

March 24, 2008

April—

Bob Bailey, who served as our first full-time director of the Native American Program (1972-79), sent me this obituary on Floyd Westerman, who walked on last December.

Floyd played a big role in helping to publicize our program when we were first starting. He was one of the guests we invited to launch the first “Indian Awareness Days” which was a week-long celebration of Indian culture held in October, 1971. I’m sure if anyone looked at the Nishnawbe News issues during that time, they would find good coverage of his visit.

In addition to a concert, President Jamrich held a reception for him at the President’s House, and he took part in a number of other activities. He was a very personable guy, humorous, and highly intelligent and talented. He had come up the hard way and had made a career for himself in spite of everything. He really inspired our Indian students and all of us who came to know him.

One day, I had the privilege to spend an evening with Floyd at the bar/grill of what is now called the Landmark Inn. LaDonna Harris was also with us. She was a Comanche from Oklahoma and wife of Fred Harris, also an Indian and at that time U.S Senator from Oklahoma. (He later ran for President as a Democrat in the primaries.) LaDonna was president of Americans for Indian Opportunity, based in Washington, DC, an early group promoting Indian interests, education, etc. The fourth person was Coy Eklund, who grew up near Seney, who had risen to the top of the corporate world as President and CEO of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of New York, one of the world’s major life insurance companies. He had spent part of his life on an Ojibwa reservation in Minnesota, and was very interested in the language. His father could speak it, and Floyd later published an Ojibwa Dictionary.

LaDonna, Coy, and I sat in a booth while Floyd sat opposite us on a bar stool entertaining us through the evening with his guitar and songs. I don’t recall that there were many others in the bar. He had recently made his famous album, “Custer Died for Your Sins.” We had a great time. I naively asked him to sing “This Land is My Land.” Well, his version was a bit different. It went something like this: “This Land Ain’t Your Land, Get the Hell off My Land, etc., etc.”

I recall there was a great photo of a parade/march by our Indian students during that week in 1971 in front of old Kaye Hall (where Cohodas Center is now located) with LaDonna Harris leading it. We published it in the Nishnawbe News on the front page.

And a word about President Jamrich. He was a staunch supporter of our Indian program from the beginning, and went out of his way to hose our many prominent Indian people who came on campus during those years. When we hit a brick wall in trying to find

funds for the start-up of the Nishnawbe News in 1970-71 from granting agencies and foundations, President Jamrich came to our rescue by taking the money out of his office's discretionary fund to get it started. Without his support, I doubt if the Nishnawbe News would ever have been launched. He continued his support and genuine interest in everything we did throughout the rest of his presidency, which ended in 1983.

Those were great years, and I was so fortunate to be able to be a part of them. Much of the credit has to go to our Indian students who were an unusually capable and hard-working group, to the many Indian leaders and elders from all across the region who guided us during those years and formative years, and to Bob Bailey, an Ottawa from Suttons Bay, our first full-time director, who soon proved to have been an excellent choice to lead our new program.

Jim Carter

P.S. Floyd came back in 1981 to help us celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nishnawbe News.