

People

**Citizen wins two national Red Cross honors**  
 TULSA—Muscogee citizen Dannette Russell Geren, has been chosen American Red Cross outstanding health and safety services volunteer worker. She received the national award May 18 in Louisville, Ken. at the Red Cross annual convention awards breakfast.

Geren has been named to the American Red Cross President's Fund for Cultural Diversity Ambassadors Program, also. She was nominated for the program by the Southwest Region of the American Red Cross.

Since joining the Tulsa Chapter in 1993, Geren has been instrumental in the development of an American Indian HIV/AIDS education curriculum.



Geren

She teaches classes, trains instructors, recruits, and locates funding for the American Indian Decision to Survive (AIDS) program. Geren trains instructors for the Tulsa area chapter HIV/AIDS teen peer education program, Students Teaching AIDS to Youth.

With her emphasis on Indian groups, Geren has sought key members of the Indian community—elders, medicine men, and tribal leaders—to join the Red Cross in its quest to share information with Indians.

Since developing the nation's only culturally-specific HIV/AIDS education program for American Indians, Geren has visited other states to educate Indians about HIV/AIDS, to train curriculum instructors, and to facilitate planning and form coalitions as well.

She is employed by the Regional AIDS Interfaith Network (Rain).

Organizations

Chilocco Reunion

TULSA—The Chilocco Alumni Reunion will be June 12 through 15 at the Sheraton Inn, 10918 East 41st Street. The annual all-school gathering begins June 12. The powwow will be June 13 at 5:30 p.m. The veterans breakfast is June 14 from 8 to 10 a.m. Reservations are required and the cost is \$10 per person. The business meeting, slide show, and banquet will follow. The 5:30 p.m. banquet too, requires reservations and the cost is \$20 per person. A dance will begin at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door.

A church service will be held the morning of June 15. The hotel room rate is \$59 per night plus tax. The deadline to reserve a room at that rate is May 29. For more information, contact Emma Jean Falling between 7 and 10 p.m. at (918) 266-1626.

Sons of Confederate Veterans

OKMULGEE—Sons of Confederate Veterans is an international organization with membership worldwide. The group is seeking to create a camp in Okmulgee. The group will be at the tribal festival June 21 to distribute information about the group. An organizational meeting will begin at 7 p.m., July 7 at the tribal capitol complex. For more information, contact Jack Westbrook at (918) 252-2890.

Citizen's autobiography one of hope and endurance

*Son of Two Bloods*, Mendoza, Vincent; 164 pages, University of Nebraska Press, 1996

Muscogee citizen Vincent Mendoza is the author of *Son of Two Bloods*, an engaging autobiography recently published by the University of Nebraska Press. The book was winner of the North American Indian Prose Award in 1995.

The book's title refers to Mendoza's mixed heritage—the offspring of a Muscogee mother and a Mexican father. Martha Mae McIntosh met Concepcion "Concho" Mendoza at Cains Ballroom in Tulsa, where she had moved after graduating from Chilocco Indian School. Martha's parents were Newman and Annie McIntosh of Hitchita.

Mendoza began writing his autobiography nearly ten years ago, while recovering from surgery. He originally planned to focus on his experiences in the U.S. Marine Corps, but the manuscript grew to include reminiscences from his childhood and married life as well.

*Son of Two Bloods* begins with four-year-old Vincent's trip to Claremore Indian Hospital to visit his great-grandmother. Sissy Kernels lay near death, and Vincent remembers her as his link to traditional Mvskoke life before the Civil War. As a young girl, she was among the Loyal Creeks who fled north to Kansas with Opotheyahola.

Mendoza dedicated this book to his grandchildren, and it is clear that he places a high value on family relations.

The Mendozas lived on the north side of Tulsa in a neighborhood near other Mexican families. They attended a local Catholic church as well as Okmulgee Indian Baptist Church, where Vincent's grandfather, Newman McIntosh, was preacher. The McIntosh family camp house became an important part of Vincent's childhood.

But it was also a place where he "felt like an oddball, a boy without a race." Mendoza grew up attending Mexican fiestas and Muscogee church meetings while participating in more typically American pastimes as well—swimming, bicycling, Little League baseball, and Boy Scouts. Mendoza's struggle with identity and encounters with prejudice are recurring themes in his autobiography.

Vincent learned to play the saxophone while in elementary school. He became the youngest member of the Mendoza family mariachi band led by his uncle Claude. Vincent later organized his own band and played at Mexican dances throughout Oklahoma.

As a teenage athlete, he dreamed of being the next Jim Thorpe.

Mendoza enlisted in the Marines after graduating from high school in 1966 with the intent of avenging the death of his best friend. He was surprised and disappointed when he found himself assigned to the military postal service. His tour of duty took him to Okinawa and Vietnam, where he eventually saw action in 1969 and "cheated death three times." The deaths of several more close friends and work on board a hospital ship gave Mendoza a deeper appreciation for the value of life.

Discharged in 1970, Mendoza returned to Tulsa where he married and started a family. He worked at various jobs and got involved in community and church activities during the 1970s and '80s. He was busy pursuing the American dream when tragedy struck again in the form of the cancer-related deaths of an adopted son in 1991 and of his wife, Debbie a year later.

Mendoza faced loneliness and despair, but his autobiography ends on an optimistic note. "Endure, the weep, endure, and be rewarded, endure and rejoice, endure and learn, coming full circle...eternal." He remarried in 1994 and moved to McAlester with his new wife, Alice.

*Son of Two Bloods* is written in an informal and candid style that allows Mendoza's lighthearted attitude toward life to take center stage. Playful anecdotes scattered throughout the book demonstrate his mischievous sense of humor, and he also has a flair for romance.

But Mendoza believes in the importance of "the invisible world" as well; a theme he comes back to many times in this work. His life story is testimony to the power of faith in the midst of struggle.

— by James Treat, University of New Mexico.

**Editor's note:** Treat is a Muscogee citizen and a professor of anthropology.

Events

Scouting conference set

HARTFORD, Conn. — The American Indian Scouting Association will hold its 40th annual seminar for youth and adults at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn. July 12 through 16. The host tribes are Pequot Nations, the Eastern Pequot Nation, and the Mashantucket Pequot Nation.

Participants will include both Indian and non-Indian youth (ages 12 through 17) and adults, who explore strategies for youth development and improvement of life in Indian communities through Girl and Boy Scouting programs and services.

For more information and registration, contact: Rita Niemeyer, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., 420 Fifth Ave. 15th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or Conrad L. Fruehan, Boy Scouts of America, 1325 Walnut Hill Lane, P.O. Box 152079, Irving, TX 75015-2079.

Class of 1997

The Muscogee Nation News special feature for graduates will appear in the June edition. To be considered for inclusion the student must be an enrolled member of the Muscogee Nation and be graduating from high school, college, university, or other institute of higher learning. Submissions must be received by June 2. Please keep information to the following:

- name of graduate and tribal enrollment number;
- name of graduating institution;
- parents, spouse, grandparents, or guardians;
- scholarships, scholastic honors; extracurricular activities; other awards; and future plans.

Photographs can be either black and white or color but must be focused clearly. Please do not use ink to write on the back of the photograph. Include a return address for photos with the graduate's information.

The MNN reserves the right to edit all submissions. Address submissions to: The Muscogee Nation News, P.O. Box 580, Okmulgee, OK 74447.