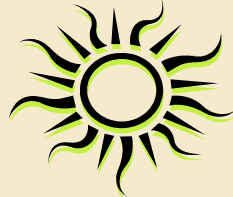




Native



Sons



Equipping Native Leaders; Empowering Native Christians

DID YOU KNOW

- Native Americans were the first to develop fire prevention programs by using fire to clear combustible materials from around their villages, thus building a defensible space protecting their homes from fire.
- The first "fire shelter" was developed by a Sioux in the early 19th century. During a wildfire, he wrapped himself in a thick buffalo hide, allowing the fire to pass over him without harm. Today, firefighters use aluminized "fire shelters" to survive if they are overrun by wildfire.
- Since 1992, Native Americans have comprised about 21% of all firefighters working major wildfires in the US.
- Native fire crews remain the backbone of the national wildland fire suppression effort today.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Levi & the boys.
- Ruby & Delbert's son to grow in Christ.
- Comfort for those on the Rez dealing with loss and death of loved ones.
- Rez youth struggling with substance abuse.
- The high unemployment rate on the Rez.
- Wisdom for Rez leaders.

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In December 2020, I made a covenant with God. I said, 'From this time forward, I am going to make a commitment to you that I am going to be faithful in my tithes and offerings, in studying for my Sunday School class, and in prayer and studying your Word.' I started to be faithful in tithing—this was the start. I did not receive a raise, but I was able to start paying off our bills, and we began building a savings account. I put myself under Pastor Martinez's leadership. I am strong-willed, and it was sometimes hard to submit to his leadership. But I supported and worked with him for one year without complaint." In December 2021, Pastor Martinez went home to be with the Lord. Then, Ron Burnette became the interim pastor.

Ruby Altaha, and her husband, Delbert, are students in the Native School of Ministry (NSM) on the White Mountain Apache Rez. Ruby's sisters, DeJean and Janet, are also taking classes. At first, when Ruby told Delbert that she wanted to take ministry classes, he asked, "Why? Do you want to become a preacher?" She said, "No, I just want more of the Lord. I don't know where the Lord is leading me (with this)." She says, "Sometimes you think you have gotten to a good place spiritually, but God shows you that there is more, and He shows new things to you."

Ruby grew up in a two-room home with two brothers and sisters. They had elec-

tricity but no running water. They needed to get water by walking to Cedar Creek, which has since dried up. Her parents were alcoholics, and her father was violent and physically abusive. She says, "Even as a little girl not knowing about Jesus, I was hungry for God. I used to go with Mom to the Catholic church early in the morning before oth-



Ruby Altaha

ers were up. Then I went to the Lutheran church for the kids' services. We learned (the hymn) What a Friend We Have in Jesus, and I knew all the words for a long time. Later, my older sister, DeJean, was invited to Cedar Creek AG for a VBS. We all went, and I accepted Jesus as my Savior through this."

As a child, Ruby attended church faithfully along with her sisters, even though her parents did not come and continued

abusing alcohol. She says, "A van with a rounded front used to come from the church to pick us up. We would yell, 'The snub-nosed bus is coming!' We were excited and yearned to be at church. We stuck with it because Sis. Pearl and Sis. Ann took us under their wings. I used to sit up front and ask for prayers for Mom and Dad. I saw other families (all together), and I wanted Mom to be in church with us." They went to all the church services, "We took communion, and we prayed. I always prayed that God would get a hold of my mom. One night, God delivered her from alcohol and saved her, but it took several more years for Dad to get saved.

Her father used to go to a bar called Bill's Bar. A dog hung out at the door, but it never bothered her father. One time, the dog jumped up and bit him hard. He had to get rabies shots because no one knew anything about the dog. The doctor told her father, "Because of the shots, you cannot drink. Sometime after he stopped drinking, her father gave his life to Jesus. Ruby notes, "My Dad grew up traditionally, and his father was a medicine man, so it was hard for him to let go of those teachings."

Her mother died in 1994 as a strong Christian who ministered throughout

ON A PERSONAL

Theresa and I are well. When you receive this newsletter, we will be just beginning a two-week vacation that we planned some time ago and have been looking forward to.

The Native School of Ministry on the White Mountain Apache Rez continues to go well, and we are just beginning the 6th course. A couple of students have needed to drop out for personal reasons. Two others will continue but at a slower pace, so I will work with them separately from the main group. I have also planned a month of itineration in the New York City area this coming September. During this time, a friend will teach the Native Ministry School in my stead.

Theresa's school has begun its summer camp sessions. Previously, the school accepted

children as old as 10 years for the summer camps, but this proved difficult. This year the school only enrolled kids six and under, so it is a better dynamic. The school's administrator wants Theresa to begin training her replacement and intends to move Theresa to the position of reading specialist and resource director next January. So, changes are coming for Theresa.

Alicia has left Levi and is seeking a divorce. This is difficult for Levi and the boys. Please keep them in your prayers.

Caleb and Erin are doing well. Caleb continues to enjoy the shorter shifts and pleasanter clientele at the hospital, where he now serves as a paramedic. They continue to work out of their garage forging

NOTE

knives and are building a good reputation and clientele.

As always, thanks for all your prayers and support!

**Peruvian owls always hunt in pairs.
It's because they are Inca hoots.**



the Rez, especially at wakes and funerals. After, her father picked up his wife's mantle. She says, "This kept him going, and he became a strong Christian. He had a lot of health problems and was always fearful of death. But he began to have dreams, including a vision of heaven that he told us about. He went to be with the Lord in 2011 and was at peace." Ruby believes that her parents' salvation is a result of her and her sister's prayers. She says, "God is faithful. He can use young children. I work with kids sometimes and encourage them to go to church. I grew up without my parents in church. Sometimes we would go and had no meal. However, DeJean and I tried to care for our younger siblings."

Though Ruby gave her life to Jesus as a child, she faced struggles as she grew. She began to drink and abuse alcohol. She continued to go to church sometimes on Sunday mornings, but she notes, "I was just occupying a pew. I would clean up but then fall off the wagon again. When I went to church I felt guilty." However, she says, "I had a really good pastor who loved me and did not condemn me. He showed support and was always happy to see me at church. He never really corrected me. Instead, he told me he was praying for me and loved me." This made a big difference for Ruby.

She married Delbert, but they separated and were divorced from 1984-1986. "This was a painful time, and I was drinking more and more. I tried AA, but it did not help me. In 1987 I went on a drinking binge. I was tired and frustrated. I called out, 'Lord, if You are real and if You love me, then deliver me from this alcohol.' Then, like the snap of a finger, I never wanted to drink again. Sometime later, Ruby and Delbert remarried each other.

Today, Ruby is the director of a non-profit group called the Community Development Corporation (CDC), where she also writes and manages grants. Recently, the CDC won a 3.3-million-dollar grant for the White Mountain Apache sawmill. She was also a firefighter when she was younger, but "I wanted to use my brains rather than my muscles." She left firefighting in 1984, took classes, and began working in business offices. She is a member of the tribe's Economic Development Committee, which addresses many of the needs of the Rez. Ruby teaches the English adult Sunday School class at Cedar Creek AG, has been the women's director, helps with the church finances, and is the Treasurer on the church board. Her Sunday School class is one of the best I have attended in years. Rather than using a canned curriculum, she prays for the Holy Spirit's guidance and digs into God's Word for her studies. As a result, her materials are fresh, personal, and relevant to the needs and concerns of the people. Because of this, the classes are thought-provoking and interactive.

At one point, a previous pastor's wife, Sis. O'Dell was teaching the English Sunday School. Ruby notes that she was a good teacher and singer. When the O'Dells left the church, Ruby told Sis. O'Dell, "I want your anointing." She says she is intimidated when other ministers attend her class. However, she notes that one well known Native evangelist came and visited her class once. He liked the lesson so much that he turned the material into a sermon. She says, "I was amazed and encouraged." She also feels like God is giving her messages, but she has nowhere to share them. She feels there is a reason that God is giving her visions and dropping Scriptures into her heart and mind, so she is now going back

and studying and writing about them. As she prepares for class, these things come together.

She says, "At a certain point, I stop, but then the Holy Spirit shows me more. For example, last May, I did a lesson on Psalm 1 that discusses how blessed the man is who walks in God's ways. I was in a gift shop browsing and came across a little pendant with a tree on it. It described a family as a tree. Then Psalm 1:3 came to my mind, "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water...." The Holy Spirit spoke to me about the need to be like that tree with strong roots so it stands strong regardless of how violent the current of the water gets. I bought the pendant. A week later, Delbert was diagnosed with cancer. When you hear 'cancer,' you worry about death. But the Holy Spirit reminded me of the tree and that I needed to be strong and rooted. The tree had a significant meaning for me, but I stopped there. Then the Holy Spirit reminded me that there is more—the need to be fruitful. So, I went back and studied more. I cross-referenced the tree in Ezekiel and the Tree of Life in Revelation. I had stopped at "be strong" but realized there was more and that I needed to go deeper.

Ruby notes the NSM classes are opening her understanding. She has read the OT and NT, but the exercises in the books make her revisit passages and open new insights for her. She also prays that the Lord will show her new things. She says, "I wish I could spend more time and go more in-depth. Ruby is curious about what was happening historically in the surrounding cultures and how this would add to understanding God's Word better. She notes, "Our opinions are fallible, but God's Word is true. This is where study comes in." As we dig deeper, we understand better, more accurately, and more completely.

The Apache Hotshots



Hotshots are firefighters that fight forest fires. Such fires are common in the Southwest, especially AZ & CA, which are now in their wildfire season.

The Fort Apache

Hotshots of Whiteriver, AZ, on the White Mountain Apache Rez, was the first nationally funded all-Native American hotshot crew in the country. The hand crew was known for its outstanding performance on the fireline and caught the attention of others who suggested to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) that they develop a hotshot crew from these firefighters. Since 1982 Fort Apache has been a fully certified Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC). The Apache Hotshots fight fires in AZ and throughout the nation but are now known as the Southwest Firefighters.

Life on the Rez is hard; jobs are scarce and good jobs are even rarer. The teens and young adults get into trouble on the Rez. All the problems in big cities exist on the Rez, including drugs and substance abuse. Role models are scarce, and as a result, firefighters are held in high regard.

Ruby Altaha served as a firefighter in the 80s, noting that the pay was good and that the fire department was always a good place to go for a summer job. She served on Apache crews 6 & 7, fighting fires and thinning undergrowth. In the past, her husband, Delbert, also worked in the forestry department and as a firefighter.

The work is hard, but the pay is good. Remaining a firefighter requires regular endurance testing and performance reviews. Timber is an important resource for the White Mountain Apache, so they believe they must do everything they can to protect their forests and communities from forest fires.



Apache 8 Crew

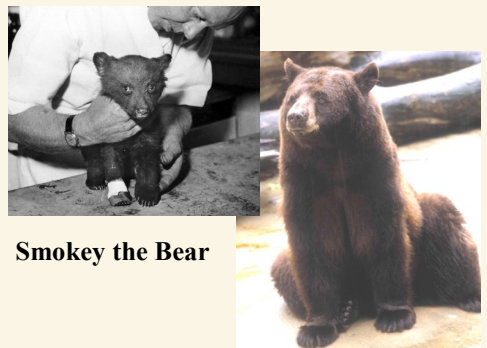
the Civilian Conservation Corp was established. It

PBS did a documentary on one of the all-women Apache Hotshots in the 1980s called the Apache 8. Ruby notes there are three other all-female crews, Apache 2, 6, & 7. Apache 1 & 9 are all male crews.

The establishment of Native firefighting units began in the early 1930s when Franklin Roosevelt was president. In 1933

engaged in various fire prevention projects and had a Native division. However, the program was terminated in 1942. After WWII, tourism created an uptick in forest fires, and in 1949, some 134,000 acres of Native timber were burned in the Southwest. In 1948, the BIA forest manager at the Mescalero Apache Rez in NM trained 19 Mescalero firefighters who called themselves the Mescalero Red Hats. They were the first organized Native wildfire crew, and their effectiveness led to the creation of others.

In 1950, while fighting a fire in Lincoln National Forest, NM, the Red Hats, along with the Zuni and Santo Domingo crews, rescued a bear cub with badly burned paws. This cub is the famed Smokey the Bear, now called Smokey Bear.



Smokey the Bear