

Note: Susie and her husband Wally Cain lived at the Heritage Living Center for a year before Wally passed away after a lengthy illness. A popular

resident in our community, Susie has remained to live and work here. The following is Susie's tribute to her mother, Eleanor (Starving Bear) Bigfoot, who made the transition from early reservation poverty in 1898 to life in the modern world.

was born in a wall tent at Lame Deer, Montana in 1940. My mother, Eleanor Starving Bear and my ▲dad, John Tall Whiteman, a policeman in

Ashland, helped raise 8 of us kids, plus relatives and orphans. But dad died young and left mother alone to care for her big family.

The first memory I have of mother – she was sitting on the ground scraping and tanning deer hides. I can still see her wide leather belt with her knife sheath, long dress and a bandanna around her head. She had white flour all over her dress and arms. She used flour to whiten the deerskins and then she made and beaded moccasins. She didn't use store bought thread. Mother could roll sinew as thin as a needle.

Every Saturday morning mother heated water to wash all

of our clothes on her washboard. That meant a lot of jeans and heavy work clothes. During the winter, my niece and I took turns running outside to put the clothes out to dry. They were frozen stiff by the time we got them on the line. In the evening we ran back out to take them down and bring them inside. If they weren't dry, we'd hang them up on ropes across the tent ceiling. By Sunday morning they were ready to

## Remembering My Mother, Eleanor Starving Bear Bigfoot

BY SUSIE CAIN AS TOLD TO RENEE SANSOM FLOOD

iron. Each morning, no matter how cold it was outside, the boys hauled water from the creek.

Mother had very little money to take care of 14 of us, including the adults. My sister had a stroke and mother took her and the children in. The only way she could feed her older kids and at the same time make sure we were safe and educated was to send us to the boarding school at St. Labre Mission. On

Sunday mornings mother opened up 8 suitcases and put them on the mattresses. She ironed and creased pants, shirts and dresses and folded them neatly in each suitcase. Afterwards, we took baths and washed our hair with brown, lye soap to get ready for school.

Sunday afternoon we went to school and we stayed until Friday afternoon. Then we came home for the weekends. Everybody had their chores but I was the youngest girl so I got to stay with mother most of the time. The days were long gone when Indian women had to haul wood and water, but my mother and sisters still carried the little ones in shawls on their backs.

Sometimes dad's father, grandpa Tall Whiteman, told old battle stories to wall-to-wall kids and adults who slept on mattresses on the ground. He was 5years-old when the US 7th Cavalry attacked his camp on the Little Bighorn in 1876. He remembered watching horses gallop back and forth in front of where he was hiding in the bushes. Shots rang out

**Eleanor Starving Bear Bigfoot** 

(continued inside)

#### ELEANOR BIGFOOT (continued)

and screaming women cried out for their children. His main fear was getting run over by the horses.

At night, the kids loved to hear mother joke about when she was young. "When I got married, I was traded for a horse," she'd say. When she was 16-years-old, my dad rode up to her tipi leading 2 horses. Her parents told her that she was going to marry, so she got on the second horse and followed her new husband home. Her parents received the 3rd horse. Many of those traditional Indian marriages worked out pretty good.

All the tipis were gone by the time I was born. Most of the people lived in tents and log cabins. In the middle of our tent sat a red woodstove. After dad died, mother married Dave Bigfoot, a man with 4 children. My step-dad found a "little red wagon," took off the wheels and turned it upside down over a hole in the ground. He cut out a place for a stovepipe and another round hole for wood. Mother cooked our food on top of that wagon without electricity or running water.

In those days we didn't celebrate birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day or Easter. We went barefoot in the summer and wore moccasins in the winter and we took turns getting old shoes and clothing from rummage sales at the Mission. My step-dad worked on area ranches while

mother made and sold moccasins for \$35 a pair. She saved up ration stamps during World War II and for a special treat she bought each of us an apple or an orange. Another treat was plum pudding and fry bread before bed. That was so much fun. We never had butter or milk and I never saw a banana until I was grown.

In September, mother helped our white neighbor ladies, Mrs. Schmaus, Mrs. Eagan and Mrs. Bailey to put up canned food. Every week Helen Schmaus brought us a bucket of fresh eggs. Once in a while, she had her boys come over to give us candy or cookies. She didn't know they stood across the road and threw the candy to us. "Here, you want this?" one of them would yell. The candy always landed in the dirt. Like puppies, we'd run over and grab the candy off the ground and eat it. Their mother finally found out and those boys really got a lickin.' It never happened again.

We had wieners once a month at home but that was all the meat we had until somebody brought in a deer, prairie dog or rabbit. Our family dug Indian turnips in June and gathered tree mushrooms after every rain storm. We ate brown oven bread with flour gravy day after day. That got tiring but it was all we had. In late August we each took a lard bucket with our name on it and went to the creek to gather plums, chokecherries, June berries and buffalo

### A Note From Father Emmett

The impact of the Asian Tsunami was felt around the world. Who would have thought a Tsunami could reach all the way to Ashland, Montana? Yet, do you know what I've discovered once again about the friends of the elders? As large a wave as the Tsunami was, it cannot compare to the wave of compassion and support we have received from you, our dedicated partners. In the most difficult times I can count on your help.

I must tell you that the month of January was quite alarming because the mail slowed to a trickle. We fell behind in paying bills and I wasn't sure when the tide might turn. After sharing our predicament with you, I was soon humbled to the core by the effort you made in helping us catch up.

Do you ever catch yourself worrying only to discover the Lord answering your prayers in such a dramatic way you are left almost breathless? He reminds us once more who is in charge. You make it possible for us to carry out His beatitudes

as we care for elders who lived in poverty, hungry, forgotten and lonely. Thank you.

Don't ever doubt or forget that Soaring Eagle succeeds because of our combined efforts. Somehow, (we know how), we all come together for this important purpose. If you ever have the opportunity to visit us and feel the energy and compassion that fills the atmosphere of the Heritage Living Center, you'll know what I'm talking about. It's a miraculous place, provided by people like you who have agreed to be part

of God's miracle.

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a conduit of His mercy. I thank God for you each day.

Your grateful beggar friend,

Tather Currett Haffwaren Fr. Emmett Hoffmann berries. Nobody could stay home. Mother made pemmican and dried the fruit for winter use. Nothing was wasted. When we had a deer, she dried meat on a pole hung from the tent ceiling. She also dried beef lungs. The only time we got horse meat was at the rodeos in white towns bordering the reservation. During a rodeo the Indians waited in back for an injured horse. They'd give us the meat to butcher and eat.

During the old days mother made our underwear and slips out of "Rex Flour" sacks. One time I was swinging and my dress caught on the swing seat. When I jumped off, the dress went way up over my head. My friends saw my panties! From then on my

Mother never complained

or said that she was tired

and I never saw her cry

except at night when she

thought we were asleep.

girlfriends, and especially the boys, called out, "Hey Rex! Where are you going?" They called me "Rex" until 8th grade.

Mother never complained or said that she was tired and I never saw her cry except at night when she thought we

were asleep. I could hear her from my bed. She prayed to "Maheo" (God). "Please watch over my kids and grandchildren. Bless our home. Give us more food. Have pity on us!"

She didn't have to raise her voice or hit us because we obeyed her. She gave us "the look" when we were bad. It stopped us in our tracks. She was a quiet woman but she loved to laugh. At night in the dark we all laughed at her jokes. I felt warm, safe and loved as I watched her bead in the dim light of the kerosene lamp. She was always there to hug and care for us, especially if one of us got sick. We didn't have a doctor on the reservation in the old days so she doctored us with Indian medicine made from plant roots, seeds, leaves and bark. Back in those days Indians died from malnutrition and tuberculosis.

When I was 16-years-old, mom had a birthday party for me. My present was a glass plate. My very own glass plate! That was really something special for me. All my life we'd used old enamel plates and cups. Mother invited a blind man, Willis Red Eagle, to pray at the dinner. As he came into our tent, he stepped right on my plate and broke it! I cried and he felt so bad he gave me a coin. My very first birthday present and I didn't have it one hour!

My older brother Clarence went to war in Korea but before he left, he told mother, "I want you to take care of my kids. I won't come back from the war." He wasn't over there very long before we got a telegram from President Truman saying that Clarence had died fighting in October, 1951. We

were all proud that he fought bravely and died a warrior, but mother stayed in bed for days with a terrible headache. She cried alone at night but she never openly grieved in front of us.

In the 1950s our white neighbors had it really good, but it was still tough for Indians. It wasn't until the '60s that living conditions improved on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Our mother admired the modern ways of living. It didn't take her long before she sold all her land and bought a '49 Chevy Coupe. She made my brother drive it. Then she moved into one of the HUD houses built for the elderly. She was thrilled to have linoleum floors, electricity, running water and a bathtub! The house

was heated by electricity and at first, she didn't know how to turn on a stove or to turn up the heat in the house. The next thing she did was to buy a television set, but it came with strict rules. Every evening at 9 p.m. we'd hear: "Turn off the

TV. You'll run up my electricity bill." Electricity cost her \$3.50 a month.

I miss playing cards with my mother and listening to her laugh. She had all her teeth worn down to the gums, but she could still pop her Wrigley's Spearmint! I was the only one of her children to graduate from High School and she was proud of me. Since I was the youngest, I stayed at home when all the others were grown. Then it was my turn to do the housework and laundry. I didn't mind because mother had been so good to all of us. She said she wanted me to have nice things like a radio, and a phonograph with records. The beading finally left her blind the last ten years of her life. She was 81-years-old when she died in 1979. We obeyed her to the end. She'd worked for so long, she deserved to have her way.

When I think back about my mother's hard work; all the bedding, diapers and heavy work clothes she washed, the meals she cooked, and the endless ironing and beadwork, I don't know how we went without or how she ever put up with all the kids. I guess it was her faith and her will to survive. When she was a girl she attended school at the Mission where the nuns taught her how to cook, clean and take care of a family. She soon used what she had learned. Nobody fought or used harsh words in our home. We were poor in money but rich in love. I still have my mother's washboard to remind me of her. Mother would have loved the Heritage Living Center.

#### **Soaring Eagle Societies**

Soaring Eagle has established societies to give proper recognition for outstanding gifts that have been given for the construction of the Heritage Living Center. Each society shows the level of donors and our gratitude for their generosity.

Spirit Coming Home Society \$10,000 to \$24,999 Carolyn Damon

> Journey of Life Society \$5,000 to \$9,999

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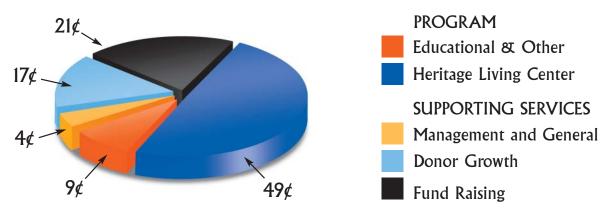
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Donors who contributed \$100 or more between January 1, 2005 and February 28, 2005 were enrolled in the Dawn of Hope Society. They received a beautiful personalized certificate suitable for framing. **Thank you for your generous and caring gifts.** 

## Soaring Eagle Fund Raising Operation

Where the dollar was spent for the year ended June 30, 2004



## Sixteen tons and what do you get...?

by Renee Sansom Flood

One day in mid-June 1969, two young men walked into a box factory in Portland, Oregon. The first was Dean Rondeau, a clean cut Northern Cheyenne Indian from Lame Deer, Montana and the other was a long-haired, bearded, tie-dyed hippie. They were co-workers but they had nothing else in common.

But after awhile, Dean found that his hippie co-worker was tolerant of everyone and lacked the prejudice he had experienced all of his life. He saw that hippies were good-hearted people who liked everybody. Despite what others thought, they held jobs as musicians, jewelry makers, artists, mechanics and gardeners.

It wasn't long before his friend invited him home for dinner. This man's "pad," as he called it, turned out to be a large house. When Dean entered the front door he encountered the strong smell of patchouli incense and pot. He felt strange passing through glittering bead curtains and he felt stranger still when he entered his friend's world of psychedelic orange and yellow murals, candles, moon-flutes and drums.

Dean squinted in the black-light at the people sitting around smoking pot. Laughter and jokes welcomed the slightly skeptical Cheyenne to their carefree way of life. "I never once saw them mad,"

Dean recalls, "but they were high most of the time." This was really something for a naive young Indian who had grown up in a dusty, little reservation town.

Dean Rondeau was born in Lame Deer,

Montana on January 1941. During World War II and until he graduated from grade school, he lived with relatives. He attended Busby School, which at that time was a government institution where children worked half a day and went to school the other half. For children who liked animals and the outdoors, it was a good opportunity to learn how to raise horses, cattle and chickens, to take care of machinery and to grow and harvest vegetables for the school and community.

Children also learned practical living skills like cooking. The school day began from 7 to 9 a.m. when students fed, watered and groomed ani-

mals and cleaned barns. From 9 until noon they attended regular school classes. After lunch they worked cattle, mended fences, plowed, planted and put up hay. Dean learned to enjoy the challenge of physical work. He was active in sports but the 10th grade was his last. By the time he was 16-years-old, Dean was on his own. "I had to support myself," he remembers, "so I got a farm job and quit school."

Living alone and working hard jobs, Dean supported himself until 1965, when he married and left for Colorado. He spent one year in Denver working to put his wife through Rocky Mountain College. Always athletic and fast on his feet, Dean took advantage of every opportunity to join local Indian basketball teams.

After graduation, Dean's wife got a job in Portland, Oregon, the famed "City of Roses," where rains created lush parks and flower gardens. They moved to Portland and that's where he found himself working with hippies.

But Dean was the only one in his family who found hippies interesting. His wife didn't approve of Dean's co-workers. "Don't bring your friends home!" she warned. Dean and his wife had raised his niece, Billie Jean Curley, since she was 3-years-old. He wanted what was best for the child so he took the warning seriously and didn't bring his new friends home. Not long afterward, Dean began work as a Portland police officer and saw much less of his bell-bottomed friends.

In March of 1980, he was on his way to work when he noticed steam rising from Mt. St. Helens, 45 miles away. People in Oregon and Washington felt uneasy about the series of small explosions and bursts of

ash, but months passed without anything more serious than puffs of smoke.

Mount St Helens was one of the most beautiful mountains in the American Northwest but local Indian tribes were reluctant to approach the volcano, despite the abundance of game in the area. Their oral tradition told of long ago devastation caused by "Fire Mountain." Unfortunately, nobody had time to pay attention toIndian wisdom.

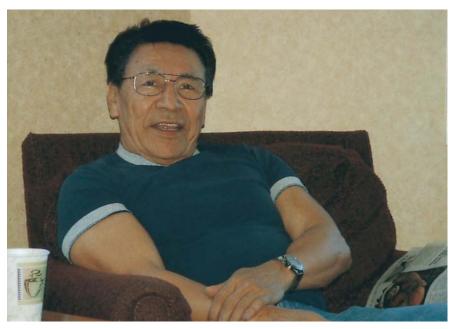
Two months later, on a quiet Sunday morning, May 18, 1980, Dean was at home when he got a call from his wife. "St. Helens just blew up!" she

His wife didn't approve of Dean's co-workers. "Don't bring your friends home!"

told him. "Go and look!" Dean ran outside and saw huge mushroom clouds and ash billowing out of the volcano, accompanied by a fantastic electrical storm. After plenty of prior warning, Mount St. Helens had erupted in a supersonic blast of rock, ash and hot gas. The temperature within the deadly cloud reached 500 degrees F. and every living thing within 10 miles north of the volcano was destroyed.

The apocalyptic eruption released an estimated ten megatons of energy, an explosion thousands of times stronger than the Hiroshima bomb. Thousands of deer, elk, bear, and small animals perished – in addition to 57 humans.

Most people in Portland thought the worst



Dean Rondeau finds new hope for the future at The Heritage Living Center.

was over but Dean was not so sure. He had been watching the wind direction. Sure enough, the first blast of ash had gone in an easterly direction, dumping ash as far away as Montana and Minnesota, but then, as Dean had expected, it turned and came over Portland, leaving a gray blanket of messy ash.

Due to Portland's proximity to Mount St. Helens, some people packed up and moved away from Oregon and Washington. Dean liked Oregon but the stress of the times had taken its toll on his marriage. After he and his wife divorced in 1982, Dean and Billie Jean moved back to Montana where he found a bleak job market on the reservation.

After a year, Billie Jean stayed with relatives in Montana and Dean moved to Idaho where he quickly found work. Boise was a clean city with mountains all around. Best of all, there was plenty of work for a strong man. For 17 years Dean never lacked for a job, but heavy lifting finally took its toll. One day he was loading 60 pound bags of cement when he lifted a bag the wrong way. Instantly, his lower back went out. Despite excruciating pain, he somehow got home and went to bed. When he tried to get up to go to the hospital, he couldn't even get out of bed, let alone tie his shoes. "It took me an hour to get to the phone," he recalls.

Emergency room and medical bills quickly piled up and Dean couldn't work. He knew if he was going to get help, he had to go back to Lame Deer for treatment through the Indian Health Service. He went home and began a series of med-

ical tests. The prognosis shocked Dean and it changed his life forever. Doctors told him he could never lift again. This was bad news for anyone, but especially for a man who had no fear of hard work. "I was strong. I always prided myself in that," Dean remembers.

Doctors told him that he would eventually need surgery. Dean was forced into retirement with no income. He had to exercise to strengthen his back muscles but he knew that it was only a matter of time until he might have to go under the knife, and there was no telling the outcome.

In 2002, Dean heard about the Heritage Living Center, but he was skeptical about another change in lifestyle. He sure didn't

want to move into a nursing home, so he came up to the Center for a visit. Thank goodness it was not a nursing home! He was surprised at how nice it was and how many Cheyenne people worked there. He picked an apartment on the second floor with a great view of the pine-covered hills.

Today, from his balcony, Dean can look across the valley where Lakota warrior Crazy Horse camped with his Cheyenne relatives in the years before the Battle of the Little Bighorn. It's peaceful to wake up in the morning and watch the deer grazing on the hills. Dean's disability has been hard to accept but it's easier now that he knows his limitations. In the future, if he has to have surgery, he'll be ready.

Sixteen tons and what do you get? Another day older and a bad back!

## Soaring Eagle Annuities-Earn yourself a tidy sum as you give.

I'm impressed by the creative ways our donor friends come up with ideas on how they want to participate in our Soaring Eagle Charitable Gift Annuity program. I like to call Howard our "tidy annuitant!" Why, you ask? Because Howard likes to work with round numbers and I always enjoy hearing his latest ideas.

Howard called last November asking how much he should give if he wanted to receive \$200 per month in annuity payments from Soaring Eagle, plus a significant tax deduction on the lump sum of the total gift annuity.

I calculated, based on his age and annuity rate, and found that if he gave \$30,379, he could receive a tidy \$200 every month from Soaring Eagle for life, plus a charitable deduction on his taxes for 2004 in the amount of \$11,028.

Howard said, "Let's go for it!"

Howard owns a business that is enjoying tremendous profits lately. That's great news for Howard until he considers the tax burden it causes him. A Soaring Eagle Charitable Gift Annuity helps to solve his tax problem while at the same time it provides a future gift to Soaring Eagle. His gift annuity goes into a separate account that isn't touched for any of the day-to-day needs of Soaring Eagle. That fund is growing for the future benefit of the Heritage Living Center after a donor passes away.

Howard is 75-years-young and has no intention of retiring any time soon. He now has three annuities with Soaring Eagle and says he'll be calling me again in November to figure out another "tidy sum." We are deeply grateful to all of our donor friends who give so generously in a variety of ways. In Howard's case, it's always tidy, but in whatever way you give to the elders, please know how very grateful we are.

If you want to consider a Soaring Eagle Gift Annuity, Please fill out the provided form and mail it to Mary Jo Fox at Soaring Eagle. Just tell her the annuity amount you are considering and the birthdate (up to two annuitants are allowed for each annuity). She will send you a proposal with no obligation. Take a look! See what a Soaring Eagle Gift Annuity can do for you.

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\$30,000	Contract Amount	\$30,000
7.9%	Rate of Return	3.81%
\$1,535/yr	Tax Free Income	\$0
\$834/yr	Taxable Income	\$1,143/yr
\$2,370/yr	Gross Annual Income	\$1,143/yr
\$3,374	Income Tax Savings (Yr. 1)	\$0

\*Based on a 75 year-old individual in a 27% Federal tax bracket, making a \$30,000 investment. Soaring Eagle Annuity contracts are irrevocable, resulting in the large contribution deduction. The Certificate of Deposit is a 2-year rate.



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#### Your Gift Lives On

### Please use one of the following sample forms of bequest:

A. (Whatever is left after other bequests have been granted) "All the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate, I bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the Laws of the State of Montana, located at Billings, Montana."

B. "I give, devise, and bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the Laws of the State of Montana, located at Billings, Montana, \_\_\_\_\_\_% of my estate."

C. "I give, devise, and bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the Laws of the State of Montana, located at Billings, Montana, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_."

D. "I give, devise, and bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the Laws of the State of Montana, located at 745 Indian Trail, P.O. Drawer 879 in Billings, Montana, 59103, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the Wall of Living Memories Fund, to care for Cheyenne elders, the principal of which shall remain in perpetuity."

These are sample forms only. Consult your attorney when preparing any legal document.

YES, I'm interested in a Soaring Eagle charitable gift annuity. The better rate of return, tax deduction and eventual charitable contribution to Soaring Eagle sounds like a WIN WIN WIN opportunity.

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(up to 2 names/birthdates allowed per annuity.)		

This is a non-binding proposal. Upon receipt of actual payment for an annuity, a formal contract will be mailed. For more information call Mary Jo at (406) 256-8500.







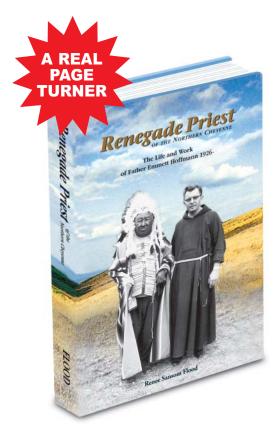
In November, 2003, Father Emmett celebrated his 50th Jubilee year in the priesthood. Following the dinner and reception, attended by 200 friends, Father Emmett signed copies of his autobiography, Renegade Priest of the Northem Cheyenne. After the festivities, Chiefs Wayne Headswift, Clarence "Bisco" Spotted Wolf and Herb Bear Chum led a Gourd Dance in the Heritage Living Center Lobby.

On June 29, 2004, Father Emmett united Susie and Wally Cain in Holy Matrimony in the Heritage Living Center Chapel. Kimmie Olson, the Montessori School Director, looks on. After the ceremony the couple celebrated at a reception held in the dining room. Residents, staff, family and friends all agreed that it was a wonderful day.

# Renegade Priest of the Northern Cheyenne

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