

Editorial And Opinion Page



AS I SEE IT

Bruce Barton

Under the knife

I'll be 60 my birthday (Oct. 1) and I had never had the trauma of a hospital stay, until recently. On April 23, I traveled to Moore County/First Health Hospital in Pinehurst to have a fatty tumor removed from my right shoulder blade. It was a minor operation, and I mended at home for a week as an out patient. I'm back to work and good as new, except for sundry staples buttoned into the healing wound. Thank the Lord that initial reports indicate it was benign, and more a hindrance than anything else.

My experience with the hospital was good, as well as TLC Health Care of Pembroke who took care of me as I mended at home. I recommend both organizations to you without hesitation.

Thanks for your expressions of concern, and your prayers.

Around town

As a matter of fact, I was feeling well enough to get out for the first time last Friday night to attend the B.J. Thomas concert at the Givens PAC on the UNC-Pembroke campus. He is a wonderful entertainer and rings true. I like him a lot, and was especially pleased to see Larry-Chavis, a local Indian musician, playing drums with his band. That probably had a little bit to do with my liking B.J. Thomas so much. He has good taste in musicians.

And monitoring the Eddie Hatcher Trial ...

And we continue to monitor the Eddie Hatcher Trial in nearby Lumberton which is another world to many of us, especially Indians like me who grew up in the turbulence of the institutional segregation of the 50s and 60s. I have a long memory.

Again, I say, if Eddie Hatcher cannot get a fair trial in Robeson County then neither can you or I. The D.A. needs to be very careful in making sure that Mr. Hatcher's rights are conscientiously observed without favor or bias. It's a hard thing to do because Mr. Hatcher has the capacity to get under one's skin if he has a mind to.

Eddie Hatcher, now 44, is charged with first-degree murder in the May 31, 1999 shooting death of Brian McMillian, who was 19. Hatcher is also charged with attempted murder and shooting into an occupied dwelling. He could face the death penalty if convicted.

The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice.

—Lyndon Johnson

Former Chief of the Haliwa-Saponi Succumbs After Extended Illness

The Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe mourns the loss of former Chief W. R. (William Robert) Richardson. Chief Richardson passed away Thursday, April 26, 2001 at Nash County General Hospital in Rocky Mount, NC after an extended illness.

Chief Richardson served as the Chief of the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe from 1955 until his retirement of the position in 1999. He was a champion for the rights of American Indians on the local, state, and national level. During his lifetime he dedicated himself to the betterment of Indian people by lobbying for Indian education and various other programs designed for American Indians. Chief Richardson was honored for his works when he received the "Order of the Long Leaf Pine" award from former Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. This award is the most distinguished award presented to a citizen by the Governor.

Chief Richardson attended school in Halifax County where he grew up. In his late twenties, he moved away from the tribal community to live in Philadelphia where he continued his education at Maustbaum Technical Institute in the early 1930s. While at Maustbaum, he distinguished himself by completing his high school diploma, as well as a course of study in the machinist field. He later received a Machinist First Class Certification.

After moving back to the tribal community in Hollister, NC, he distinguished himself by becoming Chief of his tribe in May of 1955. Chief Richardson would serve in that capacity until he retired the position in 1999. He was a pioneer in the tribe's efforts to obtain their own educational system by being a founding member of the Haliwa Indian School which opened in 1957 for the exclusive use of Haliwa-Saponi tribal members. It was the only Indian school in NC funded entirely by the members of the tribe, which it served. The school would become state supported in 1959. While serving as tribal Chief, he founded the Haliwa Burial Association, as well as the Haliwa Indian Tribe's Boy Scout Troop. Chief Richardson served as Scout leader from 1958 until 1968. He was a charter member of the Hollister Garment Company, and served as vice chairman for a period of time. A compassionate and caring individual, Chief Richardson was a founding member of the Twin County Rural Health Center in Essex, NC. This Center would provide both affordable and adequate health care to rural residents.

Chief Richardson dedicated his life to working for the betterment of American Indians. He was a founding member of the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs and served as Chairman under the direction of former Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Chief Richardson served on the North Carolina Indian Hous-

ing Authority Board of Commissioners, an appointment from former Governor Hunt, from 1986 until 1998.

On the national level, Chief Richardson served as a delegate to the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest national Indian organization continuing to operate. He served as a representative for the Haliwa-Saponi at numerous national conferences and testified at various congressional hear-

ings on matters relating the American Indians. As a result of the Chief's work on the national level, the Haliwa-Saponi Indian tribe was the first non-federally recognized Indian tribe in NC to gain membership in NCAI. Chief Richardson served as a board member of the Coalition of Eastern Native Americans, a non-profit Indian advocacy organization based in Washington, DC from 1970 until 1975.



Along The Robeson Trail

by Dr. Stan Knick, Director, UNCP Native American Resource Center

In the past two weeks we have been looking into storytelling (centering on Abenaki storyteller Joseph Bruchac's book *Tell Me A Tale: A Book About Storytelling*). We have seen that storytelling begins with listening, and that we all have storytelling roots — sources of stories from our ancestors, our families, our homes and our own lives. This week we continue along Bruchac's steps to good storytelling.

If listening is the first step, then observing is the second. Even though most of us look around all the time, do we really see what is there? Do we become so accustomed to the things in our environment — the bluebird in the yard, the glorious sunset, the smile on an old friend's face — that we begin to take them for granted, not to see them for what they really are? To help us learn truly to see, Bruchac suggests another exercise.

This one he calls "Close Your Eyes and See." With a friend, sit in a room or some other familiar place. Close your eyes and try to call up the image of the room or other place. While your eyes are still closed, let your friend ask you about what you have "seen." They shouldn't be hard questions, just simple things you could have seen with your eyes open if you had been truly observant. How many windows are there? What clothing is your friend wearing? What's hanging on the wall? Doing this exercise repeatedly makes one a better observer.

Bruchac points out that "seeing" is not just about what is in the room or the universe around you. It is sometimes necessary to see into things: "Those who cannot see beyond

the surface are often fooled. One of the oldest stories about being fooled by not seeing deeply is the Aesop's fable of the fox and the grapes. Aesop was a storyteller in ancient Greece. His name meant 'the Ethiopian,' for Aesop had been brought as a slave from Africa, and the stories he told appear to have their roots in African traditions.... In [one] version of the story, a hungry fox sees what it thinks are grapes that have fallen into a pond. It can see them just below the surface of the water. The fox jumps in to get them but cannot find them.... The fox keeps trying, but it only gets wetter. The grapes are actually hanging from a vine in a tree over the water. All that the fox saw was the reflection of the grapes on the pond's still surface (p. 37)."

Bruchac argues that we must observe "with understanding" in order to gain a vision of what is important. Sometimes this means seeing ourselves as others see us (to paraphrase the great Scot poet, Robert Burns). Sometimes it means seeing into other people, and not only seeing a reflection of ourselves. Trying to see things from someone else's point of view can often help us see what is important in a situation. Every time we do this, we gain new understanding. Such understanding is a vital ingredient in good stories.

A crucial part of observing can happen when we take special notice of changes in our lives. This is particularly true of what have been called "rites of passage." These are times in our lives when we pass from one stage to another, for example from boyhood to manhood, or girlhood to womanhood. Observing these

"passages" or changes, as was common in all the traditional cultures of the world, helps us to understand our lives and Life in general:

"In the Native American community, it was common for a young man or a young woman to go on a vision quest when they were ready to become an adult. Adolescents would be taken out alone into the woods or onto the plain or up on a mountain, far from other people. They would be told by their elders what to do and how to act. Then they would sit in one place for several days without eating. They were supposed to listen and watch. Their job was to pray for a vision that would help them for the rest of their lives."

"Seeking a vision is not just something done by Native Americans; it is a practice found throughout the world in many cultures, including the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ goes out into the wilderness for forty days. When he returns, after hearing the word of God, he is ready to take on the work of spreading his message of peace (p. 43-44)."

Observation, whether it is simply of the things around us or of the changes in our lives, can make better people and better storytellers. Whatever we observe can reveal stories to us.

Next week we will examine more of Bruchac's ideas about stories, and move to the third step on the path to good storytelling. For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in historic Old Main Building, on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (our Internet address is www.uncp.edu/nativemuseum).

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