



Elders Chair: Frank Hurd, 88 Years Young and Still Dancing

Printed in The DeBahJiMon March 2004

Interview and photograph by Patsy Gordon

Nestled into their warm and modest 3-room house with their two dogs, “Nicki” and “Chico”, Frank and Louise Hurd seemed content. Even without transportation, they seemed settled and satisfied with their lives even though they are limited to staying at home much of the time. The Hurds do not own a car and with no relatives living near, they are forced to depend upon a volunteer driver or Leech Lake Transportation to take care of their business, such as grocery shopping, medical appointments, attend the pow-wows, etc. The only trouble with that, Louise says, is they have to call a week ahead of time, sometimes 2 weeks, to get on their list which forces them to sometimes cancel their appointments and have to reschedule. They enjoyed and really made use of the Leech Lake Elders Division when someone from that office would come to their house to check in on them and take them to the laundromat or to the pow-wows. Louise said, “Since they cut the elders program now, we just stay at home and behave. That’s all there is to do.”

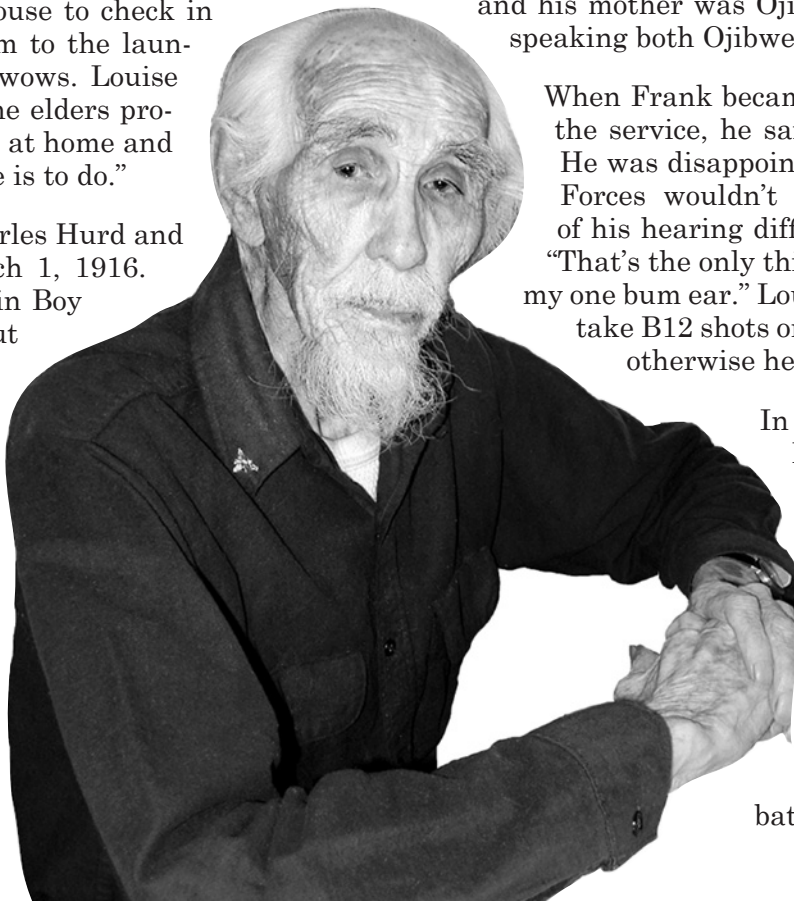
Frank was born to Charles Hurd and Mary Lincoln on March 1, 1916. He was born at home in Boy River, Minnesota, but raised mostly around the Old Agency area in Onigum and Walker. Frank was proud to tell me that his mother was a full-blooded Chippewa, and he had 9 siblings, 4 brothers and 5 sisters. Because Frank has always had trouble with his hearing and has lost much of his memories due to age, it was difficult for him to

hear or understand me as I visited with him. So Louise, his wife, filled in the blanks when Frank was unable to hear or did not understand. Louise told me that Frank and she didn’t have any children, but Frank did have two boys before he married her, who live elsewhere, and 2 daughters who are now deceased. Frank did tell me that he had a daughter that was born in the 1950’s in Madison, Wisconsin, that he lost track of and he now has no idea of her whereabouts or if she is even still living. Together Frank and Louise raised a niece who was only 10 months old at the time the little girl came to live with them.

Frank lived in Tomah, Wisconsin for part of his life as a young boy and attended school there through the 6th grade. Since Frank’s father was white and his mother was Ojibwe, Frank grew up speaking both Ojibwe and English.

When Frank became old enough to join the service, he said he went to enlist. He was disappointed when the Armed Forces wouldn’t accept him because of his hearing difficulties. Frank says, “That’s the only thing wrong with me is my one bum ear.” Louise said Frank must take B12 shots on a regular basis, but otherwise he’s healthy.

In 1989, Frank and Louise moved into the house where they live now. They bought the cabin from a resort and fixed it up, which is what they now call home. The house came with no running water and only a small bathroom. The Reser-



vation put in running water for them and made the bathroom bigger which they are thankful for.

When I've attended pow-wows in the past, I recall seeing a thin, elderly man who was always dressed in his regalia and was out there dancing in the ring, and I would wonder who he was. Today, I know. Frank still gets dressed to dance and enjoys joining in the pow-wows whenever he can. Louise said Frank fell and broke his hip in 2001 and quit dancing after that, but still tries to dance, but is unable to stay on his feet for long periods of time now because of the injury.

Frank's favorite past time is reading and playing cards. His favorite food is soup. Louise said, "He's a soup eater, he loves crackers, especially those little tiny ones, those Hi-Ho crackers." Frank likes to get out and exercise whenever he can, although it is hard for him to get out and do much in the wintertime. But in the summer months, he does get

out and takes walks on the road near his home. Although Frank doesn't remember much about harvesting wild rice, picking berries, tapping trees, and other traditional activities, he mentioned a few times about playing the moccasin game. I gathered he was very fond of that game.

On February 6th, Frank and Louise celebrated their 50th (Golden) wedding anniversary. ■

