



# GREETINGS FROM MIKE

Winter 2017

Our spirits are soaring as winter is almost over! At least we think it is. An early March storm is bearing down on much of Montana as I write this article. We pray it is the last one of the year. We hope this edition of "Signals" finds you well and that spring is just around the corner for you to enjoy and warm up along with us.

I've heard from friends in the south and they tell me spring came early this year with azaleas, tulip poplars and redbuds blooming. Parts of the upper Midwest went without snow on the ground for nearly two months. We hope those friends don't face a drought later this spring and summer. Thinking of drought, our friends in California received so much rain and snow that news accounts report they are recovering from a decade long drought. Thank God for the blessing of abundant moisture.

In February, elders, staff and townsfolk gathered at Heritage Living Center to remember Father Emmett Hoffmann's passing in 2013. It has been four years since Father left us,

but his spirit is alive and well in the hearts of us at the Center. The gathering was more a celebration



Elders gathered in the Heritage Living Center to remember and celebrate Father Emmett Hoffmann's life and works.

rather than sorrowful occasion.

We gathered at Fr. Emmett's gravesite in Eagle Ridge Park behind the Center. It was a sunny day, but very cold as we laid a wreath containing the Cheyenne colors of red, yellow, white and black surrounding a cross laced with small white flowers. A solitary drummer rhythmically tapped his high-pitched hand drum and led us in a traditional song. Prayers were spoken and hugs shared.

Back inside the warmth of the Center, residents and guests filled the lobby to participate in a time of sharing memories. Susie Tall Whiteman Cain, a long-time friend of Fr. Emmett, remembered all that he did from when she was a little girl to today as an elder living at the Center. Friend after friend spoke of their experiences and love for the Beggar Priest who reached out to benefactors across the country to help fight the poverty of the Northern Cheyenne people, educate children and care for elders.

After the time of sharing, Tony

Three Fingers and Johanna Redneck performed a cleansing ceremony as elders and visitors stepped toward the middle of the lobby. Mr. Three Fingers directed cleansing cedar smoke touching their feet, hands and forehead to symbolically cover each person from head to toe. At the same time Ms. Redneck passed black and white prayer cloths brushing and “wiping” the chest, shoulders, back and head of each person as she prayed. The prayer cloths collect ill feelings, mourning and bad spirit. The cloths are given a hard snap towards the ground to shake the “bad” away. Silence filled the room as recipients stepped forward, some with canes and walkers, others in wheelchairs to receive the cleansing.

Drummers gathered in the center of the lobby and sang memorial and honor songs. Many of the elderly women placed shawls over their shoulders and gently rocked from one foot to the other in a Gourd Dance. Some of the women were helped to stand with their walkers so that they could participate in the dance. Others did not have shawls, so the shawls were shared or passed around so each elder could be part of the Gourd Dance.

Following the Gourd Dance, a traditional give away was conducted with elders and staff receiving baskets of household items and small packets of food. Some received blankets as expressions of thanks. Then everyone moved to the dining room for a traditional meal of stew, fry bread and chokecherry pudding. It was a

wonderful and meaningful day to remember Father Emmett and bring people together in good spirit.

Fr. Emmett would have been so pleased to be at the Center the evening of March 7. The dining room was filled with residents enjoying a homecooked meal. It was also resident, Delpha Harris’s birthday and she had a few guests with her. I thought I would catch her off guard and dared to ask if it was her 39th birthday and without missing a beat, Delpha replied, “No, that was last year!” We all had a good laugh.

Your gifts to Soaring Eagle make wholesome meals and special occasions possible for the elders. Our care continues year-round during good and tough times.

I ask you to help us through this difficult time as our donations are down from last year. Friends write to me about the high cost of their utilities, medical bills and other expenses, yet usually a donation is tucked inside their letters. I am grateful for each gift and I know some donors sacrifice and do without to help us continue the care given to the elders. You would honor Father’s memory if you could help us this month by sending a thoughtful donation in the gold envelope with this newsletter.

Inside you will find an interesting story about Indian names. Many of our donors write to me asking about the elders’ last names. Most Indian names are different than yours and mine and there is an interesting and sometimes complex history to how our native

friends received their names. I think you will enjoy learning about Richard Tallbull’s name. In future newsletters, we plan to write about other elders’ names.

Also, in this newsletter is a wonderful story about one of our newest residents, Effie Beartrack and the history of her family from the village of Birney on the southern tip of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Father Emmett’s good friend, John Warner, worked for Father many years ago and again for Soaring Eagle. He continues to help us with unique photos and perspectives on the elders and our work with them. When John met Effie, he told her about meeting her father when he first moved to Montana from Indiana. He showed her some old photos he had taken and from that point on there was a bond of friendship.

New elders like Effie have moved to the Heritage Living Center in recent weeks. We are glad to shelter and care for them. If not for your friendship and generous support, their options would be extremely limited in our remote, little town. Thank you for making the Heritage Living Center - the Miracle on the Hill - a wonderful home for the Cheyenne elders.

With a grateful heart,

  
Mike Skaggs

# NORTHERN CHEYENNE NAMES AND HISTORY



Left: Relaxing in HLC’s common room, Richard Tallbull provides insight on many topics.

Whenever we have a question about something we can always count on Richard Tallbull to patiently explain things for us. We asked him how it seems everyone on the reservation is related.

“A long time ago we had Indian names. (For example) I would be Tall Bull and my brother was White Wolf. Then the census and BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) came along and we had to do things their way. So our kids used our full names as their last names and we had to give

them a first name. My kid might be Lucas Tall Bull and my brother’s kid would be Jimmy White Wolf. Here we are, two brothers, and our kids have different last names.”

Richard told a story about one man trying to convey his name - Bull Over Hill - to the Census taker, who enrolled him as Oliver Hill. He also talked about how Morning Star, a Cheyenne Chief, was also called Dull Knife - a nickname he was given after his brother-in-law took him hunting and couldn’t get



Above: Morning Star (Dull Knife), seated, photographed with fellow Northern Cheyenne leader, Little Coyote (Little Wolf).

Their Northern Cheyenne names are: **Vóóhéhéve** (Morning Star) and **Ó’kôhómôxháahketa** (Little Coyote)

over how unsharpened his knife was when it was time to butcher the deer they killed. “That’s what he went by from then on.” History books use Dull Knife more than Morning Star in describing the famous chief.

# GROWING UP IN BIRNEY



By John Warner

When Effie Fighting Bear was a young girl in the 1950s her father Elmer came home one day driving a car. It was the first car for the Fighting Bears and perhaps the first in the Birney village. "Boy were we proud of that car," says Effie. She laughs now because she remembers the car had to be hand-cranked to start it. She doesn't remember much else about the actual car, but says it certainly changed their life. What kind of car was it? "I don't know, all I remember is that crank!" she says. Crank starters in American cars were replaced with electric

starters around 1920, so it is likely Elmer came home that day driving a 40-year-old Ford Model-T.

Growing up in Birney on the Northern Cheyenne reservation in the 1950s was rural living and then some. The little village was miles from nowhere - 20 miles from Lame Deer, the reservation's main town. Lame Deer was also miles from nowhere. In the 1950s and '60s the nearest paved road was some 60 miles away. The reservation was all you knew.

Living along the Tongue River in Birney with her five brothers and sisters

**Left:** While relaxing in HLC's living room, Effie Fighting Bear reminisces over childhood memories of her family and growing up in Birney, MT.

was a childhood of sun-bleached summers and frozen winters. During the summer Effie recalls riding with her dad a few miles to the nearby tiny town of "White Birney", which is what it was called by Indians. It is officially named Birney, too, and where the post office was, along with the closest store. On the way home Elmer would pull the horse and buggy (and later the car) into the shade by the Tongue River and let the kids out to jump off the bridge that crossed onto the reservation and swim to cool off. But they could always just walk from home to river to swim and play with the other "Indian Birney" kids when they wanted to, and often that's what they did.

Winters were spent surviving. Early in the morning the kids would huddle together in the wagon or car and Elmer would drive out to the spot where a school bus would pick them up. Elmer would be waiting there when the bus returned in the afternoon.

Having a car meant going to Lame Deer was no longer a two-day trip by horse and buggy anymore. It was an exciting evening when Elmer would announce they were going to town the next day. The family would visit as many friends as they could before bouncing home in the evening on the



gravel road back to Birney.

I met Elmer Fighting Bear in 1989. I was a staff photographer at "The Indianapolis Star" and wanted to see the West. After seeing the Badlands and Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, then Devil's Tower in Wyoming, I drove across Highway 212 into eastern Montana - destined for the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. I had

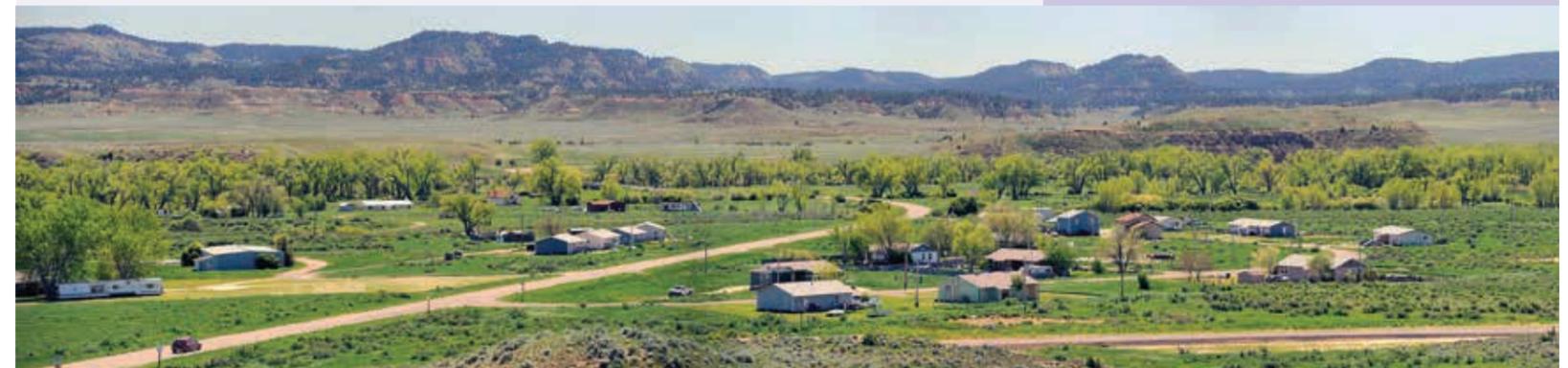
been on Father Emmett's mailing list for a few years and was fascinated by the stories he told. I wanted to meet him, and see "The Rez" in person. Two years later I would leave The Star to collaborate with Father Emmett documenting the life and times of the Northern Cheyenne in pictures.

I don't remember how and why, but on this first trip West I wound

**Left:** Effie's father, Elmer Fighting Bear outside his sweat lodge, summer of 1989. "That's dad. He always had a feather in his cowboy hat, dark glasses and a big ol' smile!"

up in Birney, Montana, miles from nowhere, sitting outside in the sun with Elmer Fighting Bear as he waited for a pile of big rocks in a fire to turn red so he could put them inside his sweat lodge. I don't know how or why I wound up inside the sweat lodge with him either, shocked by intense heat, blindly shooting pictures in the dark. I now understand blasting a flash inside the sweat lodge was ridiculous, but Elmer tolerated the curious newcomer and was pleased when I came back in for the second round without the camera. I drove away later knowing I'd met the real thing - a spiritual Cheyenne elder - and even had the privilege to sweat

**Below:** Birney hasn't grown much since Effie's childhood - it's still a small village on the banks of the Tongue River in the southeast corner of the reservation.



with him. It was the start of my own journey of many years living on the reservation. A few weeks ago, after so much time had passed, I was showing those pictures to Effie.

“That’s dad. He always had a feather in his cowboy hat, dark glasses and big ol’ smile!”

Elmer would later become the tribe’s Keeper of the Sacred Hat. The Sacred Hat bundle sits inside a tipi located near the Keeper’s home. There is no higher honor than to be Hat Keeper. It becomes a family affair - guarding the tipi - making sure it stays strong in storms, always under respectful watch. Whenever Elmer had to leave it was up to Effie, her

[continued below flap ▼](#)

**Right:** Effie’s official HLC portrait.

were a huge deal back then. In the 1960s they got indoor plumbing and a faucet installed outside the house with a hose attached. “Quit playing with the water! And put that hose away!” is the first thing Effie remembers when asked what it was like not to ever again have to haul water from the river, or use the outhouse in the winter.

“We were poor but we made it work,” said Effie. “We picked berries, made dry meat, baked bread...had fried potatoes and gravy, biscuits, bacon. We had good times. Nobody ever bothered us, hardly ever saw anybody drunk...it was free of alcohol around here. I never saw that.”



mom Mabel, and the rest of the kids to watch over the sacred hat bundle. There was coffee on 24/7 for visitors.

For entertainment they had a radio. “Sixteen Tons! I remember my mom loved that song!” said Effie. Gene Autry, Hank Williams...the memories around the radio were coming back. Later on they got a black and white television and - with tin foil added to the antenna - they could pick up a station. Little Orphan Annie was Effie’s favorite show, and they all loved Hee Haw.

Things we take for granted today

One of the things she remembers her mother telling her was to learn to bead. “You have to learn to survive,” she told Effie. “I thought, ‘What is she saying? Is she trying to kick us out of the house? I didn’t understand.’” Years later when Effie was able to sell



beadwork for money she needed, she finally understood - it was about the only thing a woman could do to make extra money in those days. “So this is what she was trying to tell me,” she said.

Effie, now 74, and her husband Paul recently moved into the HLC. They met in Oklahoma years after Effie had moved away from Birney. But that’s another story.

**Left:** Effie and her husband, Paul, enjoying a light-hearted moment with Mike Skaggs in their HLC apartment.

## CELEBRATING VETERANS DAY



Every November 11th the flag over HLC is replaced with a new one as we honor our veterans. The retired flag is ceremoniously given to one of our resident veterans. **Right:** Veterans and active service men and women fold the retired flag, and then presented it to HLC resident and veteran Jake Jacobson, **above.**



DETACH, MOISTEN GLUE STRIP AND SEAL

# FATHER EMMETT MEMORIAL



**Right:** Drummers sing memorial and honor songs.

**Far Right:** HLC Resident, Edna Seminole, receives cleansing of bad spirits in a traditional ceremony.

**Below:** Elder women with shawls Gourd Dance.



# GIVING APPRECIATED STOCK MAY BE JUST FOR YOU

Resident Attendant, George Archambault, cleans the dining room during the night shift.



with some of their stock.

If you are considering a charitable contribution, maybe one of significance or extraordinary, then it is in your best interest to seek out the most effective ways in which your money and assets can work for you and benefit others. Gifting appreciated stock may be an effective way to make that meaningful donation and enjoy significant tax savings.

### Benefits of giving appreciated stock include:

1. Knowing your property is invested in a cause important and dear to you. Soaring Eagle would be honored for you to consider us as one of those causes.

2. Capital gains taxes on the stock are avoided.

3. You will be eligible to enjoy a charitable deduction on your federal, and in some cases, state income tax for the full fair-market value of the stock at the time of the gift.

Investors who sell appreciated stock held one year or longer owe taxes on the capital gains. If the investor donated the proceeds from the sale he or she could receive a charitable donation, but the deduction might not offset the capital gain from the stock sale. The investor might be better served donating the appreciated stock, pay no taxes on the gain and

Soaring Eagle's friends and benefactors give in many different ways. The vast majority of donors give by writing checks. It is easy, it's immediate and we put your gift to work right away caring for the Cheyenne elders at Heritage Living Center. Each check we receive is meaningful and given with love for the Cheyenne elders.

For each donation, we are very grateful. Each gift is put to good use making quality assisted-living care available in our isolated southeastern Montana location.

In addition to cash, some friends across America have other property that could be gifted too. So, this article

may not be for everyone, but if you own stocks, you may want to read on and consider a tax wise way to give to Soaring Eagle.

The stock market has reached record levels in value. Investors are looking at their portfolios and considering what to do with, in some cases, their tremendous gains. Stock owners may have purchased shares in great companies many years ago with a "buy and hold" strategy. Through the ups and downs of the markets, that strategy has served those investors well. But, now with values at highs not seen before, some charitably inclined donors are rethinking their strategies and considering what to do

receive the tax deduction for the full value of the shares.

Your gift of appreciated stock will be fully deductible up to 30% of your adjusted gross income. Some high income donors may be subject to a partial reduction over itemized deductions. Any excess of the 30% limit can be carried forward and deducted over the next five years.

Here is an example. John and Mary Smith want to give Soaring Eagle \$10,000 to assist with the Cheyenne elders' care. Many years ago they purchased stock in a company for \$2,000 and years later the stock is now worth \$10,000. They are considering the three options below.

By donating the appreciated

securities, Mr. and Mrs. Smith made a \$10,000 donation to Soaring Eagle at a net cost of \$5,300. In turn, Soaring Eagle can sell the stock and receive \$10,000 to spend on elder care.

There are other giving strategies that can be used with gifts of stock like:

- Giving a security while "keeping" it
- Balancing capital gain through gifts
- Giving securities that have gone down in value

In addition, a Soaring Eagle Charitable Gift Annuity can be funded with a gift of appreciated stock. See our display on gift annuities in this

newsletter for more information.

If you own stock that is highly appreciated and you've been thinking about how to handle the potential gain and taxes owed if you sold it, then giving some of your stock to Soaring Eagle might be a good solution. By doing so you could preserve your cash for other important uses and reduce your potential tax liability on the appreciated stock. We recommend you seek the advice of your financial and tax advisor before making a gift of appreciated stock. We would be happy to visit with you and your advisors as you plan a gift and provide information on how to make a gift of stock to Soaring Eagle.

For more information, please call or write for our free booklet "Giving Securities". To learn more, please contact Mike Skaggs, CEO, Soaring Eagle, P.O. Box 879, Billings, Montana 59103, or call 406-256-8500.

*The information in this newsletter is presented to Soaring Eagle's donors and friends to provide general information and encourage charitable giving. Soaring Eagle is a public charity incorporated in the state of Montana and does not engage in rendering legal, tax, financial, or any other professional advice. Consult your own professional advisors as it pertains to your individual situation. Consult an attorney if your plans require the creation of or revision of a will or other legal document. Tax deductions vary based on numerous factors including personal financial circumstances, tax codes, and applicable federal discount rates, which can change each month. Charitable gift annuities may not be available in all states.*

## John and Mary Smith Donation Decision

	Donate appreciated securities outright	Donate \$10,000 cash	Sell securities & donate cash
<b>Charitable deduction</b>	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
<b>Ordinary income tax savings (assume 35% rate)</b>	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500
<b>Capital gains tax paid (assumes 15% tax rate on \$8,000 gain)</b>	\$1,200 saved	none	\$1,200 paid
<b>Net tax savings</b>	<b>\$4,700</b>	<b>\$3,500</b>	<b>\$2,300</b>

## Soaring Eagle Annuity Rates

One-Life Annuity

Age	% Rate	Age	% Rate
65	4.7	78	6.4
66	4.8	79	6.6
67	4.8	80	6.8
68	4.9	81	7.0
69	5.0	82	7.2
70	5.1	83	7.4
71	5.3	84	7.6
72	5.4	85	7.8
73	5.5	86	8.0
74	5.7	87	8.2
75	5.8	88	8.4
76	6.0	89	8.7
77	6.2	90+	9.0

Lower two-life rates are available. Please contact us for information.

*"I learned that I could receive a good return with a gift annuity. I asked Soaring Eagle to send me information illustrating the benefits of a gift annuity. It was free and there was no obligation. It was straight forward and simple to complete, so I sent \$10,000 for a 6.2% annuity. Now, I can count on my payments for the rest of my life and help care for Cheyenne elders at the Heritage Living Center. I received a tax deduction when I set up my annuity. Best of all, most of each payment is tax-free."*

**I RECEIVE HIGH FIXED PAYMENTS FROM MY SOARING EAGLE GIFT ANNUITY!**

To learn more about the benefits of a Soaring Eagle gift annuity, please use the coupon in this newsletter or call Mike Skaggs at 406-256-8500, Soaring Eagle, PO Box 879, Billings, MT 59103.



## YOUR WILL KEEPS ON GIVING

Please use one of the following sample forms of bequest when preparing your Will:

- Giving a Specific Amount – "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 \$\_\_\_\_\_."
- Giving a Specific Property - "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, (identify specific property, example: 500 shares of XYZ stock)."
- Giving a Percentage – "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."
- Giving the Residue - "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."
- Giving a Contingent Bequest – "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 my bequest to (name of intended recipient) should he/she not be living or be able to accept my bequest."

**The above are sample forms only. Consult your attorney when preparing any legal document.**

To learn more about giving to Soaring Eagle through your will, request our free booklet "Giving Through Your Will" by writing or calling: Soaring Eagle, PO Box 879, Billings, MT 59103 406-256-8500.

Note: In this newsletter, you learned about a new resident, Effie Beartrack, Frank Walks Last's granddaughter. Here is an excerpt from a letter Father Emmett wrote in 2007 to his friends and benefactors about Frank Walks Last and the needs of elders.

*When a new resident moves into the Heritage Living Center I see the beginning of a miracle in the making. Most are underweight with a tired weary look reflecting the worries, sufferings and insecurity that has become part of their lives as the years went by. Within weeks and most often within days their worried looks disappear, they begin to enjoy healthy meals and soon the complexion of their faces takes on a new tone.*

*I never tire of telling you about the "old chiefs" who were keenly aware of what was happening to the Cheyenne elders in their day. As the people grew older the hardships of life were more than they could handle, trying to survive the bitter cold of winter, intense heat of summer, eking out a life going without enough food, fighting tuberculosis and other contagious diseases.*



## Reminisce with Father Emmett

Ten Years Ago . . . . .

*Many died premature deaths because of neglect, they feared seeking medical help less they be sent to a far away nursing home where they died lonely deaths because no one could understand their needs or their Cheyenne language.*

*Frank Walks Last, an elder who has passed away (or as the Cheyenne say moved onto the next camp) years ago described the suffering and loneliness of an elder:*

*"Us older people – we're kind of shoved aside. When you get sick you are by yourself in this world. Nobody around to help you. You feel all by yourself. You*

*look around and there's nobody to help you. That's what it feels like to get old these days.*

*When you can be around other people, you hear them laugh and it kind of brings you out of it. You see people enjoying themselves and you want to throw in with them and be happy, too. You feel better when there are people around. You know there's somebody who will help you."*

*With your generous help, it was a challenge to build the Heritage Living Center. Now it is even a bigger challenge to provide for the needs and care of the Cheyenne elders. In each letter I write, it is difficult to find new words to tell you how much we need your help to care for the elders.*

*Without your continued help all this would be impossible. It is an understatement when I say that I am grateful for each gift you send. My gratitude for your generosity is always with me in my prayers as I ask God to bless you in every way.*

*Your beggar friend,  
Father Emmett*



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## SOARING EAGLE GIFT INFORMATION REQUEST

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Email *(Promise we will not share)* \_\_\_\_\_

**YES, I'm interested in a Soaring Eagle Charitable Gift Annuity. Please send me more information.**

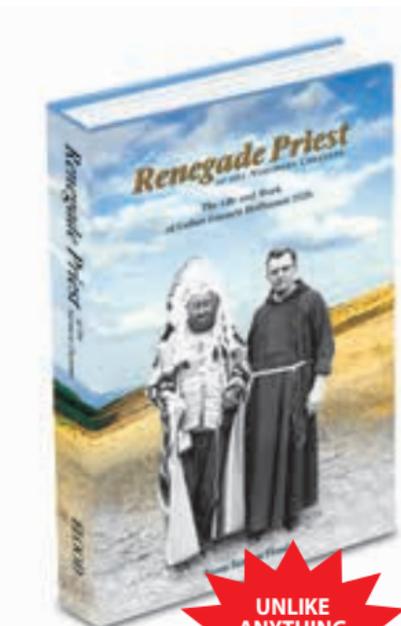
Birth date(s) of annuitant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Annuity Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_ *Minimum annuity amount \$5,000 (up to 2 names/birth dates 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 (406) 256-8500.*

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