

Gertrude 'Chewani' Ruskin, Historian and Friend of Cherokees

An unusual dance step was added to those of the Tlingit Indians, as Mrs. Gertrude Ruskin, official ambassador of the Cherokee Nation, donned a Tlingit costume and joined the Cape Fox Dancers during a recent visit to Ketchikan.

Named Princess Chewani (meaning Faithful One) by the Eastern branch of the Cherokees, Mrs. Ruskin was in Southeast Alaska with her husband the last of July touring Alaska and Canada.

She was presented with a participation certificate by the mayor of Saxmon Village for her performance.

In Fairbanks last week, the energetic couple explained that they were on a three week tour with several other people which included visits to Juneau, Anchorage, and Mt. McKinley as well as Fairbanks and Ketchikan.

Visiting the Tundra Times office, she presented the editor, Howard Rock, with a basket woven by the Cherokees out of honeysuckle vine.

Mrs. Ruskin lives in Decatur, Georgia where she carries out the self-assigned task of preserving the history and culture of the Cherokee Indians.

Currently, most of the Cherokee Indians are located either in



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Oklahoma or in the Great Smokie Mountains of North Carolina. In 1838 they were driven from the mountains to Oklahoma during what is known as the "Trail of Tears."

Many, however, remained behind by hiding out in the mountains and their descendents now live on the Cherokee Indian Reservation in North Carolina.

A noted historian on the Cherokee Indians, and overflowing with stories about them, Mrs. Ruskin was born in North Carolina and, as a child, was taken to New York State where she was raised by Presbyterian missionaries following the death of her parents.

Mrs. Ruskin, 1/32 Cherokee, has written many articles on the Indians and a historical drama

called the 'White Man's Magic' based on Sequoyah's struggles in forming the alphabet. Sequoyah was an illiterate chief of the Cherokees who made history by inventing the Cherokee alphabet to educate his people in 1821.

Soon to be released is her book, "Sequoyah, the Cherokee Indian Cadmus," which tells of her accomplishments before and after she was appointed national chairman of the bicentennial commemoration of the birth of Sequoyah in 1960.