizing days for that to happen.

President Ronald Reagan signed Bill HR 3885 on Nov. 22, 1983. The restored Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde began with 2,200 members.

"We were elk hunting and we heard the announcement on the radio," Margaret Provost said. "It was very exciting."

Kathryn Harrison drove her car up and down Grand Ronde Road, honking her horn and yelling, "We did it ... we did it!"

A small crowd of Tribal members gathered at the Tribal cemetery and toasted the event with celebratory shouts.

"It was the happiest day of my life," recalls Margo Mercier.

That was 30 years ago.

In that time, several of the key players in the Tribal Restoration effort have walked on.

Merle Holmes walked on in May 2004

at the age of 70.

Jackie Mercier Colton Whisler was taken away shortly after the Tribe's 24th Restoration anniversary in December 2007 at the age of 56. Her father, Dean Mercier, walked on July 6, 2011, and Russell Leno walked on Dec. 7, 2010.

Other important participants in the Restoration effort are still with the Tribe, Elders now in their 60s and older: Kathryn Harrison, Margaret Provost, Candy Robertson, Patti Tom Martin and Marvin Kimsey, to name a few.

## Post-Restoration success

In the almost 11,000 days since Restoration, those Tribal Elders have watched the restored Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde grow from owning only a 2.5-acre cemetery to obtaining almost 10,000 acres for a reservation to building Tribal Community and Governance centers to opening Spirit Mountain Casino and Spirit Mountain Lodge.

They have watched the Tribe become the largest employer in Polk and Yamhill counties.

They have watched the Tribe build its own Health & Wellness Center that provides medical services to Tribal members and residents of the surrounding community.

They've watched as new Grand Ronde Tribal members have been born, learned their heritage and culture, and matured into proud Native Americans.

They have watched housing built, allowing Tribal members to return to the reservation. They have watched an educational facility go up to teach Chinuk Wawa.

They have watched a new generation of Tribal members take the helm and guide the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde toward prosperity, self-sufficiency and control of their collective destiny.

"I think one of the real strengths that the Grand Ronde people have is that we know that our destiny is in our hands," Kennedy said. "We no longer want to be in a position where someone else has the key to whether we survive or not. We will determine our own destiny."

Harrison, who served on Tribal Council for more than 20 years and never lost an election, best summed up the years since Restoration for the Tribe.

"We are living out the dreams of our Elders and our ancestors," Harrison said.

*(This article includes previously published information from "Standing Tall: The Lifeway of Kathryn Harrison" by Kristine Olson and the 1985 Grand Ronde Reservation Plan, as well as Smoke Signals articles written by Tribal members Chris Mercier and Angela Sears and longtime staff writer Ron Karten. In addition, it includes information and quotes from interviews conducted with Tribal members and Elders, as well as other key players in the Restoration effort, during the summer and fall of 2008).*





# BUILDING



Tribal Community Center opens March 1992



Spirit Mountain Casino opens October 1995



Natural Resources Department opens in August 1997



Grand Meadows opens September 1997



Health & Wellness Center opens September 1997



Governance Center opens November 1998



Spirit Mountain Lodge opens December 1998



Elder Housing opens August 2000



Education Building opens August 2002



Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority Office opens November 2002



Tribal Library opens April 2003





# A NATION



West Valley Veterans Memorial dedicated May 2003



Chxi Musam Illihi housing development opens June 2003



Grand Ronde Station opens December 2003



Adult Foster Care buildings open July 2006



Elders' Activity Center opens November 2008



Portland Area Office purchased November 2009



Grand Ronde Fire Station opens June 2010



Tribal plankhouse opens September 2010



Tribe buys Willamina Middle School in May 2011





***“I have the greatest respect for every decision-maker that we’ve ever had in this Tribe, and every Tribal member that made the decision to put them in place.”***

*Tribal Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr.*

### **Grand Ronde Post-Restoration Tribal Councils**

**April 1984-May 1985:** Kathryn Harrison, chair; Dean Mercier, vice chair; Candy Robertson, secretary; Frank Harrison, Merle Leno, Russell Leno, Darrell Mercier, Mark Mercier and Henry Petite.

**May 1985 – October 1985:** Henry Petite, chair; Mark Mercier, vice chair; Kathryn Harrison, secretary; Cheryle A. Kennedy, Merle Leno, Russell Leno, Darrell Mercier, Eula Petite and Candy Robertson.

**October 1985 – September 1986:** Mark Mercier, chair; Merle Leno, vice chair; Kathryn Harrison, secretary; Cheryle A. Kennedy, Russell Leno, Darrell Mercier, Eula Petite, Henry Petite and Candy Robertson.

**September 1986 – September 1987:** Mark Mercier, chair; Merle Leno, vice chair; Kathryn Harrison, secretary; Dorothy Greene, Frank Harrison, Bradley Kowing, Russell Leno, Eula Petite and Candy Robertson.

**September 1987 – September 1988:** Mark Mercier, chair; Merle Leno, vice chair; Kathryn Harrison, secretary; Valarene Grout, Eugene LaBonte, Russell Leno, Ray McKnight, Henry Petite and Candy Robertson.

**September 1988 – September 1989:** Mark Mercier, chair; Candy Robertson, vice chair; Kathryn Harrison, secretary; Valarene Grout, Merle Holmes, Marvin Kimsey, Russell Leno, Ray McKnight and Henry Petite.

**September 1989 (vacancies due to absenteeism):** Mark Mercier, chair; Candy Robertson, vice chair; Kathryn Harrison, secretary; Wilmadene Butler, Valarene Grout, Merle Holmes, Ray McKnight and Rick McKnight.

**September 1989 – September 1990:** Mark Mercier, chair; Candy Robertson, vice chair; Kathryn Harrison, secretary; Wilmadene Butler, Valarene Grout, Merle Holmes, Ray McKnight, Rick McKnight and Bob Mercier.

**September 1990 – September 1991:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Valarene Grout, secretary; Larry Brandon, Merle Holmes, Ray McKnight, Rick McKnight, Bob Mercier and Margaret Provost.

**September 1991 – October 1991:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Valarene Grout, secretary; Larry Brandon, Merle Holmes, Ray McKnight, Rick McKnight, Bob Mercier and Margaret Provost.

**October 16-30, 1991:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Valarene Grout, secretary; Larry Brandon, Merle Holmes, Ray McKnight, Bob Mercier, Margaret Provost and Candy Robertson.

**Oct. 30 – Nov. 13, 1991 (vacancy):** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Valarene Grout, secretary; Merle Holmes, Ray McKnight, Bob Mercier, Margaret Provost and Candy Robertson.

**November 1991 – September 1992:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Valarene Grout, secretary; Merle Holmes, Ray McKnight, Bob Mercier, Margaret Provost, Candy Robertson and Leon C. Tom.

**September 1992 – September 1993:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Candy Robertson, secretary; Merle Holmes, Andrew Jenness, Ed Larsen, Ray McKnight, Margaret Provost and Leon C. Tom.

**September 1993 – September 1994:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Candy Robertson, secretary; Valarene Grout, Merle Holmes, Andrew Jenness, Ed Larsen, Ray McKnight and Leon C. Tom.

**September 1994 – September 1995:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Ed Larsen, secretary; Valarene Grout, Bob Haller, Andrew Jenness, Eugene LaBonte, Ed Pearsall and Leon C. Tom.

**Sept. 20 – Oct. 11, 1995:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Ed Larsen, secretary; Valarene Grout, Bob Haller, Eugene LaBonte, Ed Pearsall, Margaret Provost and Leon C. Tom.

**Oct. 12, 1995 – September 1996:** Mark Mercier, chair; Kathryn Harrison, vice chair; Ed Pearsall, secretary; Valarene Grout, Bob Haller, Eugene LaBonte, Ed Larsen, Margaret Provost and Leon C. Tom.

**September 1996 – September 1997:** Kathryn Harrison, chair; Ed Larsen, vice chair; Ed Pearsall, secretary; Bob Haller, Eugene LaBonte, Reyn Leno, Mark Mercier, Margaret Provost and Leon C. Tom.

**September 1997 – September 1998:** Kathryn Harrison, chair; Ed Larsen, vice chair; Ed Pearsall, secretary; Valarene Grout, Reyn Leno, Bob Mercier, Mark Mercier, Margaret Provost and Leon C. Tom.

**September 1998 – September 1999:** Kathryn Harrison, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; Ed Pearsall, secretary; Valarene Grout, Bob Haller, Ed Larsen, Bob Mercier, Mark Mercier and Leon C. Tom.

**September 1999 – September 2000:** Kathryn Harrison, chair; Ed Larsen, vice chair; Ed Pearsall, secretary; Valarene Grout, Bob Haller, Earl F. LaBonte, Reyn Leno, Bob Mercier and June Sell-Sherer.

**September 2000 – September 2001:** Kathryn Harrison, chair; Ed Larsen, vice chair; Reyn Leno, secretary; Bob Haller, Cheryle A. Kennedy, Earl F. LaBonte, Ed Pearsall, Jan D. Reibach and June Sell-Sherer.

**September 2001 – September 2002:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; June Sell-Sherer, secretary; Valarene Grout, Bob Haller, Earl F. LaBonte, Ed Larsen, Ed Pearsall and Jan D. Reibach.

**September 2002 – September 2003:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; June Sell-Sherer, secretary; Valarene Grout, Bob Haller, Ed Larsen, Ed Pearsall, Jan D. Reibach and Valorie Robertson.

**September 2003 – September 2004:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; June Sell-Sherer, secretary; Jack Giffen Jr., Valarene Grout, Bob Haller, Ed Larsen, Jan D. Reibach and Valorie Robertson.

**September 2004 – September 2005:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; June Sell-Sherer, secretary; Angie Blackwell, Jack Giffen Jr., Chris Mercier, Jan D. Reibach, Valorie Robertson and Wesley West.

**September 2005 – September 2006:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Angie Blackwell, vice chair; Chris Mercier, secretary; Jack Giffen Jr., Reyn Leno, Jan D. Reibach, Wink Soderberg, Kathleen Tom and Wesley West.

**September 2006 – September 2007:** Chris Mercier, chair; Angie Blackwell, vice chair; Jack Giffen Jr., secretary; Cheryle A. Kennedy, Reyn Leno, Valorie Sheker, Wink Soderberg, Kathleen Tom and Wesley West.

**September 2007 – September 2008:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; Jack Giffen Jr., secretary; Chris Mercier, June Sell-Sherer, Steve Bobb Sr., Kathleen Tom, Valorie Sheker and Wink Soderberg.

**September 2008 – September 2009:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; Jack Giffen Jr., secretary; Chris Mercier, June Sell-Sherer, Steve Bobb Sr., Kathleen Tom, Valorie Sheker and Wink Soderberg.

**September 2009 – September 2010:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; Kathleen Tom, secretary; Chris Mercier, June Sell-Sherer, Steve Bobb Sr., Valorie Sheker, Wink Soderberg and Toby McClary.

**September 2010 – September 2011:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; Kathleen Tom, secretary; Chris Mercier, Jack Giffen Jr., Steve Bobb Sr., Valorie Sheker, Wink Soderberg and Toby McClary.

**September 2011 – May 2012:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; Jack Giffen Jr., secretary; Chris Mercier, Steve Bobb Sr., Valorie Sheker, June Sherer, Kathleen Tom and Toby McClary.

**June 2012 – September 2012:** Cheryle A. Kennedy, chair; Reyn Leno, vice chair; Jack Giffen Jr., secretary; Chris Mercier, Steve Bobb Sr., June Sherer, Kathleen Tom and Toby McClary.

**September 2012 – Sept. 2013:** Reyn Leno, chair; Jack Giffen Jr., vice chair; Toby McClary, secretary; Chris Mercier, Steve Bobb Sr., June Sherer, Kathleen Tom, Cheryle A. Kennedy and Jon A. George.

**September 2013 – Present:** Reyn Leno, chair; Jack Giffen Jr., vice chair; Toby McClary, secretary; June Sherer, Kathleen Tom, Cheryle A. Kennedy, Jon A. George, Ed Pearsall and Denise Harvey.





# 30<sup>th</sup> Restoration

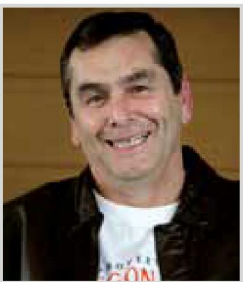
commemorative issue



Angie Blackwell  
2004-07



Steve Bobb Sr.  
2007-13



Larry Brandon  
1990-91



Wilmadene Butler  
1989-90



Jon A. George  
2012-present



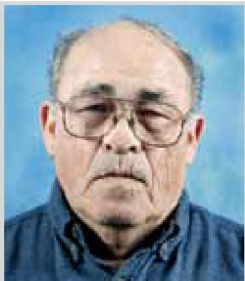
Jack Giffen Jr.  
2003-09, 2010-present



Dorothy Greene  
1986-87



Valarene Grout  
1987-92, 93-96, 97-00, 2001-04



Bob Haller  
1994-97, 98-04



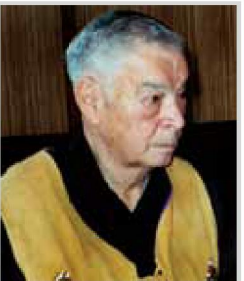
Frank Harrison  
1984-85, 86-87



Kathryn Harrison  
1984-2001



Denise Harvey  
2013-present



Merle Holmes  
1988-94



Andrew Jenness  
1992-95



Cheryl Kennedy  
1985-86, 2000-present



Marvin Kinsey  
1988-89



Bradley Kowing  
1986-87



Earl LaBonte  
1999-02



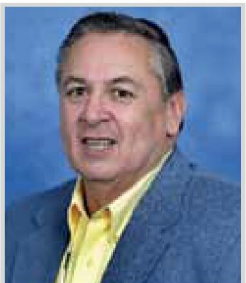
Eugene LaBonte  
1987-88, 94-97



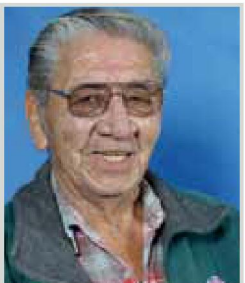
Ed Larsen  
1992-2004



Merle Leno  
1984-88



Reyn Leno  
1996-present



Russell Leno  
1984-89



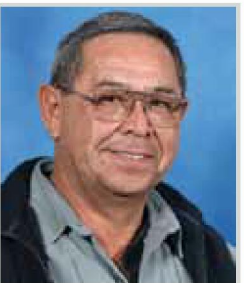
Toby McClary  
2009-present



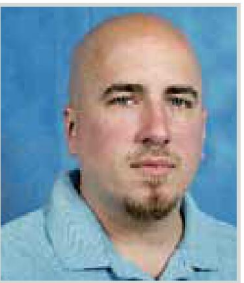
Ray McKnight  
1987-94



Rick McKnight  
1989-91



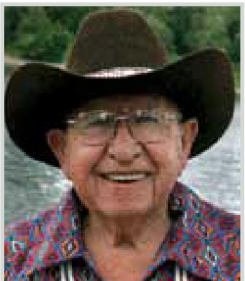
Bob Mercier  
1989-92, 98-00



Chris Mercier  
2004-13



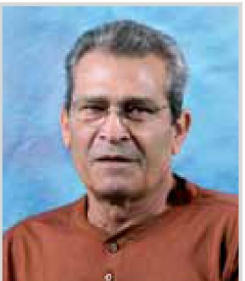
Darrell Mercier  
1984-86



Dean Mercier  
1984-85



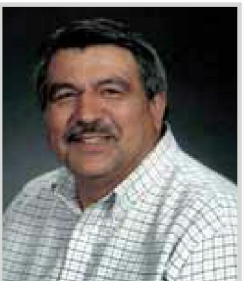
Mark Mercier  
1984-99



Ed Pearsall  
1994-03, 2013-present



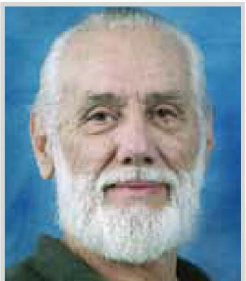
Eula Petite  
1985-87



Henry Petite  
1984-86, 87-89



Margaret Provost  
1990-93, 95-98



Jan Reibach  
2000-06



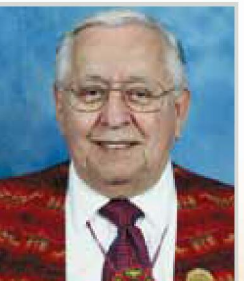
Candy Robertson  
1984-90, 91-94



June Sherer  
1999-05, 07-10, 11-present



Val (Robertson) Sheker  
2002-05, 06-12



Wink Soderberg  
2005-11



Leon Tom  
1991-99



Kathleen Tom  
2005-present



Wesley West  
2004-07

# Tribal Council

## Years of Service





# 30<sup>th</sup> Restoration commemorative issue

## Temporary Grand Ronde Council meets in June 1975

### Early Treasurer's Report cites Tribal bank balance of \$2.27

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The year is 1975.

Gerald Ford sits in the White House.

"All in the Family" is the most popular show on TV.

"Love Will Keep Us Together" by the Captain & Tennille tops the pop music charts.

Gas sells for about 50 cents a gallon.

And on June 8, 10 people christened "The Temporary Council of the Grand Ronde Indians" convene. Those in attendance are Chairwoman Margaret Provost, Co-Chairman Merle Holmes, Secretary Patti Martin, Treasurer Vicki Lawrence and Council members Darrell Mercier, Marvin Kimsey, Les Houck, Russell Leno, Verna Larsen and Ken Hudson.

According to minutes kept by Martin, the discussion items are mostly procedural.

Among the decisions made:

- Meetings will be held on Sundays;
- General Council meetings will be held once a month;
- Bylaws of the Siletz Tribal Council will be adopted and revised to meet Grand Ronde needs.

And the next meeting will be held at the Kopper Kitchen in Salem.

The meeting adjourns at 4:01 p.m.

Forty-three people attended the meeting in Grand Ronde, driving from as far away as Tillamook and Portland.

From such humble beginnings, the Restoration of the Grand Ronde Tribe began.

According to Martin's minutes, taken between June 8, 1975, and Feb. 1, 1976, money to fund the effort was indeed scarce.

For instance, the June 17 meeting held at the Kopper Kitchen is fronted by Margaret Provost. She pays \$14.75 for dinner and the meeting room, and will be reimbursed when "the funds come in," the minutes state.

During the Sept. 21, 1975, meeting, Holmes announces he has applied for a \$7,800 grant from the National Indian Lutheran Board. In addition, Tribal members have approached the Small Tribes of Western Washington for admission, which would make the Grand Ronde Tribe eligible for the organization's grants.

Also in September, Kimsey moves to keep the same Tribal Council members on until September 1976 because of all the work they have done and the contacts made. The motion passes.

In October at a meeting held in the conference room at Chemawa Indian School, attendance swells to 57. Provost explains the ultimate goal of the council to newly attend-

ing Tribal members – Restoration. The meeting also includes a potluck meal.

In addition, a show of hands indicates interest in a health survey, which Diana Denhem and Patti Martin agree to conduct in the Grand Ronde Library on Oct. 31.

On Dec. 7, Treasurer Vicki Lawrence delivers her first report detailed in the minutes. The amount of \$21.27 was collected at the previous meeting, of which \$15 was dispersed for rental of the church and \$5 used to purchase stamps, leaving a balance of \$2.27.

Holmes reports receiving a letter from Oregon Sen. Bob Packwood.

"Since the Menominees were restored, it looks good for Siletz. We are sure that we could be restored also, because we have as many rights and needs as the others. There is also a chance for state recognition," the minutes say.

The Dec. 15 Tribal Council meeting held at a Bonanza restaurant discusses putting together a Christmas party and spaghetti feed for Indian children in Grand Ronde. Several names are offered regard-

ing who would be the best Santa, but the minutes do not reveal who the eventual Grand Ronde Claus turned out to be. However, the party is slated for 1 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21.

In January 1976, the Tribe is notified that its admittance into the Small Tribes of Western Washington is denied. An early setback in obtaining funding for the Restoration effort.

"The fact that Chinook Indians are a member, and receiving funds, is very puzzling since Grand Ronde has more than 300 Chinook Indians," the minutes state.

On the positive side, Holmes says he feels confident about receiving a \$7,800 National Indian Lutheran Board grant since ineligible groups were supposed to be notified of such by Jan. 1.

It also is announced that Ray Cross, a Mandan Indian who helped the Menominees obtain Restoration, would be taking over the Grand Ronde's case with the Native American Rights Fund.

The Tribal Council also decides that all meetings should be held

in Grand Ronde from now on. "The public school is open to use by the public," the minutes state. "There is no cost unless we use the kitchen. The Tribal Business Committee is filling out the necessary forms to see that the first Sunday of every month is scheduled for our meetings."

Monetarily, things are improving. The Tribal checking account stands at \$93 thanks to donations at the Christmas party. (There's no mention of Provost being reimbursed for the Kopper Kitchen expense.)

In February, Holmes appoints Dean Mercier to the remainder of Ken Hudson's term on council until September elections are held. And a Bylaw Committee of Russ Leno, Dean Mercier, Darrell Mercier, Vicki Lawrence and Patti Martin forms to update the Siletz bylaws.

Twenty-eight people attend the Feb. 1 Tribal Council meeting. Most of them list Grand Ronde addresses on the attendance sheet.

Slowly, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is re-awakening in its traditional homelands as the nation's 200th birthday approaches. ■

#### COUNCIL MEETING OF THE GRAND RONDE INDIANS

DATE: DECEMBER 7, 1975

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Vicki Lawrence  
Russ Leno  
Merle Holmes  
Marvin Kimsey  
Darrell Mercier  
Patti Martin

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE: Les Houck  
Margaret Provost  
Ken Hudson

#### MINUTES:

Merle called the meeting to order at 1:20. Roll was called--Margaret Provost, Ken Hudson, and Les Houck were absent.

Treasurer's report was given by Vicki Lawrence. The amount of \$21.27 was collected at the last meeting. \$15.00 was paid to the pastor for the rental of the church; \$5.00 was used for stamps; a balance was left of \$2.27. Merle motioned the treasurer's report be accepted; Marvin seconded.

Merle asked Marvin to give his report on the visitation of the lawyer, James King. He said that probably no government land could be given back. He told the people if they are on this list, they must contact the State Land Board. There is a charge of \$7.50 to get it.

The question was asked, "Is there any hope of doing something to Mr. Fuller?" The statute of limitations has run out.

Merle and Marvin attended a meeting of the task force at Siletz. There were some Indians there; but Merle said that if they did anything at all, they were very sympathetic. "But who knows?"

We want to have a meeting with Mr. Lonefight and the Public Health in order to use the dental health facilities at Chemawa. Merle said the people who are on the old rolls, and their dependents, will be recognized for this dental program.

Merle has some feelers out about low-income housing in the Grand Ronde area. The rent would be very low, because of the incomes out this way. Nothing smaller than 2 bedrooms.

Marvin said a work-shop is being held in Portland concerning the CETA Program. He hopes we will be sub-granted by U.I.P., and have CETA monies to use in the Grand Ronde area.

There are a lot of educational grants--the main one being B.E.O.G. The school must be Federally accredited before they will accept the grants. Marvin Kimsey told the people that if they could get up enough men for a tree-planting crew, the CETA Program will arrange a contract between the crew and the Forest Service.

The question was asked, "Does anyone know what the cost of hooking up to the water system is?" It is an initial cost of \$300.00, and then a monthly charge of \$7.00 - \$8.00.





# Restoration testimony

**Testimony of Kathryn Harrison in support of HR 3885 before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Oct. 18, 1983:**



Today, for the first time, I feel at peace with my ancestors, the introduction of this Restoration Bill is a beginning of an ending; a eulogy and a greeting.

I am speaking here today, not only for people back home who are gathered together to celebrate this day, but also for those ancestors who completed our first Trail of Tears 127 years ago. Walking from Table Rock near what is now the city of Medford, Oregon, in a massive military round-up during the wintery month of February 1856. It took them 33 days to reach the present site of Grand Ronde. For those proud people who carried on, persisted, even stood alone to preserve our culture, Termination was not in their plans at all.

Did they make that walk in vain?

If you know anything about Indian people, especially the history of Grand Ronde Indians, a history that's not in the history books, you know we have endured much, but we have endured. With the coming of Termination in 1954, our second Trail of Tears began and is now in its 29th year; our children know of no other way of life. The economic impact was devastating and we became "experts" on poverty; our original reservation

of 69,000 acres, with proper management, could have been a continuing, on-going support for us. As a terminated Tribe, we suffer from problems in addition to issues confronting other Tribes. Without resources, we are a minority among recognized Tribes, yet, not considered as equals either in the dominant society.

It has taken a lot of hard work, depressing and discouraging at times, but, there's always been the feeling that, as extensions of our ancestors, this restoration effort is the carrying out of their visions – and so we could always reach back to their strengths and wisdom.

Because of this, we have seen organizations come and go, yet the Grand Ronde Tribe continues. Our roots are there, but we need those roots confirmed by Restoration. We are not only looking at strengthening our culture, we are also interested in working for economic betterment, and so by helping ourselves, we are helping the total community.

Termination of Indian Tribes has been discredited by all of the U.S. presidents since President Nixon, yet my Tribe is still terminated.

But now, Congressman AuCoin knows and understands our plight and has joined us in our long walk toward rejoining the family of Indian Nations. By introducing our Restoration Bill today, he is giving us new hope that there is still "liberty and justice for all" in this United States of America.

**Testimony of Frank Harrison in support of HR 3885 before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Oct. 18, 1983:**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

My name is Frank Harrison, and I am a council member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Indians. I want to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to appear before you. I would like to tell you some of the effects of Termination on our Tribe.



As you know, Termination as a policy has been repudiated by the United States Congress since 1968, but my Tribe remains terminated.

The idea behind Termination was for Indian people and Tribes to become self-sufficient by assimilating into the white society; to compete with white people and thus to learn to advance ourselves. The concept was that Termination would have a positive effect on the Grand Ronde Tribe.

The facts, however, show that the opposite has happened. Termination caused a great hardship to our Tribe and our people are still suffering because of it. In 1982, we hired a firm in McMinnville, Oregon, to conduct a socio-economic study of our people. This study shows that the Grand Ronde Indians are lagging behind their white neighbors in health, employment and education. I would like, Mr. Chairman, to read some of the findings of this report.

Twenty-five percent of our Tribal members suffer from chronic health problems. Twenty-four percent are in need of medical attention but cannot afford it. Fifty-one percent have dental care needs which are not being met.

The tragic irony of this is that not far from Grand Ronde there is the Indian Health Service's facility at Chemawa Indian School. This is a modern and efficient facility, but our people cannot make use of its services because we are terminated and no longer federally recognized Indians. But the greatest loss has been our sense of identity. The loss of federal recognition affected the unity of the Tribe. Some people moved away. I remember going to other Tribes and having Indian people ask me what Tribe I was from, and having them not know Grand Ronde. This happened to me many times when I was growing up and still does today. This would not have happened if our Tribe had been federally recognized perhaps.

In seven ratified treaties, our Tribe ceded to the United States hundreds of thousands of prime acres, making that land available for white settlement; in return the United States agreed to provide health, education and economic development services. The United States agreed to protect our people; the United States recognized our sovereignty. Our Tribe has abided by the laws of Congress and we kept our treaty promises. We never consented to being terminated and yet Termination has unilaterally abrogated many of the promises made to our Tribe by the United States. We ask today that Congress close the gap of 29 years and restore our Tribe to its former status. Thank you.

**An excerpt from the testimony of U.S. Rep. Les AuCoin before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 18, 1983. In this testimony, AuCoin urged the passage of the Restoration Bill, which he introduced.**



Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this bill. The main thing I want to stress this morning is my complete support for this legislation and what it seeks to do – and that is give the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde the tools they need to help themselves.

I'm convinced that Tribal status is crucial to Native American people and is a cornerstone for their collective success. To non-Indians, Tribal status may seem superfluous, unnecessary and perhaps even silly. But to Indian peoples, it is the vessel for their cultural rediscovery, and a source of their cultural identity.

Even though the Tribe was ill-prepared for the realities of Termination and many Indians floundered as unemployment soared, the Grand Rondes maintained an identity, a sense of community that persists today. It is a strong bond which may never be broken.

These Indian people are now ready to accept Restoration of their Tribe as a federally recognized entity. They are not asking for a handout. They are determined people who have earned the dignity of being called by this nation as a Tribe once more.



# Road to R

**1850s** - The Grand Ronde Reservation is established by treaty arrangements and an executive order. More than 30 Tribes and Bands from western Oregon, northern California and southern Washington forcibly relocated to the reservation beginning in February 1856.

**1887** - The General Allotment Act, which gave 270 allotments totaling more than 33,000 acres on the reservation to individual Tribal members, became law. This action led to the loss of major portions of the reservation to Indian non-ownership.

## Key Tribal Events After Restoration

**1984** - First official Tribal Council sworn in office.

**Sept. 9, 1988** - The Tribe regains 9,811 acres of its original reservation when President Reagan signs the Grand Ronde Reservation Act into law.

**1989** - The Tribe buys 5.5 acres along Highway 18 to house its Natural Resources offices. It is now the site of Spirit Mountain Casino.

**March 1992** - Tribal Community Center completed.

**1993** - Tribe purchases 240 acres of additional land along Highway 18 for economic development.

**1994** - Tribal membership votes to pursue gaming.

**October 1995** - Spirit Mountain Casino opens.

**1996** - The Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority is established.

continued on next page



**Kathryn Harrison:** Tribal Elder, now 89, who joined the Restoration effort in the early 1980s and was one of the five Tribal members to testify before Congress in 1983. She also has served on the Tribal Council as chairwoman.



**Jackie Whisler:** Tribal Elder, passed on, who joined the Restoration effort after being cajoled by her father, Dean Mercier, who asked her when she was going to come over and start helping her people.



**Dean Mercier:** Tribal Elder, passed on, who joined the Restoration effort in the 1970s and helped recruit his daughter, Jackie Whisler, to the Restoration effort. Along with Holmes and Kimsey, one of the first three Tribal chairmen.



**Vic Atiyeh:** Oregon governor during part of the Restoration effort who supported the Grand Ronde in regaining federal recognition as a Tribe.



**Merle Holmes:** Tribal Elder, who passed away in May 2004, was one of the three Tribal members in the early 1970s who started the effort to restore the Grand Ronde Tribe to federal recognition.



**Margaret Provost:** Tribal Elder, now 83, who was one of the three Tribal members in the early 1970s who started the effort to restore the Grand Ronde Tribe to federal recognition.

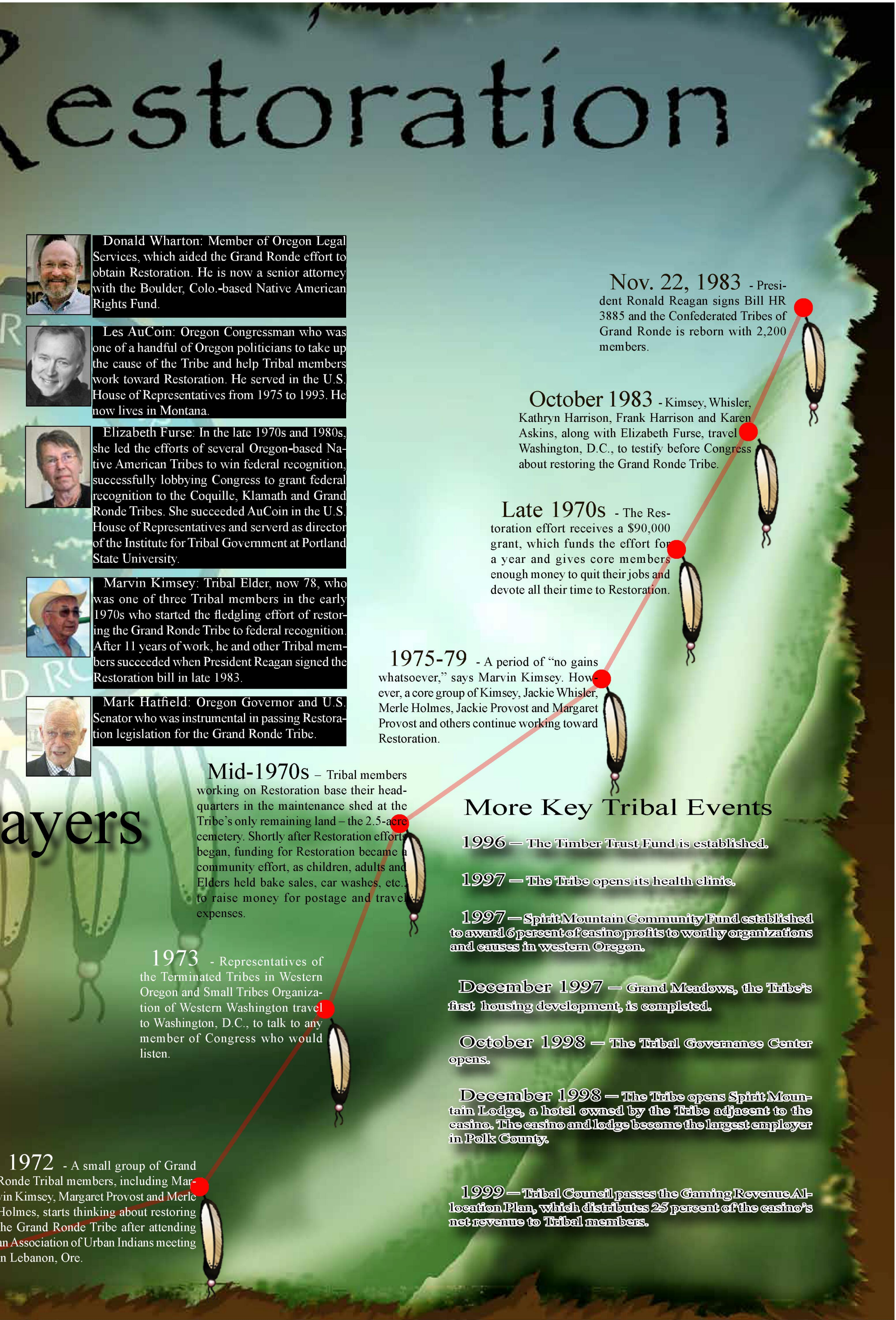
**1901** - U.S. Inspector James McLaughlin declares a 25,791-acre tract of the reservation "surplus" and sells it for \$1.10 per acre. Much of the land was purchased by local timber interests.

**Aug. 13, 1954** - Congress passes the Western Oregon Indian Termination Act, which severs the trust relationship between the federal government and the Tribe. It meant that the Grand Ronde would no longer be acknowledged as Indians, and would have no rights to their reservation lands.

**1968** - President Lyndon Johnson speaks against Termination as a federal policy.

## Key Pl







# 30<sup>th</sup> Restoration commemorative issue

## Kimsey recalls the road to Restoration

By Chris Mercier

There I sat at the local Food Bank.

Elder Marvin Kimsey sat before me, leaning back in the chair, calmly flicking cigarette ashes into a coffee can.

He spoke of Restoration. No, not the act of Restoration, Bill 3885, and speaking before Congress. Not the recent celebration at Spirit Mountain Casino. No, none of that.

He spoke of those first Tribal Council meetings that were like pot-lucks and the occasional shouting match that unfurled in a tiny office at the cemetery. To him, Restoration signified a unique struggle that he and a handful of others worked toward long ago.

He talked about Lebanon, nearly 30 years ago. Margaret Provost convinced him and Merle Holmes to come to a meeting held by some Association of Urban Indians.

"God those meetings were awful. They fought, they bickered," he said. "Some of the people, they were Kalapuyan, some of them were Sioux. Some not even Indian at all."

But despite the arguing, those people had one thing in common; an idea in hindsight that meant everything, an idea that would put Grand Ronde on the map.

The year was 1972, and the Termination Act had occurred not even 20 years ago. The idea was Restoration. Nobody knew what that meant, how long such a task would take or even if the goal was at all possible. But the idea stuck and 30 years later, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

If it could have only been that simple.

"You know, we figured it would take two or three years, tops," said Kimsey.

Well, we all know how the road toward Restoration extended a little beyond that projection, as the Tribe never really became The Tribe in the eyes of the federal government until 1983, 11 years after Kimsey, Provost and Holmes first attended that fateful little meeting in Lebanon.

What we don't really know is just what had to be done to achieve Restoration. Paperwork; loads and loads of paperwork. And phone calls, and letters to be written, and surveys, and enrollment numbers, and fact-finding, and people finding, coalition building, you name it – this was grassroots politics.

Names abound – Les AuCoin, Elizabeth Furse, Mark Hatfield, Don Wharton and Dean Mercier. And, yes, most people have a general idea of what happened, what with the visits to Washington, D.C., and all. But only a select few know the whole story, one which really goes beyond the scope of a simple article in a bimonthly publication, and might be better suited for a detailed



Marvin Kimsey

account as a book. At least so said Kimsey.

"It is ... impossible, I mean impossible to tell you everything that went on in Restoration, and what entailed," Kimsey said, shaking his head. "It really is. You just had to be there."

"There were a lot of sacrifices made," he continued. "We weren't always a Tribe with a casino, or a Tribe with timber even."

To be exact, they were a small group of people, with lives, with jobs not really related to a potential Tribe. There was no steady source of funding, no grants and their pooled extra cash amounted to no more than \$37. Not surprisingly for the first few years, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde was an after-hours project; work away from work, unpaid for even Kimsey himself, often questionable.

"I can't say what drives a person to do it," he said. "I don't know who else would have done it, because there wasn't a whole lot of interest. Work 10- to 12-hour days for nothing. Who wants to do that?"

Well enough people wanted to do "that" to make the venture worthwhile. The first few acres of Tribal property were purchased, the cemetery no less, but coming at least with an office building. Things were cooking. Membership was estimated at more than 600 people, and there was a steady flow of volunteers to keep the ball rolling.

"A lot of people came and went," Kimsey said. "Some were really helpful for one or two months and then they left. And who can blame them? They had their livelihood, their jobs."

Kimsey called the period of 1975

to 1979 a time of "no gains whatsoever." But that time produced the core group of himself, Jackie Whisler, Merle Holmes and Margaret Provost, the four who were to be instrumental in getting the Tribe restored. And that time yielded some of the long-lasting alliances, such as with Elizabeth Furse and Don Wharton of Oregon Legal Services, and with a strong political friend in the form of Congressman Les AuCoin.

Two other key players of note would arrive on the scene, Dean Mercier and Kathryn Harrison. Kimsey and Whisler both can remember the long days and nights spent crowded in the cemetery office, with neither heat nor plumbing, one phone line and a donated typewriter between them. Their first computer was a Commodore 64, which only one person knew how to use. Paper towels substituted for coffee filters.

"Yeah, I can remember during the long winter days, watching Jackie and Kathryn sit at their desks, wearing their coats," chuckled Kimsey.

"Gosh, I can remember those days, too," Whisler said on another occasion. "I left a Coke sitting by my desk one night and when I came back the next morning, it had frozen."

"We lived Restoration," she said.

Whisler entered the fray in 1977 while living in Amity. Her father, Dean Mercier, had become involved and phoned her one night, asking when she was going to come over and "start helping her people."

Mercier himself had become involved, somewhat inadvertently, after learning at a Christmas party one night that he had been elected

to Tribal Council.

"I figured if they thought enough of me to vote me in, I'd better start paying attention," Mercier said.

He, like others, had been recruited into the effort by Kimsey, of course. "Mister Restoration," Mercier called him.

Holmes, Kimsey and Mercier were in fact three of the first original Tribal chairmen. A Tribal Council did exist back then, with elections determined not by ballots, but merely by a show of hands at the General Council meetings.

"Back then nobody wanted to be on council," Whisler said. "I think if somebody was angry at somebody else, they would nominate them for council."

Perhaps nobody wanted to be on council because the positions were, like virtually every other one in those days, voluntary (read: unpaid). Council members had to be leaders, not politicians, an aspect not forgotten by the pre-Restoration group, especially Mercier.

"I never turned into a politician," Mercier said. "Though sometimes they tried to force me to. It was tough on the way to Restoration."

Indeed, Mercier's fiery personality didn't always serve his purpose too well. Whisler and her father both remember one of their early meetings with Les AuCoin, when the congressman was unusually tardy.

"He asked us if he was late," Mercier remembered. "I said, 'Oh, about two years late.'"

Whisler growled "Dad!" and gave him a sharp kick in the shin for the lack of diplomacy.

"I can remember AuCoin just looked at my dad and said, 'You're starting out wrong,'" Whisler said, laughing.

Nonetheless, a sense of levity pervaded many of those early meetings. Some even look back on the occasional fistfights that erupted within the confines of Tribal functions with nostalgia, because even an overheated argument that came to blows was a sure sign of clear and effective communication. Nobody doubted another's stance after a bloody nose and row on the floor.

"The meetings were fun back then," Whisler said. "They were informative."

Just what were they doing all those years? What did all those meetings, all those long office hours need? Kimsey presented a paper from his records, a questionnaire and on it written, among others things, "Congressional Criteria for Federal Recognition."

It read:

1. The Tribe has exercised ongoing governmental functions.

2. Tribal group consists of a community of Indians belonging to a formerly recognized Tribe.



# 30<sup>th</sup> Restoration commemorative issue

3. The Indians are still located in their aboriginal territory or on the former reservation.

4. They have maintained their customs and language.

5. The Tribal group is poorer than the surrounding adjacent non-Indian population.

"So, there you had it," Kimsey said. "The five or six steps toward Restoration. It seemed so simple, but it wasn't."

And AuCoin was the first person to tell them that.

"When we first dealt with him, he told us about all the work," Kimsey said. "And he told us, 'You've got to do the work. I'm not going to do it for you.'"

They had to hold meetings, to prove governmental functions. They had to hold powwows and other rituals to demonstrate the upkeep of culture. They had to certify the blood quantum of members, document those who still spoke jargon, research families and collect numbers on income. They had to pursue grants for funding. Fry bread stands and peddling homemade (by Tribal Elders) jam were some of the notable fundraising activities.

At one point, Mercier said, the Tribe had an unsigned deal with United and Southwest airlines to provide them with huckleberry jam. That is until they realized the quantity demanded was way beyond their means.

Community support also had to be garnered. They contacted churches, clubs and scores of organizations, and just about anyone who would give support. They went through all manner of tedious bureaucratic work just to fulfill those obligations. Before steady funding arrived, Kimsey had to quit his job just to devote more time to the effort.

"It was like chasing a rainbow," Kimsey said. "It seemed closer, but it wasn't."

But the group got plenty of help from Tribal Elders; either through bake sales or money. Their support was monumental, Kimsey said.

"Ila (Dowd) and Velma (Mercier) helped us," he said. "And Wilson Bobb and Esther LaBonte, they donated money."

"It made you feel pretty good that someone believed in you," he added.

"Sometimes I think the Elders just wanted an excuse to get together," Whisler said. "To them, Restoration hopefully meant their medication was paid for."

But even with all the backing, the goal still seemed unreachable, just always out of grasp. More than once they felt like quitting.

"The hours were long and tedious," Kimsey said. "And there were times I wondered if it was worth it."

"I can remember once I wanted to quit because we didn't get this Association for Native Administration grant," Whisler said. "We thought we had it. But Marvin told me we didn't get it and I cried. It just seemed like this would never



From left, Marvin Kimsey, Jackie Whisler, Frank Harrison, Karen Askins and Kathryn Harrison prepared to testify before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee about restoration for the Grand Ronde Tribe on Oct. 18, 1983.

happen."

They got over it, and pressed on, taking solace in the slightest sliver of hope. As Whisler said, the encouragement came sporadically, and when it did, it worked.

"We would be so down sometimes," she said. "But all it took was one phone call from somebody in Salem or D.C., telling us we had to do this or that and it would have us all fired up and working for another week."

The occasional workshop would happen, or a conference out of state, and they would have to decide who would go. Funds were that limited.

"We didn't have enough money, so we just sent one person and they would take notes for all of us," Whisler said.

Ultimately, another ANA grant came their way for \$60,000, enough to fund the whole operation for a year, and enough for the core members to quit and go full-time into Restoration.

"At that time, it was enough for all of us," said Kimsey, smiling.

More help materialized, as Elizabeth Furse, Don Wharton and Oregon Legal Services jumped on board and really got the effort going. In a clear reversal of fortune, at one point Kimsey and the others were actually turning down grants. And slowly but surely, with their newfound aid and finances, they were building up toward a date in D.C. with Congress.

But other obstacles loomed, among them opposition from Oregon Steelheaders and commercial fisheries, who feared that the special fishing rights likely given to a newly restored Tribe might encroach upon their business. Timber organizations worried federal lands loaded with troves of timber might go to Indians for reservation land. Even the Bureau of Indian Affairs proved

difficult.

"Geez, you'd think the BIA would be your friend," said Whisler. "But they demanded so much from us."

Through political maneuvering, they were able to neutralize opposition or turn it into support. With AuCoin gathering support in the House and Hatfield in the Senate, plus the aid of then-Oregon Gov. Vic Atiyeh and assorted Polk and Yamhill county commissioners, the Tribe was only a hearing away from reality.

In 1983, Kimsey, Whisler, Kathryn Harrison and her son, Frank, and her daughter, Karen Askins, along with Elizabeth Furse made the legendary trip to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Neither Kimsey nor Whisler have forgotten that. As funds were still nowhere near the abundance they are now, the intrepid group stayed at the Davis House, not exactly a mission, and pretty far from being a hotel.

"My room, as near as I can tell, was a converted closet," Whisler said. "And I had one towel for the entire week. I had to ask for another."

The big day was truly, well ... big. Whisler wasn't really prepared for what lay ahead. The plan was originally to have Marvin and Frank speak before Congress and aides, with her looking on not uttering a peep. But Furse had other plans, telling Whisler it was imperative that she spoke.

"I freaked out," she said. "I told her there's no way I can speak in front of all those people. I told her I wasn't going to do it."

"She just looked at me and said, 'Jackie!'" Whisler said, imitating Furse with a voice similar to the way a parent might speak to a petulant child.

Later on, while walking down the halls of Congress, Whisler peeked

into a side room. Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes" was conducting an interview with some political bigwig.

They also met with a senator from Minnesota. She remembered vividly how he explained that some Tribes in Minnesota considered Termination one of the best things that ever happened to them.

"We didn't know what to say," she said. "I just said, 'We can't speak for other Tribes.'"

They all spoke on behalf of their Tribe. Ronald Reagan signed HR 3885 and it was passed with 57 letters of support and none opposing. And on Nov. 22, 1983, the inception of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde began, 2,200 members in all.

"The truth is, I've no interest in being back there and part of those politics that go on today," Kimsey said. "But I'm glad I was part of Restoration, and like I said, I don't know what would drive a person to do it. But if it had to be done again, I suppose I could muster up the strength."

Whisler reflects rather fondly on it as well.

"As good as we're doing now, when I think back to all the struggles then, it was so much fun," she said. "It was so ... innocent."

If Kimsey himself has any hard feelings, they are well concealed. He just hopes that someday the recognition due to his crew will come, particularly Whisler, who he thought had been largely omitted in appreciation.

"Not enough is said about Jackie," he said. "I can't even begin to tell you how important she was. Whatever we needed, she always got it done."

*Reprinted from the Dec. 15, 2001, Smoke Signals.*



# Important Confederated Tri

**Sept. 10, 1853:** Treaty with the Rogue River Tribes.

**Sept. 19, 1853:** Treaty with the Umpqua-Cow Creek Band.

**Nov. 15, 1854:** Treaty with the Rogue River Tribes.

**Nov. 18, 1854:** Treaty with the Chasta Costa.

**Nov. 29, 1854:** Treaty with the Umpqua and Kalapuya.

**Jan. 22, 1855:** Treaty with the Confederated Bands of the Willamette Valley.

**Dec. 21, 1855:** Treaty with the Molalla.

**Feb. 23-March 25, 1856:** Trail of Tears from Table Rock Reservation to Grand Ronde.

**June 30, 1857:** President James Buchanan's Executive Order establishes the 69,100-acre Grand Ronde Reservation.

**1862:** Father Adrian Croquet opens St. Michael's Church in Grand Ronde.

**1870s:** Indians from the Salmon and Nestucca rivers join the Grand Ronde Reservation.

**1872:** Individual Indian families allotted farm and land at Grand Ronde.

**1887-89:** Dawes General Allotment Act passed by federal government; reservation begins to shrink.

**1901:** Negotiations begin on sale of surplus, or unallotted, reservation lands. Sale consummated by lump-sum payment of \$28,500, or about \$1.10 per acre or \$72 per capita.

**June 18, 1934:** Indian Reorganization Act allows Tribe to purchase land for subsistence and farming sites. About 537 acres purchased using IRA funds.

**April 4, 1936:** Tribe adopts its Constitution and bylaws under the IRA by an 83-13 vote.

**June 9, 1953:** The 83rd Congress approves House Resolution 108, which establishes a policy of termination of the federal-Tribal relationship with some Tribes.

**Aug. 13, 1954:** The Western Oregon Indian Termination Act signed.

**1956:** Federal services to terminated Indian Tribes cease; publication of Termination Roll.

**Dec. 22, 1973:** The Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin becomes the first Terminated Tribe restored by Congress.

**1975:** Temporary Council of Grand Ronde Indians starts meeting in Grand Ronde Library and other sites in Grand Ronde and Salem areas.

**Nov. 18, 1977:** Confederated Tribes of Siletz in western Oregon becomes second Terminated Tribe restored by Congress.

**1978:** Oregon Legal Services starts its Native American Program.

**May 1, 1979:** The Tribe, through extensive community fundraising efforts, buys seven acres to add to the 2.5 acres left of its land base – the Tribal cemetery.

**1979:** Oregon Legal Services' Don Wharton first visits a Grand Ronde Tribal Council meeting held at Willamina Elementary School.

**1979:** Tribe receives a \$90,000 Administration for Native Americans grant, which allows it to hire five full-time employees to work

gan signs the bill that restores federal recognition to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

**Feb. 11, 1984:** The Tribe holds its first post-Restoration election to elect an Interim Council from 27 candidates.

**Oct. 6, 1984:** More than 1,000 people attend the first Restoration Celebration held in Grand Ronde. Keynote speaker was U.S. Rep. Les AuCoin.

**Nov. 10, 1984:** The Tribe OKs a Constitution by a 145-14 vote.

**Dec. 4, 1984:** The Tribe purchases Grand Ronde Rail Depot for use as Tribal governmental office space.

**April 1985:** Roger Harrison wins the contest for designing the Tribal logo, which is still in



Photo from Smoke Signals archive

on Restoration.

**1980:** Kathryn Harrison, who worked on the Siletz Restoration, returns to Grand Ronde, the Tribe of her father.

**1982:** Grand Ronde Tribal members make trips to Washington, D.C., to enlist congressional support for the Tribe's Restoration.

**Dec. 27, 1982:** The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe in southern Oregon is restored.

**Sept. 14, 1983:** Congressman Les AuCoin introduces the Grand Ronde Restoration Bill.

**Oct. 18, 1983:** Five Tribal members – Kathryn, Frank and Karen Harrison, Marvin Kimsey and Jackie Mercier Colton – travel to Washington, D.C., to testify on behalf of Tribal Restoration.

**November 1983:** The U.S. House of Representatives passes the Grand Ronde Restoration Bill and sends it to the U.S. Senate for consideration.

**Nov. 11, 1983:** The U.S. Senate passes the Grand Ronde Restoration Bill without amendments by a voice vote. It is sent on Nov. 14 to President Ronald Reagan for his signature.

**Nov. 22, 1983:** President Rea-

use today.

**August 1985:** The Tribe begins holding an annual powwow.

**Nov. 22, 1985:** The Tribe finishes its final draft of the Grand Ronde Reservation Plan and submits it to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

**Nov. 14, 1986:** The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission approves a consent decree with the Tribe regarding fishing and hunting rights on the proposed reservation.

**Jan. 12, 1987:** The state of Oregon and Tribe enter into a consent decree regarding fishing and hunting rights.

**February 1987:** Tribal enrollment surpasses the 2,000 mark.

**April 1987:** The Tribal newsletter, Smoke Signals, is printed on newsprint for the first time.

**Aug. 10, 1987:** U.S. Rep Les AuCoin holds a hearing at Grand Ronde Elementary School regarding the Tribe's reservation plan.

**Sept. 12, 1987:** The Tribe elects Tribal Council, setting the stage for staggered terms with three members up for election every year.

**March 14, 1988:** A new reserva-



# bes of Grand Ronde Dates

tion bill is submitted by U.S. Rep. Les AuCoin, calling for a 9,811-acre reservation for the Grand Ronde Tribe.

**April 12, 1988:** U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield introduces a similar Grand Ronde Reservation Bill in the Senate.

**Sept. 9, 1988:** President Ronald Reagan signs the Grand Ronde Reservation Act, restoring 9,811 acres of the original reservation to the Tribe.

**Oct. 17, 1988:** The National Indian Gaming Regulatory Act becomes law.

**Oct. 22, 1988:** The Tribe celebrates the re-establishment of the Grand Ronde Reservation; an estimated 300 Tribal members and friends attend.

**April 1989:** The Tribe opens Nanitch Sahallie, a substance abuse treatment center for Native American youth in Keizer.

**April 25, 1989:** The Tribe holds its first timber sale from the reservation valued at approximately \$1.3 million.

**1989:** The Tribe purchases 5.5 acres along Highway 18 for housing the Natural Resources office. It is now the site of Spirit Mountain Casino.

**1990:** Tribal Court established to uphold the Tribal Constitution and maintain the rights of Tribal members.

**Summer 1990:** The Tribe receives a \$250,000 Community Development Block Grant to help build a Community Center, which will house most community services.

**January 1991:** The Tribe moves its offices from the old manor building to a new modular office complex on Grand Ronde Road.

**March 1992:** Grand Ronde Tribal Council meets in the new Community Center, the first permanent building constructed since Tribal Restoration.

**Jan. 1, 1993:** The Tribe's Burial Fund Ordinance goes into effect.

**July 1993:** Gov. Barbara Roberts signs a gaming compact with the Grand Ronde Tribe.

**July 1993:** The first Veterans Powwow is held at the Grand Ronde Powwow Grounds.

**Nov. 22, 1993:** The Tribe celebrates the 10th anniversary of Restoration at the Grand Ronde Grade School. Les AuCoin and Don Wharton attended the celebration.

**1994:** Tribal membership votes to pursue gaming at a General

Council meeting.

**January 1994:** Tribal membership sits at 3,393 members.

**March 1994:** The Tribe receives a \$270,000 Indian Community Block Grant to construct a 5,000-gallon steel water storage tank on the ridge north of Highway 18 across from the proposed casino site.

**October 1994:** Construction begins on the Tribe's casino. John Hancock Insurance Co. approved an \$18.9 million loan for the project.

**February 1995:** Smoke Signals starts publishing twice monthly.

**April 3, 1995:** The Tribe signs a management agreement with the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding the Nelson's Checkermallow plant.

**April 3, 1995:** The logo for Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. – a coyote leaping over Spirit Mountain – is unveiled. It was designed by Sandstrom Design in Portland.

**Oct. 16, 1995:** An open house provided more than 4,000 Tribal members, business vendors and civic leaders their first look inside Spirit Mountain Casino.

**December 1995:** The Tribe establishes the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority.

**1996:** The Timber Trust Fund is established.

**May 22, 1996:** Gov. John Kitzhaber signs an executive order establishing state-Tribal government-to-government relationships.

**July 4, 1996:** Phase II of Spirit Mountain Casino opens. The new area includes a new steakhouse and lounge, childrens' SuperPlay area and banquet rooms.

**Aug. 23-24, 1996:** The first annual Spirit Mountain Stampede and Rodeo is held at the Grand Ronde Powwow Grounds.

**Jan. 10, 1997:** Gov. John Kitzhaber signs a new gaming compact with the Tribe that will allow expanded gaming options at Spirit Mountain Casino.

**April 1997:** Roulette is added as a gaming option at Spirit Mountain Casino with craps tables scheduled to appear in June.

**May 1997:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund makes its first grant award to the Life Flight Network for \$174,000.

**August 1997:** The Natural Resources Department moves into a new facility on Hebo Road.

**Sept. 8, 1997:** The new Health and Wellness Center opens.

**Sept. 22, 1997:** The first residents move into Grand Meadows, the Tribe's new 37-lot manufactured home park.

**December 1997:** More than 200 memory bricks are laid outside the new Health and Wellness Clinic.

**January 1998:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund creates the Hatfield Fellowship to honor Sen. Mark O. Hatfield.

**October 1998:** Peter Wakeland is selected as the first Hatfield Fellow.

**Nov. 6, 1998:** The new Governance Center is dedicated.

**Nov. 22, 1998:** The Tribe celebrates 15 years of Restoration at Grand Ronde Elementary School.

**Dec. 21, 1998:** The 100-room Spirit Mountain Lodge opens.

**1999:** Tribal Council passes the Gaming Revenue Allocation Plan, which distributes a percentage of the casino's revenue to Tribal members.

**May 1999:** The Oregon Tourism Commission says that Spirit Mountain Casino is the state's No. 1 tourist attraction.

**June 9, 1999:** The Tribe signs an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service about coordinating management of 6,600 acres of national forest lands.

**June 10, 1999:** Ground is broken on the Elder housing complex, which will have 38 separate two-bedroom apartments.

**July 1999:** First Elder Honor Day is held.

**Sept. 15, 1999:** The Tribe submitted a claim to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City asking for return of Tomanowos (The Willamette Meteorite) under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

**Jan. 27, 2000:** The Tribe signs a memorandum of understanding with Willamette National Forest that guarantees the forest will seek the Tribe's input and consultation on forest management practices.

**June 2000:** The Tribe signs an agreement with the American Museum of Natural History in New York City that will ensure Tribal access to Tomanowos.

**Aug. 1, 2000:** The Tribe's first Elder housing development is dedicated.

**Nov. 11, 2000:** Ground is broken at the Tribal Governance Center for the planned Veterans' Memorial.



**December 2000:** The National Indian Gaming Commission announces that the Grand Ronde Tribe is recognized for operating a self-regulating Indian casino.

**February 2001:** Smoke Signals joined the World Wide Web at [www.grandronde.org](http://www.grandronde.org).

**April 2001:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund eclipses the \$10 million mark in giving.

**May 16, 2001:** Tribal members make their first visit to Tomanowos at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City to bless the meteorite.

**May 23, 2001:** Ground is broken for a new education complex.

**May 2001:** Work begins on new rodeo grounds that will be adjacent to the Tribal Governance Center.

**June 2001:** Work starts on a 5,200-square-foot expansion of Spirit Mountain Casino, which will provide space for an additional 200 slot machines.

**Aug. 1, 2001:** The Tribe establishes a Court of Appeals.

**Sept. 21, 2001:** Ground is broken on a new Tribal member housing development that will include 36 one- through five-bedroom homes.

**August 2002:** Open house is held in the gymnasium of the Tribe's new Education Complex.

**November 2002:** The new Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority building completed.

**April 2003:** The Tribal Library opens.

**April 4-5, 2003:** The first Agency Creek Round Dance is held.

**April 2003:** The first Tribal Wellness Day is held.

**May 13, 2003:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund celebrates \$20 million in charitable giving.

**May 31, 2003:** The West Valley Veteran's Memorial is dedicated on the Tribal campus.

**June 26, 2003:** The Tribe's new 36-unit housing development Chxi Musam Illihi ("A New Sleeping Place" in Chinuk Wawa) is dedicated.

**August 2003:** The Hall of Legends, which connects Spirit Mountain Casino with Spirit Mountain Lodge, is remodeled into a walk-through display showcasing the history and culture of the Grand Ronde Tribes.

**Nov. 22, 2003:** The Tribe celebrates 20 years of Restoration at Spirit Mountain Casino. Singer Crystal Gayle was the headliner at the event.

**Dec. 19, 2003:** The Tribal convenience store opens off Highway 18 next to Spirit Mountain Casino.

**February 2004:** The Tribe receives a \$500,000 Indian Com-

munity Development Block grant to widen Grand Ronde Road.

**April 2004:** Work begins on an expansion of Spirit Mountain Lodge that will add 150 rooms in five stories.

**April 2004:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund surpasses the \$25 million mark in charitable giving.

**Sept. 1, 2004:** The Tribe opens a satellite office in Portland.

**March 2005:** The Tribe opens a satellite office in Eugene.

**April 23, 2005:** The 163-room expansion of Spirit Mountain Lodge opens.

**April 2005:** Round Valley becomes the Tribe's independent construction company.

**June 15, 2005:** Ground is broken at the Chemawa Station site.

**June 2005:** Ground is broken for a new 72-unit mixed-income development.

**Aug. 1, 2005:** The Grand Ronde Tribe participates in its first Canoe Journey, the Paddle to Elwha, which lands in Port Angeles, Wash.

**Nov. 10, 2005:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund tops \$30 million in charitable giving.

**April 17, 2006:** A 2.2-pound fragment of Tomanowos is repatriated to the Tribe by Willamette University.

**July 5, 2006:** The Tribe celebrates the opening of three Adult Foster Care buildings on the Tribal campus.

**July 15, 2006:** A name-giving ceremony is held for Stankiya, the Grand Ronde's homemade canoe. The name means "change" in Chinuk Wawa.

**Sept. 1, 2006:** Spirit Mountain Casino opens The Peak.

**October 2006:** New rental units in Chxi Musam Illihi ready for occupation in Grand Ronde.

**October 2006:** The Tribe starts building a fish weir in Agency Creek.

**Feb. 5, 2007:** A groundbreaking event is held for the southern expansion project at Spirit Moun-

tain Casino.

**May 25, 2007:** A groundbreaking event is held for the new Elders' Activity Center.

**Aug. 2, 2007:** Gov. Ted Kulongoski signs the first state-Tribal Proclamation, which was the first step toward giving Grand Ronde Tribal members increased access to game for ceremonial purposes.

**Aug. 24, 2007:** Spirit Mountain Casino opens the free-standing PlayWorld Events Center.

**Sept. 13, 2007:** The Tribe celebrates the 10th anniversary of Spirit Mountain Community Fund, which surpasses the \$40 million mark in charitable giving.

**March 2008:** More than 600 Tribal artifacts from the Horner Collection are returned to the Tribe.

**April 18, 2008:** The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission awards ceremonial hunting rights to the Grand Ronde Tribe.

**May 15, 2008:** The fourth major expansion of Spirit Mountain Casino opens, including a new Events Center and the Cedar Plank Buffett.

**July 12, 2008:** The first powwow is held at the Tribe's new Uyxat Powwow Grounds off Hebo Road near Fort Yamhill State Park.

**August 2008:** The Tribal Reader Board along Grand Ronde Road becomes operational.

**Sept. 15, 2008:** The Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles starts accepting Tribal identification cards as proof of legal presence in the United States.

**Nov. 1, 2008:** The Elders' Activity Center opens.

**Nov. 22, 2008:** The Tribe celebrates 25 years of Restoration at Spirit Mountain Casino. Events include a concert by Rita Coolidge.

**Jan. 30, 2009:** The first Gathering of Oregon's First Nations Powwow is held at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem.

**May 14, 2009:** Tribal flags are added to the Walks of Flags area at the state Capitol in Salem.



Photo from Smoke Signals archive



**May 23, 2009:** Spirit Mountain Casino opens the Mountain View Sports Bar and Raindrops Nightclub.

**July 2009:** The Tribe and West Valley Fire District sign an inter-governmental agreement to build a fire station in Grand Ronde.

**September 2009:** A new baseball field, complete with two dugouts, is constructed on the Tribal campus.

**Oct. 2, 2009:** The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission re-adopts a rule granting ceremonial hunting rights to the Tribe across the Trask Hunting Unit.

**Nov. 2, 2009:** Completion of the Grand Ronde Road improvement project is marked by a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

**Nov. 6, 2009:** The Tribe purchases a new 20,000-square-foot building at 4445 S.W. Barbur Blvd. in which to house the Portland satellite office.

**January 2010:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund joins Facebook, the increasingly popular social media site.

**February 2010:** The Tribe receives a \$325,000 Indian Community Development Block Grant to double the size of the Tribal Library.

**February 2010:** Tribal staff move into the new Portland satellite office on Barbur Boulevard.

**March 3, 2010:** For the first time ever, the Tribe celebrates employees who have reached their 25th year of employment with the Tribe.

**June 14, 2010:** A Tribal contingent celebrates the 10th anniversary of the Tribe's agreement with the American Museum of Natural History in New York City by holding a ceremony with Tomanowos.

**June 25, 2010:** Grand opening of the Grand Ronde Fire Station at McPherson and Grand Ronde roads is celebrated.

**Sept. 8, 2010:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund surpasses the \$50 million mark in charitable giving.

**Sept. 17, 2010:** Grand opening of the new Tribal plankhouse.

**October 2010:** The Tribe establishes Twitter and Facebook social media accounts.

**Dec. 9, 2010:** An open house celebrates the 4,000-square-foot expansion of the Tribal Health and Wellness Center.

**Jan. 19, 2011:** The Tribe becomes a three-year sponsor of the Portland Rose Festival's Grand Floral Parade.

**Jan. 30, 2011:** The Tribal plankhouse is christened with a name, "Achaf-hammi," a Tualatin-Kalapuya word meaning "a house built

of cedar planks."

**May 2011:** The Tribe agrees to buy the soon-to-be vacated middle school facility in Grand Ronde from the Willamina School District.

**June 2, 2011:** An open house celebrates the expansion of the Tribal Library.

**July 2011:** After a two-year hiatus because of difficult economic times, Spirit Mountain Stampede returns to the Tribal Rodeo Grounds.

**Sept. 10, 2011:** The Tribe signs a memorandum of understanding with the Bureau of Land Management and Nature Conservancy regarding the management plan for Table Rocks.

**Sept. 23, 2011:** The Tribe holds

tional Register of Historic Places.

**Feb. 11, 2013:** The Tribe becomes a minority owner of SAM Medical Products in Wilsonville.

**April 11, 2013:** The Tribe mounts the exhibit "We Were Here First ... And We're Here to Stay!" at the Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill in Salem.

**April 2013:** The Tribe begins an enrollment audit to ensure its enrollment is historically accurate.

**April 2013:** The Lands Management and Cultural Resources departments are merged into one entity, the new Land and Culture Department.

**May 1, 2013:** Two new police officers were sworn in to the Grand Ronde Police Department.

**May 6, 2013:** The Tribe held a

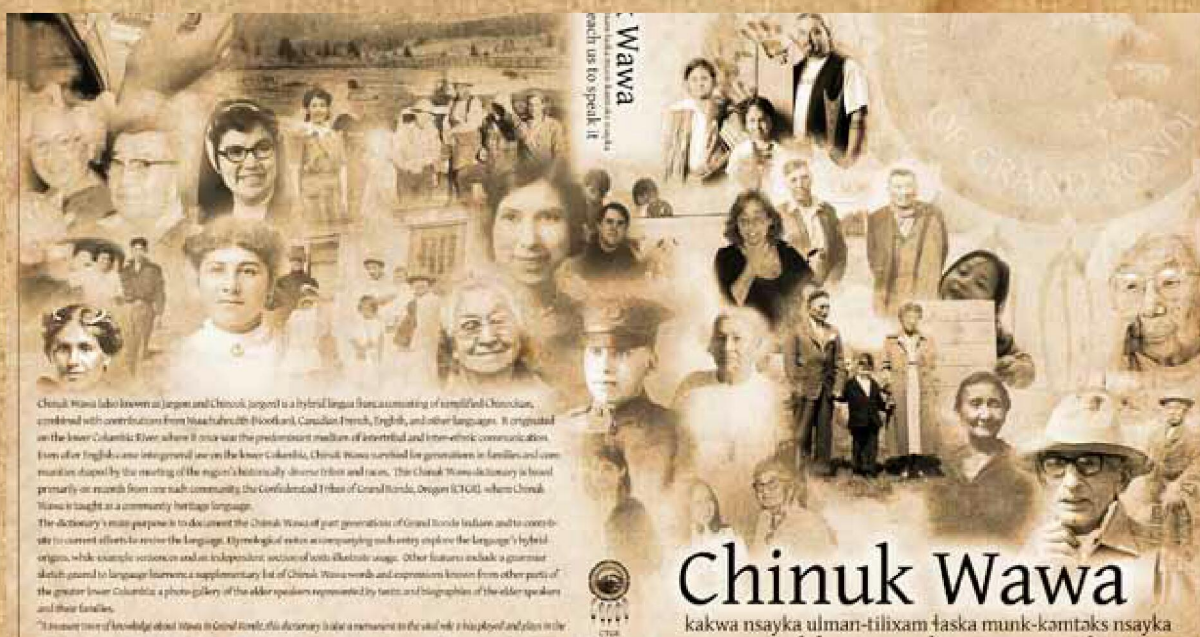


Photo from Smoke Signals archive

its first-ever Tribal Government Day with the city of Portland.

**Dec. 7, 2011:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund tops \$55 million in charitable giving.

**Dec. 16, 2011:** The Tribe holds its first Salmon Celebration.

**March 4, 2012:** The Tribe celebrates the release of a new Chinuk Wawa dictionary, "Chinuk Wawa: As our elders teach us to speak it."

**May 11, 2012:** Spirit Mountain Community Fund celebrates its 15th anniversary.

**July 11, 2012:** The city of Portland formalizes coordination and consultation with Tribal governments.

**Nov. 6, 2012:** Oregonians reject two measures that would have amended the state Constitution to allow private casinos and would have specifically approved one in Wood Village.

**Nov. 16, 2012:** Alvin LaChance Jr. and Jake McKnight are sworn in as the first two members of the Grand Ronde Police Department.

**Nov. 27, 2012:** Two charging stations for electric cars become operational at the Grand Ronde convenience store.

**Dec. 26, 2012:** The Grand Ronde Rail Depot is named to the Na-

First Salmon Ceremony at the McLean House in West Linn, marking the first time in 130 years Tribal members held such a ceremony on the banks of the Willamette River.

**May 2013:** The first Tribal students graduated Willamina High School with both high school and college credit for learning their Native language, Chinuk Wawa.

**May 29, 2013:** Mindy Lane is sworn in as the first female member of the Grand Ronde Police Department.

**June 2013:** The Tribe acquires the 338-acre Chahalpam property on the North Santiam River southeast of Salem in Marion County and just downstream from Stayton.

**June 9, 2013:** The Tribe hosted the first-ever four-day Veterans' Summit at Uyxat Powwow Grounds.

**Sept. 25-29, 2013:** For the first time in more than 100 years, a Coming of Age Ceremony is held for Tribal girls.

**Nov. 22-23, 2013:** The Tribe celebrates 30 years of Restoration at Spirit Mountain Casino.



# 30<sup>th</sup> Restoration commemorative issue

## Congressman recalls Tribal Restoration effort

By Dean Rhodes

*Smoke Signals editor*

**L**es AuCoin was Oregon's 1st District Congressman between 1975 and 1993, and sponsored the Restoration bills of both the Siletz and Grand Ronde Tribes in the U.S. House of Representatives.

After 1973's Restoration of the Menominee Tribe in Wisconsin, the Siletz and Grand Ronde restorations occurred in 1977 and 1983, respectively. (The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians was restored in December 1982.)

AuCoin, who now lives in Bozeman, Mont., was interviewed via telephone on Sept. 10, 2008, about the Grand Ronde Restoration effort. Below is an excerpt of that interview.

**Q: You were the congressman during the restoration of the Grand Ronde and Siletz Tribes. Could you talk about the political climate in Oregon in the late 1970s, early '80s regarding restoration of Tribes that were terminated?**

**A:** Hostile

**Q. In what way?**

**A:** The restoration proposals came not too many years after the very controversial Belloni and Boldt decisions. This allocated superior fishing rights to the Columbia River Tribes. Though the hostility of the nonIndian community was not monolithic, there was a substantial backlash against the Tribes stemming from those decisions, and it spilled over into the efforts that I undertook along with Sen. (Mark) Hatfield. In restoring the Tribal status of both the Siletz and the Grand Ronde, I think that the argument went something like this:

- One, the Tribal members are American and should be treated like any other American and not have "special rights";

- Two, the argument was that inherent in getting a reservation or getting a restoration it might somehow enhance their ability to assert successfully in court in ways that no one could comprehend or know, but feared, superior hunting and fishing rights.

Together those arguments had a lot of influence, and it made it difficult to do the right thing because those arguments were so easy to demagogue.

**Q. Elizabeth Furse said that you actually spilled a lot of political blood on the Siletz Restoration.**

**A:** I did, I did. My first term I introduced the legislation, but it hadn't moved yet and my political opponent made exactly those arguments against my proposals for the Siletz; mainly that I was giving superior hunting and fishing rights to the Tribe, even though they didn't claim that they wanted superior hunting and fishing rights. I can remember billboards all over the district put up by my opponent that said, "More Fish, Less AuCoin." It got really nasty. I even had mail from people that had been lifelong friends and sportsmen that were just outrageously opposed to the Tribe's restoration. I just had to talk to them. Anyone who reads Native American history knows about the wars ... the most god-awful thing to happen to Native Americans was the

so-called mainstreaming policy that took place in the 1950s and became yet another of the tragedies that the U.S. government inflicted on the American Indians throughout their history.

**Q. What effect did your experience working on the Siletz Restoration have when the Grand Ronde Tribe approached you about its potential Restoration?**



Les AuCoin

**A:** Well, I did not know that much about the Grand Ronde and my first impression was that the Confederated Tribes might be an organization of convenience rather than a qualified confederation. Therefore, I was probably somewhat suspicious, but that went away with a little bit of research.

The next thing that I said to myself, and I will be honest about this, was, "Oh, great. Now that I have been beaten around like a piñata over the Siletz, I get to do it again with the Grand Ronde." However, that was fleeting and all too human I am afraid.

My memory went back years earlier when I took a Winnebago throughout the streets and went to the smallest of towns; it was a traveling office. We had caseworkers and folks, and we would stop at predetermined times and people would be there to greet and would have questions about Social Security or any other problems they would have with the government, and talk to me and my staff.

I remembered going to this wide spot in the road that they called Grand Ronde and meeting people and looking at the abject poverty. When this proposal came along, I saw it as an opportunity to do something, to overcome that economically bleak picture for the Grand Ronde people.

**Q. What was the biggest legislative hurdle from your perspective regarding the Grand Ronde Restoration? Was it Tribal members eliciting community support?**

**A:** Yes. The Tribe came to me and Elizabeth (Furse) was consulting with them at the time. I remember Kathryn Harrison and others; I do not think that Mark Mercier was with them at that time. He became chair later. I certainly remember Kathryn and the delegation that came back with Elizabeth. Moreover, they talked to me about what they wanted to do. They seemed to be unmindful of the strenuous efforts that the Siletz had gone through to get the statements of community support, which were important for Congress. It showed that they had the support from a broader community.

Therefore, I had to be fairly blunt with them. I had to put on a pretty stern countenance. I laid out very clearly what they had to do. Church groups, chambers of commerce, major organizations ... they had to do their homework. They had to tell their story locally. They had to gain political support on the ground and then come back. And once they did, I told them that we could go forward. That is what



Congressman Les AuCoin, right, presents Kathryn Harrison and Mark Mercier with a copy of the Grand Ronde Reservation Act in 1988.

it took with Siletz and that is what it took with other Tribal restorations around the country. That is what it would take in their case.

You may hear it from others, but Kathryn, who is a dear friend, told me she was rather shocked about my little political tutorial. They did their jobs fabulously well and they came back with ... an incredible amount of support that outdid the opposition.

**Q. You said you were very blunt with the Grand Ronde representatives when they came to you seeking Restoration. Are there any memories or anecdotes that stand out in your mind concerning their effort?**

**A:** Their efforts astonished me. They went to some of the most unlikely places to get, and won, endorsements. They had the support of Gordon McPherson, former state representative who was Republican minority leader when I was in the state Legislature as the Democratic House majority leader. One of my arch-enemies on the floor, we had a duel daily on the floor. All of the sudden I see his name up as an endorsee. I was thrilled. ... They came back with the most fertile list of church groups and mainstream business groups. It was remarkable. It was a more thorough job if anything than even the Siletz had done and I like to hope that it was due in part to the blunt way that I put it to them, because they sure kicked it into high gear and they really delivered.

**Q. How important was it for them to have the Warm Springs on their side as well as Sen. Mark Hatfield?**

**A:** Frankly, I do not think that the Warm Springs mattered so much. Having Hatfield supporting them was important because I needed to know ... well the last thing I needed was to fight the fight and get it over to the Senate and have it opposed or have it demagogued by the senior senator for the state. It would have doomed it, but the fact that it wasn't doomed on the Senate side made it pretty clear to me that if I could get it over there that it would become a bill and then it would become a law.

**Q. Regarding your legislative legacy as a congressman, two of the early restorations that occurred nationally were in your district. When you look back on your congressional career, where does that stand as far as accomplishments?**

**A:** The warmest spot in my heart is the memory of the economic difference Restoration and the establishment of reservations has done for the economic and social well-being of a people who were in dire need and had their lives changed in a very fundamental way.

When I lost my race for the Senate in

1992 and, therefore, ended my career, Mark Mercier, the Tribal chair of the Grand Ronde, wrote me this letter that just actually brought tears to my eyes. He said, "This morning I walked out across our land. Land that would not have been ours if it had not been for you, and I think about how far we have come and about how much further we will go, and will come because you believed in us. You took a chance and showed some courage." He thanked me and he said because of my efforts life would never be the same again and would be better for the Grand Ronde people. It really brought tears to my eyes it touched me so much.

It's not often that you can write a piece of legislation and actually see a community of people go from dirt poverty to a place where they are getting good jobs. In many cases incomes from the casino and that the Tribe is earning so much money that they are creating a foundation to help the broader community around them. It is phenomenal, and so I cannot compare it to very many other things. I am a congressman who got a lot done. However, the difference that my legislation made for the Grand Ronde and the Siletz is right up there with the most significant achievements in my memory book.

**Q. For Tribal members, when the 50th Restoration comes around and they may read this, what do you think they really need to know about this Restoration on the part of the Grand Ronde? What do you think that they should never forget?**

**A:** They should never forget that their Elders dared to dream, dared to believe that they could take on the forces of prejudice in their own community. They risked ridicule in the belief that they had the right to correct a historical wrong in creating an economic and social platform for their descendants to achieve things that they had never had and may not ever achieve themselves. That is what they should remember.

I think that as a nonIndian and as a congressman, my efforts should really be a footnote. I was not the one locally whose skin was a different color, a different pigmentation than the local community. I was not the one who ran into prejudice. I was not the one who challenged the status quo. It was the Tribal Elders. Therefore, my work should be seen as a footnote. ... Nevertheless, for the succeeding generations of Tribal members, I hope they will remember first and foremost the courage and tenacity and brilliance of the effort of their Elders to make life better for them.

*Reprinted from the Tribe's 25th Restoration special edition.*



# 30<sup>th</sup> Restoration commemorative issue

## Attorney helped terminated Tribes regain recognition

**D**on Wharton was the founding director of Oregon Legal Service's Native American Program from 1979 to 1983 and assisted the Grand Ronde Tribe during its campaign for Restoration.

Wharton, then a senior attorney in the Boulder, Colo., office of the Native American Rights Fund, recalled the Grand Ronde Restoration effort during a July 23, 2008, phone interview.

**Q. How did you become involved with the Grand Ronde Tribe and its Restoration efforts back in the late 1970s?**

**A.** In 1978 in Oregon, Legal Services started a program called the Native American Program and they asked me if I would be the director of that program. I was in Washington, D.C., at the time. I said that I would, so I moved to Portland.

We went around Oregon and assembled a board of directors. That board of directors was taken from various Tribes, both recognized and terminated. We set priorities for what the program was to focus on. Their determination was that the most important thing to focus on was the Restoration of the Tribes that had been terminated.

The Siletz Tribe had been restored, so the other Tribes in Oregon who had been terminated, and there were many, also wanted to seek Restoration. We called around, and there were some that had offices and some that did not. ... We were able to get ahold of the folks at Grand Ronde and they invited us to come out and meet with them. So a young attorney that I had just hired at the office and I drove out to Grand Ronde to meet with them. We met in the cafeteria at the elementary school because they had no offices or buildings of their own. And, as best I can recall, at that meeting were Dean Mercier, Jackie Colton, Marvin Kimsey, Margaret Provost and, I think, Merle Holmes; maybe Eula Petite as well. ... And we said what I have basically told you, that we started a Legal Service's program and that our priority was restoration. Were they interested? They were very interested in doing that.

**Q. What were the legal hurdles that the Tribe had to overcome?**

**A.** There was only one way to deal with Termination and that was to get Congress to pass legislation extending recognition to the Tribe unlike those Tribes that had not yet been recognized that could go through the Federal Acknowledgment Program. That was not available to terminated Tribes because Congress had passed legislation terminating their federal government-to-government relationship and the only way that could be restored was by Congress.

Therefore, we had to put together



Don Wharton

a legislative program to go and seek legislation. Now understand that this is not the only problem the Tribes were facing. ... This simply was the priority.

The next time I came out, we met in that little green house in the cemetery. ... that is where they convened an official meeting of the Tribe. You know, the fact that the federal government doesn't extend recognition doesn't mean that you're not a Tribe, or not indeed a government. So the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde existed as a Tribe and a government; they just didn't have federal recognition. Therefore, they convened the meeting of the Tribe and voted. They voted to say that they wanted Restoration and to retain the Native American Program to assist them in that process.

... I think you can fairly say that the little green building out there is the birthplace of Restoration for the Grand Ronde Tribe and the Grand Ronde people.

I think this is very apt because it is so modest, and it represents what things were like then. You know, it was a very modest beginning because the aspirations of that time were equally modest. I can remember Jackie Colton saying, "You know what I want more than anything is for my grandmother to be able to have medicine." You know, that was her goal for the time ... to have the ability to have educational opportunities for their children, to try to figure out some way to create economic opportunities in the community so the young people would not have to move away to find jobs or to progress in their education.

... There was another person that was always around at these meetings and was an enormous amount of support ... Candy Robertson. Candy was always in the background and always organizing things to make sure that the place was open and that the lights were on. Out of all the meetings, Candy was always in the background. She never came out front, but she was always there working hard, as were all of these people.

**Q. What were some of the tangible things that hiring the Native American Program's legal services did for the Tribe**

**that helped them go through this and set up the legislative agenda to get Congress to OK federal recognition?**

**A.** The thing about legislation is that it is political. It wasn't a legal problem in the sense that it was trying to figure out a lawsuit to secure hunting and fishing rights, or something under a treaty. No, this was a political process. Now it certainly has its legal elements. That is, the legislation itself. The legal elements of the legislation have to be drafted and all of this has to be put together, but in the very beginning before you even start writing all that stuff you have to survey the political landscape and start figuring out how to do the advocacy. The advocacy is local; it is not running off to Washington, D.C. It is about going to the local community. To the county commissioner, the local town, the city council, the school boards, to all of those people in the community that have some interest or concern about what happens to their community and then begin building the relationship that you need.

We went to the state, to the Legislature and to the Governor's Office to explain what we were about. When I say we, the Grand Ronde were one Tribe amongst many who were coordinating their efforts here. There were the Grand Ronde, Cow Creek, the Coos, the Lower Umpqua and the Klamath. There were a number of Tribes working together to make this work and going to these places. However, for each Tribe they had to work in their own communities to get this done.

Then they had to convince the most important person in this process, which was their congressperson. Each of them had a different one. In Grand Ronde, it was Les AuCoin. Therefore, they had to go to their congressperson and say, "We want you to assist us in introducing this legislation." Now, we also had to go to the senators. The senators were not going to do anything if the local congressperson did not support us. We had to get the support of our congressperson first.

Well, we went to Les AuCoin, who had supported and accomplished the Siletz Restoration. He did not jump right on board and say, "Yes, I have done this before so let's do it." No, he asked us some very hard questions like: What does the local community think? Where are these people? What is your plan? How is it all going to work? Why do you need in this legislation? Well, we had to get all of this addressed and part of that effort included doing radio shows.

I can remember we needed to go on the local radio station and talk about why the Tribe wanted Restoration, what it meant and what the history was. One of the hardest

things to do was to teach the local people their own history mainly because they believe that they already knew it, and, of course, they did not know a thing about Grand Ronde history. They did not understand what Termination was. They did not even know that the Tribes were in fact governments. There were so many things that they did not know.

We had to begin the education process just to help people understand the horrible inequity Termination was, and why there was the importance of Restoration. We needed to explain why Restoration needed to take place, not just as a moral matter, but also as an ethical matter.

... The first radio show we did, I remember I asked Dean (Mercier), Marvin (Kimsey) and Margaret (Provost). They all had business they were taking care of, so I went to Jackie Colton. Jackie was a very modest, very shy person. ... She was very active in her community and very charming, but the idea of going on the radio was terrifying to her.

But you know what, Jackie bucked up because the one thing that drove all of these people who gave of their own time, who were never paid for this, who donated all of their travel and money to make these things work was that they had focus, and that focus was on the future. That future was the future of their own children, the future of the Tribe and the ability to take care of their elderly, to take care of issues concerning education and housing. I mean, they really focused on that.

This was a dedication to what needed to be done for the future of the Grand Ronde people, for the future of their families, their loved ones and the larger community. So they made these contributions. No one paid them, no one asked them to do this; it was all volunteer.

**Q. What was it about the era of the late '70s and early '80s where you started seeing the terminated Tribes in Oregon pursue Restoration? Was there a common theme, an event that maybe encouraged all of the Tribes to do it?**

**A.** There were two things that were going on. As you recall in the '60s there was the civil rights movement. The civil rights movement focused its larger lens on the issue of minority rights. ... What was going on in the '70s is that, as a result of civil rights and a number of other things, President (Richard) Nixon in 1970 issued the very first Indian self-determination statement. So the tenor and the attitude in the government, that is the Executive Branch and in Congress,

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 A banner for the 30th Restoration commemorative issue. On the left is a circular logo with a mountain, trees, and the text "THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE GRAND RONDE". To the right of the logo is a large, stylized "30th" followed by the words "Restoration" and "commemorative issue" in a script font.
 

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was changing in terms of looking at and seeing what a mess they had made of Indian policy and Indian administration. ... Therefore, the consciousness, if you will, about that issue was changing. People were just simply more aware of the concerns of minority people; particularly for our purposes, of Native people in their own community.

So Congress in 1977 adopted the Restoration Act of the Siletz Tribe. In 1973, the Menominee Tribe was the first Restoration and that seemed to have broken a hold that Termination or that federal assimilation had on that policy. In 1977, with the Siletz being the second Restoration, it was like, "OK, Menominee was not unique, but actually the beginning.

Now that Siletz has been restored, it is important to keep moving." So, the other Tribes said, "Yes, we want this, just like the Menominee and the Siletz have achieved."

Not everyone jumped on board, but we had a much more open atmosphere towards accepting the idea of Restoration. There was still a lot of work to be done and people were getting organized around doing just that. They were doing good on their own. People were paying for themselves. People like Jackie Colton, who would have never gotten on the radio before, got on and explained what it was that was going on and why it was so important. Others had bake sales, trying to help pay for this.

When we had to go back to Washington, D.C., Merle Holmes paid for his own ticket. This was the kind of stuff that was going on. People were seeing that this was important, and it was certainly important to them personally. But more importantly to the future of the community and to the future of the Tribe.

**Q. I have read about the Tribe's Restoration that the late '70s was kind of the treading water situation, and then finally when the Tribe received an ANA grant to help, people actually quit their jobs and worked on this effort full time, and it seemed like a dam was broken through. Was that the period where they were going around talking to the community to elicit local support?**

A. It is exactly as you suggested in that it wasn't that there was no progress; it's that there was a lot

of groundwork that needed to be done. One of the things that had to be done was what you have just identified. We had to find funding for the Tribe, we had to have more people putting more time and effort into this, and the ANA (Administration for Native Americans) was the place to get it. Well, one of the places. We went all over the place. We went to the Catholic Church. We asked everywhere for help with funding. The ANA was one of the primary focuses.

If they had given us funding in 1978, it wouldn't have made anything go any faster. People simply weren't prepared yet to go there. I mean they, the local community in particular, had to keep hearing this over and over again to become used to it, to be able to come to some level of understanding and acceptance

in their own sense. What they think is going on and whether they fully understand it or not, they have to come to some understanding for their own purposes.

You know, not everybody agreed; there were certainly people who opposed it. Op-

position meant that there was just a lot more work to be done with and around those people. And, just as importantly, while I have given you the core of people that were working on this, there were others that had to work in their own communities to spread the word and to recruit greater participation. There is Kathryn Harrison. She was a part of that, and she brought an enormous amount of credibility and focus to this leadership. She was a very important part of coming along and adding to the Restoration effort a little later down the road. She became an icon for the Tribe and its efforts. She continues to be very important part of the history of the Tribe.

**Q. Can you talk about how the work was divided up between yourself and Elizabeth Furse as far as working on this effort?**

A. Well, we worked very closely together so there really wasn't an awful lot of division. A lot of what was important to moving us forward was Elizabeth had been to law school. She had not graduated, she was not a lawyer, but she understood the law and she was terrific at community organization. She was terrific at talking to people in positions of power in the Legislature, and in other places, Congress, etc. She just had a real touch for that. She knew she had access to or knowledge of an enormous amount

of resources.

For example, when we went back in D.C., we stayed at a Friend's house ... a house where we were able to find a place for all of the Tribes to stay so that it would be less expensive for them. It was our first trip back to D.C. to go and visit the jurisdictional committees in Congress, in the Senate and to talk to the local congressmen and senators about what was going on here. Each Tribe had to talk to their own congressman; they did not really share that many in common. She knew about resources and was very good about getting them together. She was terrific in the community, and she really had a touch for talking to and understanding people.

We had to put together a lot of educational material; this was something I was not particularly good at. She understood media, and she, with a friend of hers, put together a slideshow that talked about Termination. I did a good bit of the writing, but they actually put together the slideshow that would give people a visual to follow and to understand that this was a very difficult story. This is not a story that people intuitively understand. This is a story about what happened to Tribes; we have to be able to overcome people's misconceptions about the way the world was. About how "The West was won." About how the cavalry came in and defeated the Indians, how they began to disappear and how they became the vanishing America, that myth.

We had to start by saying, "No, that's not the way that it was." It's not like telling people a story that they're going to hear for the first time. You have to overcome their misconceptions and turn them around. You have to get them to understand what really went on and why this is important. She was very good at putting together that kind of information and helping people to understand what this was all about.

Particularly the people we needed most to understand: The congressmen and their staff, the people in the state Legislature, the local government, people in positions of relative influence; the churches, folks that you do not usually think of; the Ecumenical Council that had its seat in Portland.

**Q. Was there a moment or event that felt like, yes, we finally have accomplished this or yes, this is going to happen?**

A. Well, we all believed, certainly I always believed, this was going to happen. It was never a question in my mind, or in our minds, that this was going to happen. It was in our view inevitable. I was just a matter of just when and how. I left to go to work for the Navajo Tribe in 1983, so I left before it was done. It was after that that Elizabeth took over and saw it through to its conclusion.

**Q. How did you feel when you heard about it?**

A. Well, I was elated, very happy. I knew how much it meant, I knew what it took to get there. I knew how much personal sacrifice and commitment, as well as effort, it took the people of the Tribes, specifically with respect to the Grand Ronde. All of the Tribes individually in their settings, but for Grand Ronde what an enormous effort it took, how much heart it took. I mean endless meetings. I know that you may have talked to the very young people, but the people who were children at the time will tell you that they almost began to hate the Tribe because it took their parents away from them so much just to do all of this.

That is just a little window into the level of commitment and effort it took in the behalf of the community to get this done. The people who were actually there did that, the names I gave you and others, of course, but certainly the names that I gave you were the ones that were most involved through the entire process, and worked the hardest to get this done. Knowing what a sacrifice they made, this was so richly deserved. It was important to them, and to their future. It was terrific.

**Q. Is there something that you think Tribal members should know, say 50 years from now, about this effort?**

A. I think that this is a story that needs to be told and remembered, so that people understand their own history of where they came from and the roles people played. Not that there is some reason to canonize these people, but to understand that they came from a place where people were committed to something that they had no reason to believe could be done on a rational basis. But they had so much commitment and belief that it had to be done that they were committed to the thing until it was done. As a result of that, it was done. It was their belief and commitment that made it get done, because at every turn they could have easily turned away.

I mean, the first time they went to see the congressman, he basically said, "No, I'm not going to risk my career on this. You have to do all the work." The kind of work he was telling us to do was something that we were not accustomed to doing. They all had to learn how to do it. They all had to take enormous personal risks in terms of who they were and to get out there and do things that they were very uncomfortable doing. But, they understood that it had to be done.

So that story of personal commitment and personal sacrifice, I think, is an important touchstone for understanding who the Grand Ronde people are and where they came from.

*Reprinted from the Tribe's 25th Restoration special edition.*



# 30<sup>th</sup> Restoration commemorative issue

## Furse aided Tribe in many ways

By Dean Rhodes  
*Smoke Signals editor*

**E**lizabeth Furse was an employee of Oregon Legal Service's Native America Program during the early 1980s and instrumental in helping the Grand Ronde Tribe during its Restoration effort.

Afterward, she became a U.S. Congresswoman, succeeding Les AuCoin in the House of Representatives, representing Oregon's 1st Congressional District.

Below are excerpts from a 43-minute interview with Furse conducted Aug. 1, 2008, at her Portland State University office.

**Q. Why don't you start and then I will follow up with questions.**

**A.** To understand the Restoration of the Grand Ronde Tribe, you have to understand the context in which it occurred. ... It was in the era of the real hot fishing and hunting rights battle both in Oregon and Washington states. A member of Congress, who was an excellent member, Congressman Les AuCoin, felt that he had really spilled a great deal of political blood on the Siletz (Restoration in 1977). Therefore, when Grand Rondes came to him for this bill, he told us very early on ... that there would be no hunting or fishing rights.

At the time, I was working for Legal Services. I knew enough about legislation to know that it is almost impossible to get a highly controversial bill through the Congress. Any hunting and fishing rights would have been very controversial, to the point that I do not even think the Senate would have appreciated them.

So, what we got was a very strong bill for Grand Ronde with the opportunity to come back two years later to do a reservation bill. Sen. Mark Hatfield, who is probably the pre-eminent supporter of Indian Tribes, he and Sen. Inouye (Daniel Inouye of Hawaii) are probably the two who most supported Indian Tribes.

Sen. Hatfield told us right at the beginning ... he told us very clearly that we would need to get the support of other Tribes in Oregon, especially the Warm Springs nation. At the time, right after the Grand Ronde Restoration there was a thing put together called "New Tribes Money" that meant that if a Tribe became federally recognized, for five years the monies for that Tribe came out of a separate fund other than the BIA.

New Tribes Money was very important, but prior to Grand Ronde, that was not set aside. Specific monies meant that if a Tribe were federally recognized, monies that



Elizabeth Furse

would go to that Tribe would come out of Tribal monies for all Tribes. So, in other words, to get a Tribe newly restored or newly recognized in the state, it meant that Tribes in the state were going to take a financial hit. I do not think people understand that.

Following Sen. Hatfield's advice, Tribal Council and I went to the Warm Springs Council and presented the possibility of a bill. Warm Springs very graciously and enthusiastically supported it despite the fact it would mean a lessening of their Tribal money. When we had that support, we went to Sen. Hatfield with that and he was very pleased. It made a big difference to him because he is very close to the Warm Springs people.

We also received the support of the other federally recognized Tribe in Oregon, the Umatilla Tribe. The Siletz was federally recognized very shortly before that ... I think it was in 1977 when Siletz were recognized and the Menominee were recognized in 1973.

So, the political climate in Oregon was quite difficult for the idea that a Tribe would be newly restored. There was a huge amount of opposition from hunters and fishers. There was tremendous opposition from John Hampton, who owned Hampton Lumber. He was deeply opposed to any idea that the Tribe would receive any kind of federal lands. ...

I think people have to understand what the political situation was like in Oregon and Washington state at that time. There were effigies hung of Judge (George) Boldt, who did the Boldt decision in Washington state. People's political lives were very much involved in this tremendous controversy.

... So, hunting and fishing was never a part of the idea of what the Tribe would be restored to and what the Tribal Council wanted. Tribal Council wanted services, such as education, health services, all of the services that are available to a federally recognized Tribe. That was what the Tribe was after, and quite rightfully so.

As soon as the President signed the bill ... that same day federal services are available for Tribal members. At the time of Restoration, the Tribe only owned the cemetery and a very small shack. We did most of this work; well Tribal Council met and worked all the time, no running

water. The differences and changes that have occurred because of federal recognition would be hard for people to understand, too truly understand.

Tribal Council did the great bulk of the

work, especially Kathryn Harrison. She went around the state, particularly in that area, doing educational forums. Kathryn would go to the most hostile groups and explain the reasons for this act of Congress, and receive support. When this bill was introduced, we had access to hundreds of letters of support. That made a huge difference because the Tribe said that it was an issue of justice, and, of course, it was. I think that we should really thank and congratulate that Council for sticking with it.

For the people of Grand Ronde who funded these trips, there was no money to go back to Washington, D.C. There was nothing. There was no funding for those Council members to have salaries; everything was done on raised money. We got a couple of foundation grants that helped some. By and large that effort was funded by Tribal members. People would do bake sales, people would do little get-togethers.

When we finally went to what was called the Indian Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, which is now in the Natural Resources Committee, when the Tribe testified they testified on the issue of justice. They testified on the issue that they once more wanted to join the family of Indian Nations to work together with other Indian Nations to support Tribal programs and Tribal people. It was a very impressive testimony.

Kathryn; her son; Marvin (Kimsey); her daughter, Karen, testified at that hearing. In the Senate, we were very fortunate because we had Mark Hatfield as a great advocate. Mark Hatfield was chairman of the Senate's Committee of Indian Affairs. He and Sen. Inouye, the ranking Democrat on that committee, worked together to get this to happen.

**Q. What is your memory of the first time you went out to Grand Ronde and met with Tribal Council?**

**A.** I had talked to Marvin Kimsey, who was chairman, and said, "Let me come out and meet with you." I went out and there was this tiny concrete building, and in it were the Council members. They very graciously had coffee and cookies. We met there, a very simple place, but they were all working together.

We set out a strategy on how to get

this Restoration legislation passed. It was not an easy thing, and when I say not an easy thing I do not mean it was hard for me. I mean it was a hard piece of legislation. We think, "Oh, there have been lots of Restoration bills." ... It took awhile. We had to introduce it, too, I believe two different Congresses because it did not go through the first time. We went back the second time and we included in that bill that there would be an opportunity to come back in two years, a mandate really to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to come back with a reservation plan.

Basically, my job was to be a cheerleader, to try to sort things out, to smooth out things as they happened. They were feeling pretty remote and isolated at the time. They had been told they were not an Indian people, that they were not a Tribal government. This was a very discouraging time for them. They were an amazing people though. They had grit and persistence.

... Therefore, we set out a strategy and stuck to it. We were going to get the support from the community, and that the Tribe would agree not to fight. It is absolutely vital that you have the support of the community. You cannot have people in the middle saying, "I do not like this" or "I do not like that" when you are doing legislation. You cannot present a controversy to the member of Congress; they will stand away from it, and rightly so. Why should they get in the middle of someone else's fight?

The Council was excellent at keeping everybody together. We, of course, had many public meetings, explaining to the Tribal members what was in the bill, what the bill was going to have. I think everybody was very apprised of what was in the bill. They had the opportunity to have Don Wharton as counsel because they really could not afford counsel at the time. He, as the director of Legal Service's Native American Program, provided them the legal counsel. He is an excellent lawyer. He has worked nationwide on many important Tribal issues. So, they had excellent legal advocacy.

**Q. Don Wharton said that when you came onboard you were very good at your people skills, contacts, helping to put Tribal members up in Washington, D.C., when they went to testify, your ability to handle the media by creating slideshows and things like that.**

**A.** Well, you know I really was working full time on it. The issue for the Council was that they had jobs; they were not being paid to be council members as they are now. They had to have other jobs. So, what I was able to provide them was sort of full time.

We went and got a grant from Church Women United to do a little slideshow on the Oregon Trail of Tears. Sue Shaffer's daughter pro-

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vided amazing watercolors since we obviously did not have photographs of all of that. We put together this excellent slideshow, and Kathryn used it, as did the Cow Creeks when they went forward with their Restoration.

**Q. When this was proposed to Congressman AuCoin and he was still smarting from helping the Siletz Restoration, what was the big thing that helped convince him to go along? Was it having the community support?**

**A.** All of those things, as well as the flexibility of the Council. At first, he was reluctant due to all of the political ramifications. ... There was resistance in the whole Willamina area. People did not understand what Restoration would mean. They thought the Tribe would be able to take over private lands, which the Tribe cannot do and that would have never occurred to them. There were many misperceptions.

Working slowly with Congressman AuCoin, making sure that he trusted those Council members, and that they were not going to say anything to the press that was contrary to what they had already said. Very disciplined, you have to be.

I think he gained a great deal of trust with the Council and with the Tribe. It took awhile to get him to introduce the bill, but once he did, he was very enthusiastic and he worked very hard to get that bill through.

**Q. As far as the Tribal Council that was there at the time, can you talk about the members you recall and what their strengths were as far as working on the Restoration effort?**

**A.** Well, frankly, I always felt that Marvin Kimsey, that was not what he wanted to do. Well, he wanted to govern, but he buckled down and did what was necessary. The media work, being in the public, being the spokesperson; that really impressed me.

Margaret Provost was very quiet spoken, an intelligent voice. She was excellent at any kind of presentation.

Kathryn Harrison is tremendously inspiring. You know, she is a woman that has so much charisma that she was able to get across to people who were not interested in this information. She was able to get across to them that this was something that was important and something that was happening, and they worked together.

Now, am I saying that there were no disagreements? No, of course not. You have people in such a highly intense situation yet there were no disagreements that got in the way of the Tribe's best interest. They set aside any personal conflicts of any kind. The Tribe was always first and foremost and the Tribal members. It was fantastic to work with people like that.

**Q. Earlier on you were talking about the political atmosphere**

**of that time, late 1970s, early '80s. What was going on in the nation?**

**A.** What started the change? Well, first, the President (Nixon) acknowledged the tremendous damage that Termination had done. ... John F. Kennedy said that there would be no more Termination bills. So, there was the beginning of that change. Charles Wilkinson of NARF (Native American Rights Fund), who was a lawyer, then a law professor at the University of Oregon, he and Ada Deer of the Menominee came up with the concept of Restoration.

In order to get Termination overturned you had to put in place something else. What you also had to do was persuade the United States Congress that they had made a mistake, which was a very tough thing to do. They do not think that they make mistakes. Anyway, it was the groundwork done by Ada Deer, chair of the Menominee Nation, and Charles Wilkinson that began to make it feasible for the Congress to conceive that they could admit that they had made a mistake.

That is what every Restoration bill is; it is the recognition by the Congress that this was not the right thing to do and we are righting the wrong. ... Self-determination, of course the whole era of self-determination came in 1972 with the Self-Determination Act. Tribes were losing out if they were not restored at that time. They were losing those funds.

The New Tribes Money made a difference for Tribes coming along, because again they did not have to persuade other Tribes, "Look you are going to have to take a cut" like we did with the Warm Springs. They did not balk at all, they said, "It's a justice issue." They saw it very clear as a justice issue, Restoration.

Termination has been, along with the Allotment Act, probably the most destructive piece of legislation that Congress has ever passed.

**Q. Many of these Tribal Council members were working out of their comfort zones. Can you talk a little bit about the trips back to Washington? Any anecdotes you remember?**

**A.** Well, first of all we were traveling on an absolutely "barebones budget," so we would fly in on the red-eye. We would arrive in Washington, D.C., at 6 a.m. I would have meetings scheduled. We did not have time to take an extra day. I had meetings scheduled from 9 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 10 a.m., 10:30 a.m. We covered those halls. Not only did we see our own delegation, but we went to see people who were important in Indian issues. ... We were trying to gather friends, but also to make sure that the members of Congress knew what Restoration meant. It was new to them. Many of them were new; they had not been there when Siletz went through.

Kathryn always remembers ... she is so sweet ... she remembers it was hot and muggy. We were crossing from the House to the Senate and she was so tired. I said to her, "Would you like to sit here in the shade and I will go over there and

see the Congressman?" She said "Yes, Elizabeth," and she sat there in the shade. They worked to the bone. Nobody spent an extra moment that they were not working. They had briefings in the morning, debriefings at night. What did you hear? How was it presented? What was your response? Because, of course, we broke up into groups. If there were four or five of us, we went in groups of two. We sent two to this and two to that.

**Q. What was the biggest hurdle? Just changing the community's perspective on what happened to the Tribe, the Native Americans in Oregon?**

**A.** Yes, and because Termination had not been taught. You know, the whole Oregon Trail of Tears has not been taught in our schools. We had to educate the public. We had to educate the media. This is where the Tribal Council was fantastic. We would send them out to The Oregonian, to the local newspapers and they had the story, the true story down. They knew it very well. Slowly they managed to gather that support, so that members of Congress would feel, "I am going to introduce this bill; yes, it is going to be controversial, but I have a lot of support behind me."

**Q. When you heard that it had been successful, can you remember your reaction at the time?**

**A.** I can remember the elation when it passed. We knew it had to pass the House, then it would go to the Senate. The Senate was a lot easier because Sen. Mark Hatfield was chairman of the committee. I cannot recall if we had a Senate hearing, I think not. No, I think that we just had a House hearing. It went to the Senate committee. The Senate committee passed it out on to the floor. It was almost certain on the consent calendar. It comes up on Monday and if nobody objects, then it passes.

**Q. I read an interview from about five years ago where you said Tribes were terminated because the federal government was trying to save money.**

**A.** That was one of the reasons. Remember, it was after the second World War, in the 1950s. It is my belief that was the major reason for Termination in Oregon to the amount that it was. The interesting thing about Termination for Oregon is that Gov. (Douglas) McKay became Secretary of the Interior under Eisenhower. Gov. McKay had many friends in the timber industry. It is my belief that it was timber, in particular with the Klamath because Klamath had the largest stand of Ponderosa pine in the world. All of that pine went on the market, to McKay's friends. Moreover, it went off and over the mountain so the Klamath area lost millions of dollars worth of timber. It went to his friends on the west side, the big timber companies.

... It is my belief that Klamath was the goal, and while we are at it being active as Secretary of the Interior, let's terminate everybody else in Oregon. Sixty-one Tribes and Bands, many of those people are repeated over and over in the Termination Act. The little Bands that were not

really operating at the time and many extinct from the terrible wars at the Trail of Tears era. Therefore, I think it was money, saving money.

**Q. For anyone who is listening to this 50 years from now who is a Grand Ronde Tribal member, what about this effort do they really need for them to know?**

**A.** I think that there is a perception, and this is very human, that, "Oh gosh, it must have been very easy and that it could have been done at anytime" just because it happened. Not true! At any moment that bill could have failed. The effort could have failed. The bill that finally passed was a bill that was as good as it was going to get. The Council was very clear on what their priorities were and they were very clear on listening to what the Congressman as well as what the Senator told them was possible.

Politics is the art of the possible. It is no good to say we want everything if we are not going to get anything. I think that the Council needs to be honored by their descendants because they did the impossible, and it was difficult.

**Q. When you see an ad come on television for Spirit Mountain Casino, what do you think about the difference in the Tribe?**

**A.** I think it is wonderful. I think that like any government it has the right to develop its own economic strengths. They did that. The legislation of the National Indian Gaming Regulatory Act is clear. Tribes have the right to do gaming under a contract, and the Tribe, the Grand Ronde, have done very well with it. They have a wonderful location. ... I like the way the Grand Rondes have invested in other things. They have not put all of their eggs into one basket. They have looked to the future. I like what they do with their education dollars; you have to think about education. They live so close to the urban areas that they need to understand that Tribal members are going to be out competing outside the reservation.

**Q. Is there something that you have not talked about that you think is important for Tribal members to know about the people, the effort or the hurdles that had to be overcome?**

**A.** I think the thing to remember is what it was like before Restoration, what that was, as Kathryn's daughter testified. As a young person going to the powwow and the Indian people didn't even think you were Indian. The hurt she felt because she was not part of a federally recognized Tribe. She testified in Congress the hurt she felt. People have to remember what they have gained. There will, of course, be people that say we should have this or we should have had that. Not so! They got the very best there was going to be.

... Grand Ronde had nothing, nothing. They had no land, no economic development opportunities. They took the very best they could get and have made it better. I just hope the Tribal members will understand that, that they were magnificent that Council.

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