

## A Note From Father Emmett

How life has changed! On the farm during the Great Depression I never had a birthday party. Kids from neighboring farms would have loved to come to a party, but their parents, like mine, couldn't afford to buy presents, so birthday parties were unheard of in those days.

Instead, our birthdays were family celebrations. Mother baked large angel food cakes with white frosting and candles. I was fortunate to have my birthday during the hot summer. When it fell on a weekend, Daddy made his delicious hand-churned ice cream and I got to help.

Ever since I moved into the Heritage Living Center, my birthday celebrations have become a community event, a day for the Cheyenne elders and surrounding reservation communities to celebrate not only my birthday, but also to offer thanks to God, to our donors and to our dedicated staff for the beautiful home we live in and the superb care we receive.

Back in 2003, my birthday party was a picnic with games, hot dogs, hamburgers, cake and ice

cream. Each year since then the celebration has grown with more and more people attending. This year hundreds came to enjoy a pow wow with many Indian dancers participating in men and womens' traditional style dancing, fancy dance style and gourd

This was unexpected and everyone burst out laughing.

In the evening, we all sat down to a dinner of roast beef, mashed potatoes, corn, beans, birthday cake and ice cream served first to the resident elders, then visiting elders



*Dancers participating in the pow wow during Fr. Emmett's birthday celebration.*

dances. Four drum groups sang traditional Indian songs. Each group had six to eight drummers and a special attraction was the young boy's drum group from Lame Deer called Clay Hill.

The group called ahead to ask if they could attend. While competing with the older drum groups, the Clay Hill boys delighted the audience with an Indian song about Sponge Bob Square Pants, a popular TV cartoon character!

and then to all the guests. The Cheyenne tradition is to honor the elders by feeding them first.

This ancient custom shows respect and may have been necessary in the old days when years of famine left older people hungry and weak. This is but one of the many Cheyenne family customs that continues to the present day.

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# Father Emmett's 57 Years of Service to the Cheyenne

Believe it or not, Father Emmett worries that he hasn't done enough for the Cheyenne people! For those of us who are amazed by his achievements, it's hard to imagine how humble he is about his life's work. If you ask him about it, he will tell you that without

faithful friends and donors the Lord's work could not have been accomplished. One thing about Father is undeniable - he stays the course, no matter what. Most priests are assigned to other posts after a few years and they move on. Not Father Emmett.

# With a Lot of Help from My Friends

## July, 1954

Father arrives at St. Labre Mission in Montana to serve the Northern Cheyenne. His duties include baptism,



marriage and funeral services, He is on call 24/7 to visit the sick and the dying and he ministers in jails and hospitals. He also teaches Latin and Theology.

## 1955 – 1960

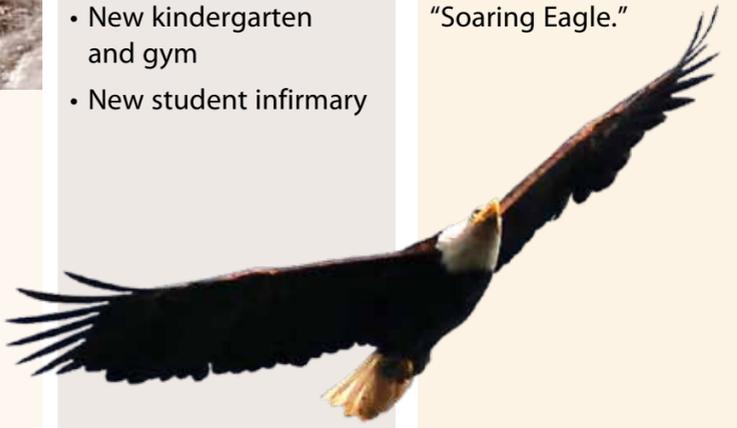
Becomes full time Pastor and Director of St. Labre.

- Builds:
- New dormitory for girls
  - New student cafeteria
  - New convent
  - Renovates barn into a trade school
  - New kindergarten and gym
  - New student infirmary

## Summer 1961



Father Emmett is made a Chief of the Northern Cheyenne Council of 44 and is given the name "Soaring Eagle."



## 1961 – 1970

Builds and opens 40,000 square foot factory, Guild Arts & Crafts. Employs over 200 Cheyenne employees and supplies bus transportation for tribal members

Constructs landing strip and earns pilot's license. In emergencies, he flies people to hospitals.

Mission welcomes Crow students.

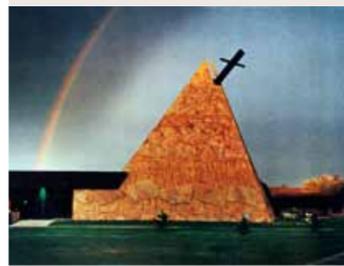
Builds St. Xavier Mission on Crow Reservation

Builds St. Charles Mission on Crow Reservation

Founder and first President of Cheyenne Western Bank in Ashland

## 1970s

Construction of the new St. Labre Church, sometimes called the, "Tipi Church." Over 30,000 square feet. Most impressive Indian Church in America



Opens another factory at Lodge Grass

Forms Endowment Fund, Tree of Life Scholarship Fund for Students

Creates Emmett G. Hoffmann College Scholarship Fund

Forms Northern Cheyenne Business Development Fund for small business loans for the Cheyenne

Remodels Dormitories for older girls

Donates classrooms for what will one day evolve into Chief Dull Knife College

Sponsors HUD Housing Project to build 80 homes for teachers and students' families. Mission pays construction workers.

## 1980s

Founds two more factories employing Indian employees – Polysapphire Orthodontic Supply Business – one located at Lodge Grass on the Crow Reservation and the other in Ashland

Builds St. Bernard's Church in Billings, Montana

## 1990s

Renovates Northern Cheyenne Pine Company – sawmill

Builds Mission Museum  
Creates 5 large group homes for troubled youth



Builds Soaring Eagle Gym, with swimming pool, theatre, indoor track, basketball court, racket ball court and sauna

Father Emmett retires from St. Labre Indian School due to health problems.

## 1997

Founds the Soaring Eagle Oral History Project

Begins fundraising to build Assisted Living Home called the Heritage Living Center



and Resident Attendants are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Finishes Eagle Ridge Park at the Heritage Living Center, overlooking the Tongue River Valley

## 2002



Grand Opening of Heritage Living Center. Center provides 40 apartments in a 50,000 foot facility with scenic views in all directions. Medical transportation provided

Every time he was sent to another post, petitions appeared with enough Cheyenne signatures to impress the powers that be. One time tribal members paraded with signs and passed a resolution that ended up on the nightly news: "The Northern Cheyenne Tribe recognizes, approves, adopts and concurs in the petition being circulated for the stay of Father Emmett Hoffmann for another term... in order that he can continue to carry on the work which he has so ably done." After nearly 60 years, Father still lives and works among the tribal people he admires and loves.

John Wooden Legs, described in a few words the conditions of his people. "We are poor and living right at the bottom." Father felt that with God's help, the Cheyenne could improve their lives by working regular jobs and providing for their families. He went to donors and asked for advice. Friends may not realize that Father has relied on donors' suggestions and advice throughout the years, including advice about his personal health.

The Guild Arts & Crafts Factory was a successful endeavor. Tribal members flocked to the factory for jobs. They learned how to fill out job applications and what to expect



in a job interview. Those who never had the opportunity to work, learned to come to work on time and use their money wisely.

When the first paychecks rolled out, Father had the satisfaction of seeing what tribal members did with the most money they had ever earned in their lives. Just as he expected, they bought clothes for

their children, sewing machines and kitchen tables for their homes and used cars. For the first time, women had the opportunity to earn money and decide what they would do with it. When the factory closed after nearly 20 years due to the Oil Embargo of the 1970s, the Cheyenne used their skills to find other jobs. But the closing

devastated Father.

He felt like the rug had been pulled out from under him. Eventually, students began to tear down the abandoned factory to make way for basketball courts. Every so often, Father drove slowly past the site, watching as the boys tore down the factory piece by piece.

True to his word and with a lot of help from his friends, the success of the Heritage Living Center has more than fulfilled his commitment to the Northern Cheyenne, yet he stays on. The Cheyenne people made their decision long ago – they have no intention of ever letting him go.



# Greetings From Big Sky Country



Mike Skaggs

Everyone deserves to be safe! A profound moment comes when a Cheyenne elder moves into the Heritage Living Center, carrying the burden of a lifetime of fear and worry. Suddenly, she gets to see the light in herself. It doesn't matter

how old she is, she can still reach her potential as a human being. That's what I want for every elder at the Center and I believe it's a meaningful purpose.

As many of you know, the Northern Cheyenne experienced injustices over many decades. I don't want to see the elders suffer anymore. Every evening, I ask myself, did I do enough to make their lives better today? I wish everyone could get to know the resident elders, the most welcoming, genuine and friendly people you'd ever want to meet. Recently, I spent time with Herb Bear Chum, who everyone calls "Happy Herb." However, this year has been anything but happy for him. First he lost his beloved wife, Marie, and then he experienced serious health problems. In our heart-warming, one-on-one conversation, I saw that inner, spiritual light Herb has within him, which has made him such a popular and gifted pow wow announcer throughout his interesting career.

In August, we were very pleased when two of our donors, Les and Eleanor Bell, stopped into the Center for an overnight stay with the elders. Father accompanied us out to the sweat lodge in Eagle Ridge Park, where we met the talented artisan and Cheyenne veteran, Peter John Wilson. I had never talked with Peter John before and when he shared his knowledge about the important significance and construction of the Cheyenne sweat lodge, he held us spellbound. I can't wait to see him again.

In future newsletters, I will report on how we spend your donations. In addition to paying the bills to maintain the Center and to keep the residents well fed, we recently installed a portable emergency call button system. The elders are saying how much safer they feel with the new system. Edna, one of the elders, fell in her apartment a couple of months ago and broke her wrist. The pain was awful and she couldn't stand up to pull the emergency cord

located in another room. She finally got to her phone to summon help. Still recovering from her accident, she is now relieved and grateful to donors for the added security of the call button system. This lady is one of the last of the Cheyenne women who knows the ancient way to cut buffalo and deer meat to prepare traditional Indian meals. She is a direct descendant of the Fort Robinson Massacre and preserves the precious oral history of her tribe.

On another note, Father's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday was a kick! Dancers, drummers and friends came from all over Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming. Donors came, too, from as far away as Chicago and New York. It was inspiring to watch people come up to greet Father Emmett, wish him well and thank him for all he has done for the Cheyenne.

When a young Cheyenne boy came up to Father's table carrying a large plate overflowing with mashed potatoes and roast beef, enough food for two people, I realized that he may not have eaten in some time. He could barely manage the plate when he asked Father if he could sit down next to him. "Father Emmett is the best thing that ever happened to Ashland!" he said and pitched into his food with a vigor.

It has been an honor and a learning experience working alongside Father Emmett for nearly a year. He had me hit the ground running and I catch my breath whenever I can. Father Emmett is a warm and caring man. We have laughed and learned from each other and have spent long hours thinking and planning for the future.

The sheer force of Father Emmett's determination to care for the Cheyenne elders was enough to get the job done at the Heritage Living Center. But imagine my trepidation as I follow his path into the future. In this newsletter you will read about some of his humanitarian accomplishments. I don't know if I can, or should even try, to match his amazing record for good, but I am determined to live up to his goals. One thing is for sure, as we go forward, I, too, will need your help and advice.

So long from Big Sky Country.

Mike

  
Soaring Eagle CEO



## Your Will Keeps on Giving

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

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.

## Soaring Eagle Charitable Gift Annuities are for Seniors

Consider for a moment how you can...

- Receive an income for life.
- Save money on your taxes.
- Help Cheyenne elders at the Heritage Living Center.

Soaring Eagle offers gift annuities with income rates as high as 9.8% (see table at right).

To learn how a Soaring Eagle charitable gift annuity can benefit you, please request our free, no-obligation proposal.

Return the gift annuity coupon in this newsletter or call Mike Skaggs at 406-256-8500.

## Soaring Eagle Charitable Gift Annuity Rates

One-Life Rates Rates Effective 7-1-2011

Age	% Rate	Age	% Rate
55	4.4	73	6.2
56	4.5	74	6.3
57	4.6	75	6.5
58	4.7	76	6.6
59	4.7	77	6.8
60	4.8	78	7.0
61	4.9	79	7.3
62	5.0	80	7.5
63	5.1	81	7.7
64	5.2	82	7.8
65	5.3	83	8.0
66	5.4	84	8.2
67	5.5	85	8.4
68	5.6	86	8.6
69	5.7	87	8.9
70	5.8	88	9.2
71	5.9	89	9.5
72	6.0	90+	9.8

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*Peter John Wilson (wearing hat) describes the purpose of a sweat lodge to Eleanor and Les Bell of Portsmouth, VA while touring the Heritage Living Center with Fr. Emmett and Mike Skaggs.*



*Herb, Edna and Fr. Emmett show off their new emergency alert buttons described inside this issue.*