

# Editorial and Opinion Page

## The Way I See It by Dr. Dean Chavers, President of the Native American Scholarship Fund

**The Best Indian Commissioner**  
Copyright 1998

Often we overlook the bet individuals in Indian Country. The ones who have led the good fight for years, endured the brickbats thrown at them, taken the insults, and stuck by their guns, are often forgotten too soon.

One of these warriors was the best Commission of Indian Affairs since John Collier. He was only the second Indian to head the BIA. He is still the only person to go from the very bottom rank in BIA all the way to the top.

His name is Robert L. Bennett. He now lives in retirement in Albuquerque, but he headed BIA from 1966 to 1969.

He was born 86 years ago on the Oneida Indian reservation in Wisconsin. The other week as I was driving across town, I saw the Commissioner, as I call him, drive across my path. I wondered how many people know what he accomplished during his tenure at the Bureau.

I called him that day, and he invited me to come over to his house. We spend a pleasant couple of hours talking about what he did in his 35 years working for the agency that is in more ways than any other agency responsible for running Indian affairs.

The Commissioner will only admit to partial credit, but some monumental things were accomplished on his watch. These include the establishment of the American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC), the establishment of the American Indian Law Center (AILC) at the University of New Mexico, the conversion of Haskell Institute into Haskell Indian National University (HINU), and the establishment of the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) as technical college.

There were then only 35 Indian attorneys in the whole U.S., so there was a huge need for the Law Center. The Commissioner pointed out that AILC was started with a grant of \$2 million from the Donner Foundation in 1968.

He helped find the funds to start it. John Echohawk, now Executive Director of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), was the first Director. The AILC encountered a variety of problems with the first few classes of law students. The problems included students not being able to understand the material, and not making the commitment to stick it out and succeed.

But within a few years these problems smoothed out. One of the main approaches they developed which worked was a six-week summer program in law, which is still being held each year.

Likewise, there were only a few dozen Indian people with graduate degrees of any kind. The AIGC, originally called American Indian Scholarships (AIS), was developed to meet this huge need. It was started with a grant from the John Hay Whitney Foundation. The Commissioner also helped to find this money.

John Rainer from the Taos Pueblo was the original director. AIS soon developed a contractual arrangement with BIA to administer all BIA post-graduate scholarships except law, which AILC administered. (Ten years ago the two programs were combined, and IGC now administers all BIA graduate scholarships.)

He found funds to help Haskell convert to a degree-granting college as well. The Donner Foundation also provided challenge grants to get Haskell's conversion started. The main change at Haskell was to convert from vocational subjects to a full academic program. The library holdings were mostly about vocational subjects, and the library had to be converted to academic holdings.

This conversion is still going on there. Haskell has started its first degree-granting program, in education, two years ago under Dr. Karen Swisher. Sid Carney was the Area Director for Anadarko, which has charge of Haskell, when the conversion started. Sid was also involved in initiating the conversion.

The Commission remained involved with Haskell after his retirement, serving as a consultant to the Board of Regents. He helped to organize this Board, and got a tax exemption for the Haskell Board of Regents. He served a total of 17 years for the University. "I stayed too long," he laughs.

SIPI started as the result of a meeting the Commissioner had with some young Indian educators in Albuquerque. They asked him for a school which would help provide the type of graduates that tribes need. The curriculum would be flexible. Programs could be dropped or added as the needs arose.

From the very beginning SIPI involved the local leaders of business and industry. They are still involved as advisors and supporters. Intel now is paying or part of the costs of a program to produce technicians who can work for this international computer chip giant, for instance.

The corporations wanted students graduating who had good command of the basics of education--reading, writing and math. They also wanted a heavy emphasis on math and science in the curriculum.

Plans for SIPI started on his watch, but it actually opened the Fall after his retirement. He has remained involved with the SIPI Board, however, and helped it gain tax exemption for its Board of Regents.

The Commissioner also helped organize a prison program starting in the 1930s when he was with Northern Utah Agency. He got the prisons to let Indian prisoners organize into clubs, and practice their Native religions. He helped the tribe take over the administration of the prisoner program, and is proud of the fact that he never attended one hearing on a prisoner.

"My philosophy was to teach the tribes how to do things in local government," he says. "I didn't want them dependent on BIA for everything."

He is also proud of having increased the operating budget for BIA

during his watch. "We got all the money we asked for most years," he recalls. "People in the House and Senate supported what we were trying to do."

Congressman Wayne Aspinall, when he was head of the Indian Committee, started the practice with him of having copies of monthly reports mailed to him after they were submitted from the Agencies to the Area Directors, and on to Washington. Thus some accountability was introduced into the funding process.

The Commissioner is also proud of the fact that he took pictures of every tribal delegation which visited his office in Washington. Many other Commissioners and Assistant Secretaries never followed this practice. But he felt it gave some legitimacy to the efforts of tribes to preserve their rights.

He also took and scheduled the Indian princesses around to meetings, exposing them to many people they would not otherwise have been able to meet.

"If the only commitment to Indians is in the treaties, tribes will take some serious lumps," he says. "In the interplay between state and federal jurisdictions, tribes can destroy themselves."

President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Commissioner Bennett head of BIA in early 1966. He took office on April 27, 1966, and left the Commissioner's job and retired on May 31, 1969.

After he retired, he directed the Law Center from 1969 until 1972. Sam Deloria was hired to be Director that year, and the Commissioner was Director of Special Projects at the Center until he retired again in 1976. Mr. Deloria stayed in this position until 1997, when he left to form his own business.

The Commissioner is also proud of having helped to start the American Indian Hall of Fame during his watch. The Hall of Fame is looking for a permanent home, and is housed on the

Haskell campus in the meantime.

One of the main accomplishments of the Commissioner was the "Indianization" of the BIA. Before his tenure, there had only been one Indian who was Commissioner, Ely S. Parker, a Seneca Indian who had been a general in the Civil War. After his tenure, every head of BIA has been an Indian.

His legacy will live on. When the position of Commission of Indian Affairs was upgraded to Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs a decade after his retirement, I remembered the glory days he had initiated at the top in DC.

Mostly his legacy will live on in the education and social programs he pioneered. Thousands of Indian people now have a chance at a bachelor's degree, a law degree, and a doctoral degree because Commissioner Bennett fought so hard to establish these programs on a national level. Scholarship funds were greatly increased during his tenure, and they are still opening doors for young Indian students.

You hope no one in your family will ever need CPR. We hope you're right.

The American Red Cross Safe Families program teaches people skills that may need in an emergency. Like CPR, water safety and basic first aid. Quite simply, we help you take care of your family. And that's something we all want to do.

 Help Can't Wait

To find out about classes in your area, call your local chapter.

**Carolina Indian Voice** is published every Thursday by First American Publications 304 Normal St. - College Plaza Post Office Box 1075 Pembroke, North Carolina 28372 Phone (910) 521-2826 Fax (910) 521-1975 Connee Brayboy, Editor Subscriptions One year in NC, \$20.00 Out of State, \$25.00 Second Class Postage Paid at Pembroke, NC

## Pediatric Pointers

By: Joseph T. Bell

One of the most worrisome medical problems for parents and doctors alike is that of appendicitis. Anytime our children run a fever and complain of belly pain, this diagnosis seems to creep into the back of our minds.

Acute appendicitis results from a germ infection in a small branch of the large intestine called the appendix. The condition is most common in teenagers and young adults with the peak ages between 15 and 24 years, of course, this disease can be seen in any age. I have even seen appendicitis in a child as young as 15 months old!


The typical signs of appendicitis begin as a low grade fever and pain around the area of the belly button. The pain usually moves to the area of the right lower abdomen (typical location of the appendix in 80% of patients). Usually there is a loss of appetite with vomiting, especially in young children. The diagnosis is often difficult in young children because it is a

less likely age group and because the vomiting may be the dominant symptom, overshadowing belly pain. There are other illnesses that can mimic appendicitis, making the diagnosis that much harder. A few of these diseases include inflamed pancreas, kidney infection, spastic colon and obstructed bowel.

If you suspect your child may have appendicitis, they should see a doctor as soon as possible. By examining the child and checking a blood count, it may make diagnosis more obvious. The treatment is surgery. The inflamed appendix must be removed to prevent it from rupturing and spreading the infection. If not treated, a perforated appendix can lead to death. Fortunately, this is rare in this country.

Remember, if you have any questions you would like answered or want to hear about a particular subject, write to me at P.O. Box 3010, Pembroke, N.C. 28372. Take care and we will talk again next week.

Patricia Brayboy  
Executive Director

 **American Red Cross**  
Robeson County Chapter

P.O. Box 1945  
Lumberton, NC 28359  
(910) 738-5057  
Fax (910) 671-8297

Disaster Services  
Bloodmobiles  
CPR/First Aid  
Water Safety  
Service to Military Families

GET A MAMMOGRAM  
TELL A FRIEND.



1-800-ACS-2345



**THE SECRET OF NO FACE**  
(an Iroekwa Epic)

Chief Everett Parker & Oledoska



An authentic tale of the Seneca people of the Cornplanter Reservation. Hundreds of years old, this legend has never been recorded before. It was written by the last of the Pine Tree Chiefs, Everett Parker, and his lifelong friend, Oledoska. It has full-page color illustrations by Oneoda. Over 180 pages long. Authentic in every detail. Completely done in the true Indian spirit and design.

**IDEAL FOR CLASSROOM USE!**  
(Inquire about wholesale orders)

A reprint of a classic.  
First published in 1972.

Order your copy today! This beautiful volume is printed on fine paper by Naturegraph Publishers, the nation's leading printer of Indian books. A must for students of Indian legends, religion, and philosophy.

Not just another Indian book--a GENUINE legend

**NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP FUND**  
8200 Mountain Road, N. E., Suite 203  
Albuquerque NM 87110  
(505) 262-2351 Phone  
(505) 262-0534 Fax  
NASF@NASF.COM E-mail

**ATTENTION HOMEOWNERS NEED MONEY?**

EXCELLENT RATES AVAILABLE BEGINNING AT 6.625%

Credit Problems Pay Off Taxes and Leins  
Bill Consolidation Closing in 8-10 Business Days  
Home Improvements Up to 125% on Appraised Value

**...JUST TELL US HOW MUCH YOU NEED!**

Application taken by phone til 6 PM  
VA & NC Licensed Mortgage Corp.

\*FREE CONSULTATION  
\*APR 7.282 CALL TOLL FREE TODAY (888) 322-9503

First Horizon Home Mortgage

**Fish For Pond Stocking**  
Wednesday, September 16

Delivery will be:  
**Pembroke-Pembroke Farm, Home & Garden Supply 12:00 -1:00 p.m.**  
Phone 910-521-2801  
Minimum order of 25 fish

We furnish your hauling containers  
To place an order call the store above or call 1-800-247-2615  
(Orders do not have to be placed in advance)

**INSESSION BIRTHDAY PARTIES ONLY \$50.00**  
(an \$80 value) includes

- Admission & skates for the Birthday Child & 11 guests
- Additional skaters are \$4.50 each
- 1/4 sheet Skate Cake and All paper products
- A Small Drink and Hot Dog for each skater (refills extra)
- Invitation
- Supervision by a party hostess
- Snack Bar Area Decorations
- A Gift for the Birthday Child and Passes for Guests
- Happy Birthday announcement & special Birthday Song Skate

No outside food or refreshments allowed in the building

Non-Refundable \$25.00 deposit required  
MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE

**PEMBROKE SKATELAND**  
(910) 521-0990

