

Battalion Classifieds

Navajo princess garners title as first tribal feminist

She dismisses with a sigh those who would label her the tribe's "last princess" or its "first feminist" and insists she's a , except for a little education
Annie Wauneka, Navajo Princess

KLAGETOH, Ariz. (AP) — Annie Wauneka, 78, laughs loudly when recalling how she once bloodied the nose of a "disrespectful" white lawyer before an astonished Navajo Tribal Council.

She wipes away a tear when speaking of her father, Chee Dodge, the first chairman of the Navajo Tribe, who died 40 years ago.

And she dismisses with a sigh those who would label her the tribe's "last princess" or its "first feminist." "I'm a pure shepherd, except for a little education," said Wauneka, a short, gray-haired grandmother speaking from the living room of her orange sandstone house in this tiny eastern Arizona village.

Though little known among the non-Indian public, Wauneka long has been one of the most powerful figures in America's largest tribe. She was the second woman ever elected to the Navajo Tribal Council and remains the only Indian ever awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

She was recently honored again when a new health clinic in Farmington, N.M., was named for her.

At 78, Annie Dodge Wauneka is a living legend in a white pickup, still traveling the remote roads of this vast reservation, fighting for the health and education of her people.

In the beginning, however, were sheep.

She learned to herd, shear and butcher her family's sheep like any Navajo girl. But her father also sent her to government schools and made sure she learned English.

Her bilingualism became useful when she became an interpreter in the 1940s during the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs' controversial program to reduce Navajo sheep herds to ease overgrazing on the reservation.

Then she returned to herding and rearing her six children. She still lives with her husband, George, but

her children, four daughters and two sons, have moved on.

Before she returned home, she'd earned a reputation for intelligence and honesty, and in 1951 she was urged to take the almost unprecedented step of running for the Tribal Council. She won handily, beginning 27 years of service on the tribe's highest policy-making body. She also began raising eyebrows with her outspoken style.

At one of her first council meetings, she questioned why a BIA official often sat beside the tribal chairman "whispering in his ear."

"I just asked everybody, 'What is he (the official) doing up there? Is this how we do self-government?' Wauneka said mildly. "I asked if maybe he (the official) should not be up there."

The practice ceased.

But Wauneka's biggest challenge came a few years later, when she was assigned by the council to deal with white doctors on addressing an epidemic of tuberculosis on the reservation.

Not only was TB killing or disabling thousands of Navajos, but efforts to fight it were crippled by traditional beliefs about its origin and by medicine men's opposition to white man's medicine.

After educating herself about the

disease, Wauneka began an odyssey that earned her legendary status among her people. In a station wagon and, later, a pickup, she traveled throughout the remote 15-million-acre Navajo Reservation, visiting the sick and counseling families about nutrition and sanitation.

At that time, most Navajos still lived in hogans, she said, traditional six-sided, windowless structures with dirt floors.

"They sat, ate and slept on the floor, and they took water and food from the same containers. No wonder they had TB," Wauneka said.

So she began preaching the gospel of white man's medicine, of tiny, invisible "bugs" that carried disease. Gradually, she was able to overcome the people's suspicions and persuade them to begin following sanitary practices.

The story most often told about Wauneka's forthright manner concerns a young white attorney in the early 1970s working for the tribe under a federal program. The council members had formally agreed that they wanted to fire the man but were blocked by a legal provision in his contract, Wauneka said.

One day, when the council was discussing the matter, the attorney "laughed and made a disrespectful noise that no person should make," she said.

It so angered her when the chairman called a recess, Wauneka strode over to the offending lawyer and demanded he leave, according to accounts by her and others. When he didn't, she punched him three times in the nose; the man then left, bleeding.

In 1963, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by then-President Johnson for her work improving tribal health care.

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Childhood pastime becomes profession for book restorer

FORT WORTH (AP) — As a child W.T. Oxford was a bookish type who dreamed of finding fortune in South America.

But adolescence dawned and found Oxford in his native Polytechnic neighborhood in Fort Worth, delivering milk and newspapers.

Adulthood came and his life was what he terms unexciting as he piloted a Fort Worth city bus for eight years.

Then in 1944, Oxford found his treasure — in old books that weren't his. He became "just a bookbinder" as he puts it.

But not JUST a bookbinder.

At 73, W.T. Oxford is the senior bookbinder at Fort Worth's oldest repair and restorer of old tomes, Worth Bindery.

In 44 years, Oxford — whose surname befits a bibliophile — has breathed new life into countless thousands of old, tattered volumes. Bibles and cookbooks, law journals and historic works. Outworn and antiquated titles, each important enough to its owner to be brought to the bindery for rebuilding.

From his work station at the bindery, Oxford — an upright white-haired man with spectacles and long, gnarled fingers — caressed each book as though it were his, which it is, for a fleeting few days.

"The way I feel about books is that every book has its character, its own personality, and I try to treat them that way," he said. "We get mostly Bibles, and your hand Bibles usually have gotten deteriorated by a lot of use."

"With the large family Bibles, lots of times the genealogy pages can be used for legal purposes. People will cut them out for court, then want me to put them back in, which I can do."

With books of religious import, Oxford learns something about the owners, people he rarely meets in the flesh.

"By the notes people write in Bibles, you can tell if they're Baptist, which I am, Methodist, Pentecostal, or whatever," he said.

At times Oxford, a substitute Sunday School teacher at Sagamore Hill Baptist Church, finds fodder to incorporate into his religious pilgrimage.

"I'm bad about copying some of the notes people put into their Bibles," he said.

"Sometimes, they're choice insights on life, little kernels of wisdom. Sometimes, I don't agree with them, but they're funny or something, so I copy 'em down anyway."

"Lots of times, the stuff written in a Bible was done by somebody who's gone on," he said. "One lady brought in her father's old Bible. He'd been a teacher

or circuit-riding preacher and she brought it in to pre-
 serve his notes, his thoughts.

"If there's scribbling in there, we're careful not to
 delete it because it might have been done by a child
 who's since passed on."

The bindery itself is a throwback to old Fort Worth.

Founded in 1928 by B.C. Curtis, whose daughter Ox-
 ford later married, Worth Bindery opened at 1211
 Throckmorton in a downtown block that was known as
 "Printers Row." Two moves ensued, but a small-scale
 family orientation was retained. And though job print-
 ing is part of the Worth operation, the firm's reputation
 is in restoration.

Whereas most binderies nowadays deal only in new
 books and orders of 200 or more, Worth caters to in-
 dividuals with single books of sentimental value. It is an
 out-of-the-way rear portion of a warehouse across
 White Settlement Road from Angelo's Barbecue.

"We're sort of an unusual business," said bindery
 Vice President W.H. "Buddy" Randall, who joined the
 company after present owner C.M. Pier became sole
 owner in 1968. "We started in the Depression and made
 it through the Depression, supporting two families.

"Every piece of equipment we have in here is bought
 and paid for before we bring it in."

"We've always had the same number of employees,
 between 10 and 12, and we've always had the same phi-
 losophy," Randall said. "We don't want to grow. We've
 found a niche in the world we like."

He said that in 1987, "which was a slow year for us,
 we did over 400 hand Bibles alone ... not counting the
 family Bibles and the other books."

A Madison Avenue advertising scheme is not part of
 the Worth Bindery operation.

"We advertise in the Yellow Pages, and do a little bit
 of direct mail, but that's about it," Randall said. "Last
 year, we let Mr. Oxford start calling on customers,
 which he's very good at."

The cost for restoring an old book, Randall said,
 ranges from about \$50 to \$150.

"And sometimes people don't understand that," he
 said. "They don't understand how delicate the work is,
 how long it takes and that we do almost everything by
 hand."

Oxford treats each volume as a physician would an
 infirm patient.

His tools include a "folder," an instrument made of
 whale bone "because that's the only kind of bone that
 won't chip." There also is a curved, razor-sharp "skiving
 knife" used exclusively for intricate peeling off of fine
 layers of the supple, pliable leather the company orders
 from New Jersey.

Houston judges, lawyers pay respects to Percy Foreman

HOUSTON (AP) — Most Harris County courts shut their doors for the funeral and burial of Percy Foreman, the forceful, famous and sometimes irreverent attorney whose 60-year legal career ended last Thursday after an apparent heart attack.

From the words of praise that came from the pulpit to the 100-car procession that led miles to the cemetery, Foreman left his life as he had lived it — with flair.

He was remembered Monday as a friend and teacher as judges and some of Houston's top lawyers gathered to pay tribute to the famous criminal attorney.

There is a great void in a lot of people's lives right now," began Foreman's partner, Mike DeGeurin, one of the lawyers who delivered informal e