

A Note From Father Emmett

I dodged another bullet! Just as the Tongue River Valley was turning green and the leaf buds on the cottonwood trees had sprouted, I got an unexpected call from my doctor. He told me I had to have an out-patient surgical procedure and it would be somewhat touchy since it involved blocking a slow leak in an aneurysm. That didn't sound too encouraging.

Cheyenne elders and staff surprised me on March 11th, the day before my scheduled surgery, with a Blessing Ceremony. I was pleased when I found our chapel at the Heritage Living Center packed with people. It was standing room only for the elders inside and other visitors stood all the way out to the corridor.

The large crowd was joined by Fr. Paschal Siler from St. Labre and Deacon Joe Kristufek from Lame Deer. Fr. Paschal began the prayer service by anointing me with the oil of the sick and prayed, "Lord Jesus, our Savior and our brother, listen to our prayer. Look with love on Father Emmett. Bless him with the gift of your Spirit. Give him courage to carry your cross and bring him back to full health and strength." Then, Deacon Joe spoke of Saint Padre Peo and his healing miracles.

Former Sacred Hat Keeper, Charles Little Old Man, prayed in Cheyenne. He asked for God's blessings upon me for the decades I spent at St. Labre edu-

cating Cheyenne children. He also asked "Maheo," the Creator, to bless everyone present and to watch over me during my surgery and recovery.

After the inspiring Blessing Ceremony, we all went to the lobby for coffee and banana bread. Once again, the Cheyenne had encouraged and given me the strength to go into surgery in a hopeful mood. The worry was gone.

In this issue of Signals, our CEO, Mike Skaggs, writes his first column to you. Also, look for the photos of our new found ability to have face-to-face

visits with friends and donors from my office, just as if we were sitting down to a cup of coffee at the kitchen table. This new technology is amazing for someone like me, who can't get around like I used to.

As I recover from my successful surgery, Fergie and I like to watch the wildlife in the park outside our windows, where there is always something new going on. Fergie knows she can't go out to chase bunnies but that doesn't stop her from putting her nose right up to the window.

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Father Emmett and Fergie enjoy a spring afternoon while posing with an etching made by solar artist Jonathan Maxwell Beartusk. The etching technique uses only sunlight and a magnifying glass.

<continued from cover... Recently, we celebrated her 11th birthday and I am so thankful for such a faithful companion through the years. While I was in surgery, she lay on her stomach with her head on her paws, waiting for my return. I think she was worried, too.

The elders living at the Heritage Living Center are free from the hardships of their past as they look forward to a happy and peaceful future. So many of their

years were spent worrying about where to get food or how they would be able to get to the doctor for medications. I thank God every day for the, "Miracle on the Hill," that you have made possible.

If you plan to visit Yellowstone or Glacier National Park this summer, I invite you to visit us here at the Heritage Living Center. Spend a night in our complimentary guest room. Meet and

enjoy meals with the elders. Let us show you where and how your donations are put to work. To make advance reservations, call the Soaring Eagle office at 406-256-8500. Fergie and I will be delighted to see you.

Your beggar friend,

Father Emmett Hoffmann
Father Emmett Hoffmann

Greetings from Mike



"Your Beggar Friend," (Father Emmett) and Mike Skaggs at the Soaring Eagle office.

In November of 2010, I welcomed the invitation to become President and CEO of Soaring Eagle, a Public Charity. I have to admit it was a little daunting to think that Father Emmett had been with the Northern Cheyenne for nearly 57 years, knew their customs and probably officiated or was present at nearly all of their ceremonies and special events. His lifetime accomplishments on their behalf were legendary. At the time, I asked myself, how are you going to follow such a class act?

I had been working as Director of Development for Deaconess Hospital Foundation for eleven years when I first met Father Emmett. In 1993, I was on the nominating committee for the Montana Chapter, National Society of Fund Raising Execu-

tives Award. Father Emmett won the award for his outstanding fund raising achievements throughout the years.

By the late 90s, I considered Father Emmett my mentor. Needless to say, I was humbled and curious when he invited me to meet with him about taking over as Soaring Eagle's new CEO.

For a number of years, my efforts had been focused as Director of Human Resources and Donor Relations at the Northern Rockies Cancer Center in Billings. After meeting with Father and the Soaring Eagle Board of Directors, and consulting with my wife, Gayle, I knew that my life was about to take a new and exciting direction.

I've been on board now at Soaring Eagle for 6 months, working closely with Father Emmett at the Heritage Living Center. This has given me the profound experience of witnessing the work of a man who was called by God to help a forgotten people who had suffered indignity, starvation and sickness since they were forced to accept reservation life in 1884.

Father's devotion and passion for the Cheyenne elders is infectious and I can feel it encompassing my heart when I see their love for him. When he enters the room, all eyes turn toward him and faces light up with smiles. At meal times, Father glides into view on his electric cart with his little dog, Fergie, clearly enjoying the ride. She then hops down and goes from elder to elder greeting each of them individually.

One of the first Cheyenne elders I met at the Center, Herb Bearchum, invited me to attend the wake for his late, beloved wife,

Marie. This was a meaningful connection of spirit, as I felt Herb's pain and observed with awe the ancient Kit Fox Society custom of painting the cheeks of the one who has passed with red ochre. I joined in their prayers and watched the bereaved widower as friends eulogized Marie. It brought to mind the eloquence of a 20th century Native American orator DeWitt "Mahto" Hare, who described our human similarities, instead of our differences:

"The Indian was made with the affections and passions of mankind . . . he loved, he feared, he rejoiced and he wondered. He was at times angry, and at times he was in sorrow. I will leave it to you to imagine his passions, for you know whom you love, what you fear, when you rejoice, and when you are in sorrow."

The Northern Cheyenne elders have welcomed me into their lives and they have already inspired and enriched my life. I'm proud to be Father Emmett's right hand man in this worthwhile organization. You, too, can be proud of the Heritage Living Center, which your love and sacrifices helped to build. I hope to correspond and meet with as many of you as possible in the coming years.

Respectfully,
Mike Skaggs

More Than A Home - A Family

by Sarah Gatti, Heritage Living Center Volunteer

A Montana sunrise is unlike any I have ever seen. Vibrant pinks melt into oranges and yellows, displacing the previous night's darkness, turning the black sky into a canvas of color. I was so thankful for this sunrise. Enjoying its beauty, I sensed winter was finally ending.

Growing up in Massachusetts, I am used to some snow and ice, but Montana winters are brutal in a completely different way. Here, a dry cold storms across the land and refuses to leave. It is often so biting that even the clouds are too cold to produce snow. In this harsh climate, the people remain friendly and kind and become even more conscious of their neighbors. My impulse in November was to climb into bed and say, "Wake me up in May!" In this frozen world I experienced the core strength and compassion that makes up the very heart of the folks around here. Now, with a new spring, I was really happy to hear birds singing and see some green begin to color the vast, empty whiteness of winter.

At the Heritage Living Center that morning there was a different emptiness waiting. Father Emmett was ill and had gone to Billings to seek medical treatment.

Father Emmett smiled and said, "Thank you for bringing them to me"

His absence, like his presence, was deeply felt around the Center. It was Sunday around the time we would normally celebrate Mass together. Several elders gathered at the chapel. They wanted to go visit Father Emmett. We loaded up the van and two hours later we arrived in Billings. Being 23 years old, I had only visited family in the hospital. I did not know the protocol for visiting non-family members. Seeing my hesitation, the elders led the way.

We arrived at Father Emmett's room and they immediately began doting on him. They asked how he was doing, eating and

EDITORS NOTE: Sarah Gatti, 23, is a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and is currently in the last months of her year-long commitment at the Heritage Living Center. The Fairfield University, Connecticut, religious-studies graduate writes of her experience.



Sarah Gatti has enjoyed her year in Montana at the Heritage Living Center so much she has reapplied for a second year in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

being treated. When will you come home? Do you need anything? They filled him in on what was going on back home. Father began to tire so we prayed together. After an "Our Father," everyone gave him a hug and shared some private parting words. (In the Cheyenne language there is no word for "goodbye" only "until our paths cross again.") Father Emmett looked exhausted when it was my turn, so I tried to be quick. He smiled and said, "Thank you for bringing them to me." It then hit me. This visit was no different than when my mom, my three siblings, and I loaded up in the van to visit my dad during his recovery from cancer.

This special Sunday visit confirmed something in me that I had been slowly realizing. The Heritage Living Center is not only a home for those who reside here; it's a place filled with people and all their glorious quirks and struggles - a family. Father Emmett delighted in seeing the elders. The elders, knowing they faced a long day including four hours in the car, did not hesitate to go see him. There was no question for these elders about coming. One of their own was sick. He needed prayers and family and that is exactly what they gave him.

When I was asked to write about my experience here I was honored and overwhelmed all at the same time. My words cannot articulate the generosity, community and love I have seen and experienced.

So, I picked this one special story to share with you. One story out of hundreds that shows the compassion, consideration and sense of family that welcomed me to the Heritage Living Center. My life has been touched by volunteering here. I will never forget this past year, the Cheyenne people and this wonder-filled place.



Sarah and Herb Bearchum share a lighter moment in the Heritage Living Center.

Yellow Robe: Last

BY RENEE SANSOM FLOOD

Among the old Cheyenne warriors Father Emmett met when he came to serve the Northern Cheyenne people, was William Yellow Robe, said to have been the last living Cheyenne Scout. Father visited the proud veteran in his two-room cabin, sparsely furnished with a bench, a wood-burning stove and two chairs. “He motioned for me to sit down,” Father recalls, “. . . and he offered me a cup of coffee. Then the old fellow took off his neck scarf ring with the military emblem of the Cheyenne Scouts. I was so impressed, that I forgot where I was for a second.”


Father knew that Yellow Robe had been present at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. The 12 year-old Cheyenne boy had gone to the river to swim with two friends. They were splashing in the water when they heard gunfire. Nearby, a young woman, later Mrs. Charles (Nellie) Limpy, fell to the ground with a bullet in her breast. ¹ Family members carried her away and she survived.

During the loud confusion, warriors galloped to join the battle, while women and children rushed to escape. In the melee, Yellow Robe’s horse bolted and ran away. He tried to mount another “green-broke” horse but it was wild with fear and he couldn’t control it. Yellow Robe and his brother went to higher ground and watched the battle from across the river.

Less than a year later, Yellow Robe was with Two Moon’s band when they surrendered at Ft. Keogh to General Nelson A. Miles. In his autobiography, Miles said he called the chiefs to a meeting. “My intention was to impress upon them the power of the government . . .” But what Miles failed to admit was that he offered them whiskey. “You are supposed to drink first!” he told them. “. . . It helps you not to be afraid.” ² Humiliated, the angry warriors stared in silence as Miles squirmed in his chair. He later wrote that their long silence, “. . . was the cause of the most painful anxiety on my part as the moments went slowly by.” ³

Suddenly, Iron Chief jumped up saying, “I do not like it! We have never used it. We are sober so we do not forget whatever we are talking about.” Bear Coat, as the general was called by the Indians, immediately recanted his statement. “Yes, it is good you don’t like it. It is no good, it’s bad . . . If you take it . . . you get crazy.” ⁴ He then offered tobacco and many other gifts to make up for his insulting behavior. The men, women and children were cold, exhausted and hungry. He told them he would treat them well. He also explained that he needed scouts to bring in the Indians who were still free, because otherwise, they would be wiped out. He promised that if they helped to persuade other bands to surrender, he would give the Northern Cheyennes the land of their choice where they could live in peace forever.

The Cheyennes were starving. They were out of ammunition and their horses were dying and had to be shot. They had no other choice but certain death. They signed on as scouts attached to Troop A, 22nd Infantry, including the young warrior, Yellow Robe.



Yellow Robe and his wife at Ft. Keogh, MT. The photographer’s son, Leo Barthelmess, stands with the scout.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTIAN BARTHELMESS. CIRCA 1888

of the Cheyenne Scouts

For the next 14 years, Yellow Robe took part in several Indian campaigns, including the historic flight and capture of the famous Nez Perce, Chief Joseph, who was leading his people to Canada to take refuge with Sitting Bull. Chief Joseph and his tribe had never fought the white man, but a deluge of white settlers had forced them from their farms and hunting grounds, previously granted to them by treaty. Joseph almost made it to the Canadian border, when General Miles intercepted him. The chief refused to give up and a terrific battle with soldiers caused numerous casualties on both sides. Yellow Robe witnessed the surrender, when Chief Joseph reportedly told Miles, “From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.”

When the Scouts were mustered out, General Miles kept his promise and asked President Benjamin Harrison to allow the Cheyennes to pick out the land where they wanted to live in south-eastern Montana. Without the military service of the scouts, the Northern Cheyenne Reservation might not exist

today. They forgave the general for offering them liquor to get them drunk, but to this day, they have never forgotten his cowardly intent.

Perhaps Yellow Robe survived to old age because he did not drink liquor. He lived for a time with Susie Cain’s family and they loved him. Susie is now a resident at the Heritage Living Center and she fondly remembers him, “He liked kids. He was always joking and saying funny

things to make us laugh. Every time he got his small military pension check, he would take us kids to town to buy candy. We would fight over who got to go with him. He bought bags of cookies, candy and fruit and he kept the goodies in a paper sack under his bed. Whoever was good got a treat.”⁵

Yellow Robe looked fierce but he was a gentle man and carried himself well. He used a willow cane and never wore shoes, only moccasins. The tall man got a kick out of chewing and popping Wrigley’s Spearmint Gum to make the children laugh. But after his first wife died, he grew lonely and found a

companion, the nearly blind widow, Mae Medicine Bird. Susie recalls that when her mother bought a car, “Grandpa and Mae would sit in the back seat with their dog sitting between them.”

William Yellow Robe passed away in early spring, 1957, in the Veteran’s Hospital at Miles City, Montana, not far from where he first became a scout. His friend, Casey Barthelmess, dropped in to see him. “In his last few days, he couldn’t open his eyes or take a drink of water,” Casey explained. “He finally managed to tell me through his interpreter, Frank Little Wolf, what he hadn’t been able to make the nurses understand – that the light from the windows hurt his eyes and he couldn’t drink water through a glass tube. So the nurses pulled down the blinds and gave him water in a cup.”⁶

When visitors came to see him, Yellow Robe spoke with pride of his four grandsons who had served their country in the Armed Forces. The last of the old time warriors hoped his descendants would continue to serve in the military. His family remained at his bedside until he rode away to join his ancestors in the next camp.



Yellow Robe, the last surviving Cheyenne scout, with Father Christopher Hafner. Circa 1955

Notes:

1. Margot Liberty. A Northern Cheyenne Album: Photographs by Thomas B. Marquis, the University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 2006.
2. Grover Wolf Voice, Soaring Eagle Heritage Project, 1973.
3. General Nelson A. Miles. Personal Recollections & Observations of General Nelson A. Miles, Werner Publishing, Chicago, Illinois, 1896.
4. The First Introduction of Liquor to the Cheyennes by Laura Rockroads. Cheyenne Christian Education Project, Busby, MT 1991.
5. Interview with Susie Cain, 4/8/2011, Heritage Living Center, Ashland, MT
6. Quote from Casey Barthelmess in Maurice Frink with Casey Barthelmess, Photographer On An Army Mule, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 1965.

Father Emmett Chats With Friends



Father Emmett recently met with Mrs. Judy Stroick, utilizing Soaring Eagle's video phone system. *"It is pretty close to sitting with a donor at their kitchen table,"* says Father Emmett. *"Mike Skaggs can travel to meet with our friends and take me along for a video chat. We can share with each other about our lives and I can thank them for their gifts to Soaring Eagle."* This new technology does not require the donor to have a computer or internet. Just an electrical outlet to plug in a laptop computer is all that is needed. Father Emmett looks forward to meeting with many friends from his office at the Heritage Living Center in Ashland, Montana.



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.

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68	5.7	81	7.4
69-70	5.8	82	7.5
71	5.9	83	7.7
72	6.0	84	7.9
73	6.1	85	8.1
74	6.3	86	8.3
75	6.4	87	8.6
76	6.5	88	8.9
77	6.7	89	9.2
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Father Emmett and Juanito Anderson, great grandson of close friend, Chief Jimmie D. Little Coyote



Evening light splashes across the Heritage Living Center and the eastern Montana landscape.