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THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

Published each Thursday by First American Publications, Pembroke, NC

VOLUME 26 NUMBER 43

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1999

TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

The Warrior Tradition: Native American Zeal to Serve the United States Was Great During World War II

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"To honor a culture, you must first understand that culture." (Statement by Mr. James Floyd, Director, VA Medical Center Salt Lake City, UT.)

During World War II, Native American Zeal to serve this country was so great that, according to U.S. Army officials, the draft would have not been necessary if the country's entire population had enlisted in the same proportion as did American Indians.

American Indians began enlisting in the late 1930s when the Armed Forces began to mobilize. What could have possibly been the motivating factor to make so many desire to serve their country? "We were ready to fight for our country, for our people for our families." These great men were mere boys at the time of their calling. Many had never left their reservation or ventured far from the Indian communities before, yet they were proud and eager to serve. There was some peer pressure as many Indians would come home on leave, sporting their new uniforms, catching the eyes of the ladies, and having a little money in their pocket. These new recruits would share their adventures of all the strange sites and places like California, Illinois, New York and

Texas! Then they'd ask their civilian friends "Why haven't you joined up yet?" The end result was 99 percent of all eligible American Indians registered for the draft, setting a national standard. In fact, many who were not even old enough to serve, misled their recruiter or found a way into military service. There were choices. According to Mr. James Edmond Locklear (Lumbee): "You could be 'deferred for farming' which meant if you were a farmer, you didn't have to go into service, but many of us Indian boys

were obligated to join our buddies and fight, that's why I begged and had a little help to get in." Mr. Locklear was in the Navy from 1943 to 1946, served on the Battleship USS New Mexico and was in combat by the age of 17.

On December 7, 1941, there were 5,000 Indians in the service and by the end of the war, more than 44,500 Indians served in uniform - 24,521 Indians from reservations and 20,000 from non-reservation Indian communities. The combined total was more than 10 percent of the American Indian population, and 1/3 of the able-bodied men from 18-50 years old.

Some Indian men were so eager to fight that they stood in line for hours, during all types of weather, just to sign their draft cards. Mr. James "Cleo" Maynor and Mr. James Arther Oxendine are two Lumbee Indian men who spent their own money to ride a bus for 2 hours one way just to see a recruiter because no one really knew what differences were between the Navy, Marines and the Army. Some Indians even carried their own rifles so they'd be ready for battle once they joined. FOR example, one-fourth of the Mescalero Apaches in New Mexico and nearly all able bodied Chippewas at the Grand Portage Reservation enlisted because they were unwilling to wait for their draft numbers!

In early 1942, the Navajo Tribal called a special convention attended by 50,000 Indians to dramatize their support for the war effort. Tuscaroras, Oneidas, Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Chippewas and the Sioux united and declared war on the Axis powers. More than 300 Indians first saw action in the Pacific, including a desendent of famed Apache Chief Geronimo, who took part in the defense of Bataan and Corregidor. The Marine Corps welcomed Native

Americans into their ranks primarily because of the warrior reputation and spirit. The Army's famed 45th "Thunderbird" Infantry Division had the highest proportion of Indian soldiers of any division of more than 2,000 Indian men! Beginning in 1943, this unit 511 days of combat, fighting through North Africa, Sicily, Italy, the Ardennes Forest, and finally into Germany. Contributions were many. Cherokee men like 1Lt. Ernest Childers, Cdr. Ernest E. Evans, Lt. Jack Montgomery and 2Lt Van Barefoot (Choctaw) were awarded the congressional Medal of Honor for their valor during combat in Europe. Major General Clarence Tinker (Osgae) was lost in action while leading a group of LB-30 bombers on a mission against Japanese forces near Wake Island June 7, 1942. He was the first U.S. General lost in WWII. Brumett Echohawk (Pawnee) was a renowned expert who trained commandos in hand-to-hand combat. Kenneth Scisson (Lakota) received the Distinguished Service Cross, accredited with 10 confirmed kills during a raid against the Germans near Bizerte, Tunisia, in 1942. Lastly, Robert Stabler (Omaha Tribe) landed alone under heavy fire to mark a beach landing site during the invasion of Sicily.

Native American contributions to the war effort were significant to say the least. Nearly 46,000 Indian men and women left their communities to work in the defense industry. Ultimately, approximately 150,000 Native Americans directly participated in their industrials, agricultural and military effort. Nearly 12,000 American Indian women served as welders in aircraft assembly plants; served in the American Women's Volunteer Service, Red Cross and Civil Defense; manned fire lookout stations; became everything from mechanics

to lumberjacks; tended livestock; grew Victory gardens; canned food and sewed uniforms! Nearly 800 Indian women served in the Women's Army Corps (WACS), Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), Women Marine Corps

Reserve and Army Nurse Corps. It didn't stop there. Native Americans purchased an amazing \$50 Million in Treasury Stamps and War Bonds.

World War II was a major turning point for all Native Americans. Large numbers of Indians experienced for the first time, the non-Indian world. As a result, some returning veterans went through purification ceremonies in order to return to their normal lives, and just wanted to go home. While the war provided many new opportunities, it also disrupted the traditional way of life. THE attraction to live away from the Indian community was offset by the lessening of Tribal ties and the loss of Tribal security. America as a whole was never the same after the war, and more so to the Indian.

Some Indians continue to live and serve their people on the reservations and Indian communities in order to preserve the traditional way of life. Still today, many American Indians make the transition and learn to live successfully in the modern world, and many venture to pass on their experiences, the truths, the pride in serving this country, and to shape the leaders of tomorrow in the Warrior tradition.

It's the Veteran, and the Elders of the community who carry the true knowledge of the past into the future and welcome the rest home. After all, without them, there'd be no home to come home to.



Eric Brewington, Special Guest speaker at the Veterans Day celebration held in Pembroke today, hosted by the Pembroke VFW Post #2843, wrote the following article in honor of all veterans. Brewington is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ted Brewington of Pembroke.

A Sisters Corner: the Newest Business in Pembroke to hold Grand Opening November 15th

Sisters Corner is a new business opening up in town on November 15th, 1999 at 10 a.m. till 6 p.m. at 611 Union Chapel Rd. across from the Robo Tex convenient store. Mrs. Shelby Blanchard Revels and her sister Mrs. Caverlen Revels-Locklear have been away for awhile, after graduating from Pembroke High School in the 60's they both chose to find opportunities outside the state. Caverlen joined the military and Shelby got married and moved to the mountains to work for Crossmore School Inc. as a resident counselor. Both sisters have returned to take care of their mother Miss Ethel O. Revels of Pembroke.

"Our mother raised us with a firm Christian hand and taught us to work hard and love everybody" said Shelby. We were looking for self supporting jobs in the area. We put our heads together and came up with a business plan in a corner therefore calling it Sisters Corner. We are determined to make this business work. This is where our hearts beat clear and strong for our home community. Sisters Corner will be operating through the holidays, there will be gifts for all occasions. Brand name fragrances and lotions, scented candle's, cards, live Christmas tree's. Some of the other aspects of the business is a program called Child Sheild U.S.A. a child protection service. Free gift wrapping will be provided for purchases of \$50 or more. There will be a play area provide for children so there parents can shop at their leisure. Later on in the year a mailbox service, copies, fax machine and UPS service. At the grand opening there will be a registration for gift certificates and door prizes, also stocking stuffers for kids.

"Shelby and Caverlen are strong supporters of Non profit organizations and Churches for discounts and whatever needs they may entail. So come and visit the sisters at Sisters Corner for good deals and great service with that hometown feel.

By Maria Rojas



Shelby Blanchard Revels and her sister Caverlen Revels-Locklear in front of their new business called Sisters Corner located at 611 Union Chapel Rd in Pembroke.



"Hats with Hugs" volunteer Juanita Richburg helps Martha Revels of Pembroke choose a hat from among 80 donated to the Southeastern Cancer Center.

Foundation Volunteers Donate Hats to Local Cancer Patients

When Doris McCormick ran across a story about "Hats with Hugs" in a local newspaper, she knew right away that it was a program needed in her community. As a member of the Southeastern Regional Medical Center Foundation's Board of Trustees, she was familiar with the work of the Southeastern Cancer Center and the patients there, who experience hair loss because of chemotherapy. Now every cancer patient who loses hair during treatment can choose an attractive hat made with tender loving care thanks to McCormick, who enlisted the help of many other women all over Robeson County. These volunteers presented more than 80 hats to the Cancer Center at a reception on October 28. The hats were given to a few patients who attended the vent and will be available for all patients who want one in the future.

"When I brought the idea of Hats with Hugs to the attention of the Foundation, it was warmly received. Everyone I've contacted has been very responsive to it," McCormick said.

Over the past several months, McCormick sought the help of several local church sewing guilds. In Lumberton, women of the First Baptist Church (N. Walnut St.) made and donated hats for the project. Several volunteers from McCormick's hometown of Rowland also participated.

"We had a real interest in this project because a number of our own

are involved in chemotherapy and radiation treatments," said Gracie Davis, who organized craftswomen of the First Baptist Church to make hats. "Cancer has touched so many of us personally that we felt we had to get involved. It was perhaps the least thing we can do. The only praise we would ever want is to know that someone got a hat who didn't have one."

Martha Revels of Pembroke was one of the cancer patients who chose her hat that evening. "I loved all of them. They were adorable," she said. "It was hard to choose which one I liked the best. But I love this one."

Jan Gane of Lumberton made the hat that Revels chose. Gane said that she became involved in the project because of family members who had battled cancer. The Tanner Retail Store in Rutherfordton, NC, donated the fabric used for the sewn hats. Needle Nicks of Florence, SC, discounted the yarn used in many of the crocheted and knitted hats.

Volunteers also made pillows in conjunction with the Hat with Hugs program. The pillows will be given to mastectomy patients in the Reach for Recovery program at the cancer center. Linda Huggins of the First Baptist Church embroidered over 25 pillows for the project.

Anyone who is interested in becoming part of the Hats with Hugs or the Reach for Recovery pillow program should contact Sissy Grantham at the SRMC Foundation, 671-5583.

Dial Conducts Auction for Public Schools

Organizing, publicizing, and making plans for the annual Public Schools of Robeson County auction creates quite a challenge for the auctioneer.

Allen Griffin Dial demonstrated his readiness for the Auction October 16 as he anxiously reviewed procedures, and checked all necessary preparations to begin the sale.

Employees of the Public Schools of Robeson County system worked diligently before the auction organiz-

ing equipment and items to allow the sale to go smoothly.

Desks, computers, cabinets, refrigerators, lawn mowers, and vehicles only served as a small portion of items to sell, customers experienced opportunities to enjoy the convenience that no longer served as updated or standard equipment for the public schools.

The sale in turn allows the profit gained to flow back into the school system to assist children's education.



The Public Schools of Robeson County held its Annual Auction October 16. Dial Auction Company conducted the sale. Left to right: licensed auctioneers W.T. Locklear, Dick Martin and Allen Griffin Dial.

Wild Game Festival to be held at NC Indian Cultural Center Nov. 19

Pembroke - The North Carolina Indian Cultural Center will have its 9th Annual Native American Wild Game festival on November 19, 1999 on the festival grounds across from the Strike at the Wind Amphitheater. The Public is invited to experience life-styles and food from the past and present. Come and hear traditional stories, songs, dance & the beat of the drums. See our live snake display, try your hand at hatchet throwing, demonstrations will be performed on quilting, beautiful designed gourds, pot-

tery by the Catawbas, basket weaving, flute making out of reeds, corn shucking and much more! There will be plenty of Bar-B-Que, Venison hash, collards, sweet potatoes and fry bread. Stop by the traders booth and purchase hand made Native American crafts. Lumbee Elder Earl Carter will

discuss tribal legends and history. Gospel singing will start at 5:30 for an exciting evening under the stars. Admission is free. For more information please call (910) 521-2433.