

House of Shakes Opened Near Wrangell

He faced the crowd in a brown suit covered by a Chilkat blanket hand woven in blue, green, yellow, black and cream mountain goat wool. On his head was a dancing hat of abalone shell fringed with Sea Lion whiskers and ermine skin. In his hand was a baton of authority, its top piece carved in the form of a leaping Killer Whale, the insignia of his house.

"Thank you, my friends, for coming to this occasion in response to my invitation. It is as though a great light had burst through the darkness to see you here. Thank you, towards me you have come."

With these traditional words of welcome, Kudanake, about to be installed as Shakes VII, opened the new community house of Shakes, on Shakes Island in Wrangell harbor.

"How picturesque!" the tourists said while snapping their pictures.

It was an unforgettable scene of barbaric splendor. To the Indian, it brought back nostalgia; to the white visitors it brought a stirring of the imagination accompanied by a distinct sense of surprise that the purveyors of moccasins and totem poles on the docks could become animated personalities by the simple device of donning button blankets and moving to the beat of the totem tom.

The year was 1940. The occasion, the first Wrangell Potlatch. The old Tlingit community house was rebuilt on Shakes Island as a CCC project under the supervision of the Forest Service. The design was done by Tom Ukas, master carver and historian of the Tlingit people and chief of

the Kiksadi.

Representing the Forest Service was Mr. Wycoff and Mr. Chipperfield who met at Mr. Ukas home and looked at the plans Mr. Ukas had drawn up from the old prints of the House of Shakes.

Roy Doverman, supervisor of the CCC, had 20 to 30 men working on the project using the old Indian tools of axes and adzes. Cedar logs used in the building, logged by James Bradley and a crew of three, were towed to Shakes Island by the boat Margie Ann.

After completion, the Forest Service asked that a potlatch be given at the dedication. Five representatives were sent from Washington, D.C. and dignitaries from Alaska, the lower 48 and Canada well attended, including dancers from throughout Alaska for a total of 500 people.

To most people a community house suggests a social center for meetings but this squat building of hand adzed timbers, was no white man's community center. Built of huge red cedar logs, the House is morticed and tenoned together without a nail in the whole structure.

It bore on its front elevation an enormous carved and painted grizzly bear and on the inside its depressed fire floor was surrounded by ascending giant like steps.

This unique building was the successor to Hit Klan (great house) of the Nan-ya-ah-ye tribe of the Tlingit nation that inhabited Southeast Alaska.

It was before this building that Charles Jones, then 76 years old, was named Kudanake Shakes VII. He assumed the hereditary

title of his tribe. In his 76 years he spanned the transition of the Tlingit from the so-called savage state of an independent, self-reliant people, who had an organized culture well suited to their habitat, to that of citizenship in the most progressive government in the world.

Born in the age when chiefs were still dictators, the chief sat around the central fire while instructing his clan in the wisdom and historical lore of their people. When the United States took possession of his country, Kudanake Shakes VII became equally obedient to the new rules, fantastic though they seemed to him. He no longer was Kudanake, but Charley Jones.

He moved out of the community house with his family and built a separate home, his children attended boarding schools just like the white man. He made his money, paid school taxes, subscribed to the Red Cross. He refused to take the name of SHAKES

Shakes VII because it was old custom and he was striving to be a typical American.

Now in his old age and the tribe down to less than a dozen members, Charley Jones had become Shakes VII in a borrowed blanket and crest hat. The new order of government men wanted him to revert to his ancient pattern, because it was picturesque and unique to the tourist trade.

The change for Charley Jones is clearly illustrated in two brushes with the law, one in defense of the old ways and the other in striving for the new. After defending his property against white men who were intent on

building a dock on his property, he spent 10 days in jail for assault and battery realizing he had been divested of all his inheritance by a law he never understood.

The second time he was arrested for voting at a time and a place where he had no right to vote. Testifying in his own defense he said, "I buy Red Cross for every one in my family, even my dog." At the trial in United States District Court the jury found Charley Jones not guilty and this established the citizenship of the Indian Tribesman Shakes VII.

No Fish, Only Starfish Left

By LAEL MORGAN

JUNEAU—"If those Russians and Japanese don't stop fishing in our waters, we're going to be eating starfish," John Nevzoroff, a seasoned commercial fisherman from the Aleutians, predicted last year.

The 1972 season was bad and this year's was a disaster—the lowest Alaskan salmon pack since 1887.

Streams that teemed with fish last season stood empty this fall. Subsistence fishing was at starvation level in some areas of the state. Even the bears went hungry.

"And I hope you have a crying towel for 1972," warned Mel Seibel, senior biometrician, Alaska State Division of Commercial Fisheries.

According to the most educated guesses, the Bristol Bay Area—once the world's most important sockeye salmon fishery—will be closed next year. The Halibut Commission is considering total closure of the Bering Sea for 1974 and 1975 and starfish may, indeed, be the only seafood left on the menu.

"You hear people blaming foreign fishing on the high seas as a common cause," Seibel considered. "But while we have substantial evidence to that effect, especially in Western Alaska, the primary factor contributing to the bad run is some very severe winters."

For the last two years, deep freezing has severely cut the survival rate of young fish and recuperation will be a long time in coming. While red salmon get their growth in a couple of years, the sockeyes don't mature for four to six years and chums come of age at four.

In 1970, a record harvest of 68 million salmon was reported and escapement was good.

In 1971, however, the catch dwindled to 47 million. A catch of 30 million was predicted for 1973 but only 21 million fish were actually netted and escapement of spawning fish was equally disappointing.

Seibel recalls that Alaskan

CENTER POTLATCH

By ROBERT GREGORY

There is a great need for the Native community to recognize the conditions of the old people at Careage North. They do not get many visitors and most of their relatives are back in the villages.

There are not many activities of interest to Natives there. They are in a strange environment and have little with which to occupy their time. They sit around and hope for something to happen. Let's make something happen.

A potlatch is being planned and will take place Sunday, December 9, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

salmon runs were under peak in the late 1930s and early 40s; recovered and then hit a tremendous decline in the late 50s.

"In the mid-1940s the catch averaged 41 million. But from 1960 to 1969 it averaged 51 million. . . an increase of roughly 25 percent. And of course we were looking at great things for the 1970s."

They were counting on high escapement figures, he added, but they failed to consider the weather factor.

And Alaskans were not the only ones hurt by the decline, he noted.

"The Japanese mother ship reported the smallest sockeye catch since 1954 and cohoes and chuck a little better."

"Friends in the game division feel it's had a definite effect on the bear population and the frequencies of bear maulings."

"Maybe it will take CARE packages for the bears. . . I don't know. But I do know if we send them anything, it won't be fish."

"It's getting to the point where you're not going to find salmon on the market. What's caught here is going to Japan and Korea."

Seibel had good news, however, when it came to the size of the catch frozen and cured and also on the price of fish which reached an all-time high here last summer.

Over 500,000 pounds of fresh frozen and cured salmon were sold, as opposed to 360,000 last season.

Prices for Alaskan king salmon reached \$2.10 a pound; cohoes \$1.55; and chums \$1.30 against \$1.50, \$1.15; and .88 for 1972.

It's also possible that the future may be brighter than estimates indicate. The newly-created Office of Rehabilitation and Enhancement (within the State Department of Fish and Game) is working on numerous fish rearing programs and has already had considerable success with salmon.

In one experiment off Kaslof, Bob LaBead, regional supervisor, reports a survival factor of 85 percent, as opposed to the natural survival rate of 10 percent for young spawn. And LaBead believes it's possible to engineer survival of fish, even in winters of deep freezing.

"We estimate the Alaskan salmon run is still capable of an annual harvest of 75 million fish," biometrician Seibel said optimistically.

"And we could easily see another 10 million on top of that with fish rearing programs. I don't think it's all gazing at stars, either. In 1970 we had 68 million."

"We've come close enough to the stars so I think we can see them."

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