

"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." — Voltaire

Tundra Times



Owned, controlled and edited by Eskimo, Indian, Aleut Publishing Company, a corporation of Alaska natives. Published at Fairbanks, Alaska, weekly, on Wednesdays.

Address all mail to Box 1287, Fairbanks, Alaska, 99707. Telephone 452-2244.

Second class postage paid at Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.

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Regular Mail (including Alaska, Canada and other states)	1 year \$15.00	6 months \$ 8.50
Air Mail (including Alaska, Canada and other states)	1 year \$35.00	6 months \$20.00

Member of the American Indian Press Association

A Native American's Reflection

(From UU WORLD)

(Following are excerpts from an address by James Lee West, a Cheyenne Indian, at the Thanksgiving celebration in Plymouth, Ma. a few years ago.)

My people have grown weary of hearing the songs of Thanksgiving. My people have grown weary of looking back at the first winter when the white man came singing songs of praise to a white man's God who had blessed the new experiment in the "bleak wilderness" where no man had set foot.

My people have grown weary of a celebration that can speak over and over again of a great tradition and a great nation "born under God" for the good of all mankind and that can turn men's hearts and minds to years of building a great American dream without turning their hearts and minds to the blood and death upon which that dream is built.

My people do not grow weary because we do not wish to share in a dream or because we do not wish to gather as families in thanks to God. We only grow weary of a celebration which not only excludes us but which in fact attempts to emasculate us.

Thanksgiving brings back many memories to us, also. But, memories of gratitude and good will are not ours. Our memories are filled with blood and sickness and hate.

We remember very well that Massasoit helped to save those first white men by teaching them to survive in the wilderness they feared so much. But we also remember that he could not teach them that their "red brothers" were more than animals.

Yes, the natives of this country remember the coming of the great American experiment. We remember the blankets deliberately filled with small pox and other diseases by the white man which killed first the children, then the women, and, finally the men whose preparation as proud warriors did not equip them for their first glimpse of biological warfare.

The distinguished British General Jeffrey Amherst, of French and Indian War fame, in his war with Pontiac, famous Ottawa war chief, wrote to one of his colonels in Pennsylvania, Henry Bouquet: "Could it be contrived to send the small pox among the disaffected tribes of Indians? We must on this occasion use every stratagem in our power to reduce them. You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets, as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race. I should be glad your scheme for hunting them down by dogs could take effect, but England is at too great a distance to think of that at present."

Thanksgiving — you ask for the Indian people to join in Thanksgiving? You ask my people to join hands on their reservations and in their ghettos and sing praises to God for the founding and success of this great American dream? You ask me to share in the celebration of the death of my people!

There is a voice crying in the wilderness! Not the wilderness you tamed and civilized, but a wilderness you created! Your genocide was not successful in America; and even though you have isolated us as far from your life as you physically can, we have observed white society in America and we have heard the echoes of our own cries as they come from black ghettos, from California, from Latin America, from Vietnam.

Yes, the Indian people are watching and they are listening but, luckily, from a distance. Our existence on reservations and in ghettos which are far from the mainstream of American society has helped us remain a people — a part of America, yet so separated that we still possess much of our own culture. Not so separated, however, that we feel no kinship with those people who are brothers in oppression.

There is a voice crying in the wilderness, but it is no longer crying for pity: not for blankets, not for land, not for a poverty existence from the charity of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. No, it's a war cry of a people who will not become "white-washed" so that they can be acceptable in your sight.

It's a war cry that is growing stronger as our people realize that the meaning that has gone from our lives will not come back to us as whites.

It is a cry against the average life expectancy of 44 years, against the suicide rate of teen-agers on reservations that is three times that of teen-agers in general, against the alcoholism rate, against arrest rate that will not be cured by the soothing medicine of self-pity and acceptance as whites in a white world.

It's a war cry of a people who seek their humanity, the right to be human beings, and who must have that humanity as whole persons — whole persons who are Indians.

We must realize that the great blot of oppression on my people is worse today than it was yesterday. Yesterday, my people were a

Letters from Here and There

The Centurion Cookbook

To: Food Editor

I am the author of about a dozen books, three of which are cookbooks. My publisher has suddenly asked me to do another cookbook for the Bicentennial to be called, "The Centurion Cookbook." This will contain recipes at least 100 years old, handed down from mother to daughter.

I hope you will consider helping me publicize this to the mothers and daughters in your area. Just a casual mention in your column asking them to send me such recipes will be very much appreciated. The

names of the contributors will be shown beside each recipe.

Thank you for your able assistance.

Sincerely,
James Stroman
6815 Lakeshore Drive
Dallas, Texas 75214

Note from Los Angeles Times reporter

STATE OF ALASKA
Office of the Governor
Juneau

Dec. 11, 1975

Tundra Times
Box 1287
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707

Dear Editor:

This note from the reporter of the Los Angeles Times who conducted the two-months-long investigation in Alaska has come to my attention through the inter-office mail within the governor's office. Mr. Dye has granted his permission to share his thoughts with your readers. I am enclosing a copy and believe it may be of interest to your readers as the viewpoint of an individual from Outside looking at the state and its government with, perhaps, unclouded eyes.

Sincerely,
W.I. "Bob" Palmer
Chief of Staff

Los Angeles Times
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A Christmas Story--

Stay with Santa Claus

(FAIRBANKS—Once again Charles J. Keim, professor of English and journalism at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, has written a Christmas story for the university to offer to the news media for use in Christmas time editions of newspapers and magazines and newscasts by radio and television stations.)

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By CHARLES J. KEIM

Santa Claus First Floor looked through his wire rimmed lensless spectacles at the large wall clock fully 350 feet across the highly decorated department store.

"Twenty minutes to 11," he mumbled aloud through his cotton beard and great mustache. No one would hear him above the now clearly audible Christmas songs over the loudspeakers as the hordes of late Christmas Eve shoppers dwindled to only a few dozen.

The children still were there, but not in the long, seemingly endless lines he had listened to

for the past two weeks. Instead, they were standing expectantly yet somewhat tired in an irregular semi-circle below his small platform. He stood, stretched, boomed his yawn in an expansive "ho ho ho" and momentarily patted his huge pillowed belly back into a balanced shape. Two mothers were bending over their youngsters, trying to get them to form a line. The women, too, had seen the clock. Santa soon would be leaving, they warned, to begin his journey to homes across the world.

Seven more, Santa Claus First Floor calculated. If no more would arrive, he could handle all these and have a few minutes of rest before he'd have completed this seasonal job which had offered both disguise and excuse to stay in town before he'd...Well, before he'd what? He sat down.

Mechanically he listened to the first two children. "I want..." and "I want..." How these words had dinned

into his mind with growing intensity the past few days. "I want..." "I want..." "I want..." One of the two mothers raised her camera. The sudden flare of the flashbulb startled him from his reverie. He'd grown accustomed to these flashes, too, which were disruptive of the neat balancing act he'd developed to respond ever more mechanically to the ceaseless "I wants..." while pondering more deeply his own situation since he and Laurie had separated.

"You're so selfish, so utterly selfish," she'd said at last, her mouth trembling as she did so. As he'd left the apartment that night without saying goodbye to their little Joanie, those words had followed him out of the door and throughout his aimless wanderings until he'd taken the Santa Claus job. Laurie had continued to run their accounting office which increasingly had become her responsibility anyway as he'd begun spending less time, there and at their apartment, too.

"I want..." This youngster was more insistent, tapping him on his pillowed chest to make him more attentive to her request only for a dolly that could do most everything, a new coat for mommie and a snowmachine for daddy.

"We'll see what we can do." Santa re-enforced the standard noncommittal promise with the candy cane while the mother took one more flashlight picture which hit him right in the eyes as he looked up once more to read the clock and weigh the time against the remaining children. But now there were six instead of five. The latecomer was slightly taller than the others and looking alternately at him and at the slim retreating figure of the woman who evidently had brought her there.

"I want..." number one of the remaining six said. And "I want..." said numbers five, four and three. "I want..." "I want..." The theme, motif, recurring refrain for two weeks up till now, and still it continued. The first two days Santa Claus First Floor had both expected the words and the monotony of the words. By the first week he'd learned that mechanical response, his mind wandering elsewhere, over his

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proud people, a people who could share what we were or fight for what we were.

In those days, when you considered us far worse off in all our barbaric heathenism, we were a whole people, proud and free! Yesterday, there might have been much we could have learned, but there might have been much that we could have taught you about life.

For instance, we could have taught you that all life was so dear that when a hunter killed an animal he prayed a prayer of forgiveness and thanks that the animal had given of himself to feed the empty stomachs of Cheyenne people.

Or we could have taught of a man's social commitment to his community that was so strong and real that when he became too old to contribute to his community, he would sing his death song and die, rather than be a burden to his people.

Yes, we were a whole people that could have contributed much, but because we were red, because we were different, and because we would not become white, you attempted to destroy us!

So listen, listen well! The Afro-Americans of this country have tried to teach us much in the last few years. I am not sure some of us have learned much in these years, but the test is coming.

The Indian people are gathering to test our learning, and along with our brothers in oppression we are prepared to give refresher courses in human rights to those who have not learned well. I hope you have learned. I hope you have learned that people cannot ask politely for their own human rights anymore.

I hope you have learned that people who are different still hold the rights of whole personhood. I hope you have learned that whole persons are not necessarily white persons.

Thus, I offer this lesson from our common past. This lesson concerns a tradition called Thanksgiving and its meaning. This lesson presents an underlying hope that as we prepare for this tradition each year, we will open our minds anew and not be unconscious of those around us who are a part of the tradition and yet so separated from it.

May our minds move behind the traditions to a gracious God who has so much to give to white Americans, to Afro-Americans, to Vietnamese, to Mexican-Americans and to Native Americans.