Citizen's autobiography one of hope and endurance

Son of Two Bloods, Mendoza, Vincent
184 pages, University of Nebraska Press, 1996

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 Caido. Vincent later organized his own band and played at Mexican dances throughout Oklahoma. As an 18-year-old, 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 was assigned to the 8th Infantry Division. When he returned home, he began writing his autobiography nearly ten years after 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 his war-time life as well.

Son of Two Bloods began with four-year-old Vincent's trip to Claremore Indian Hospital to visit his great-grandmother. Her mother, Josephine Kettles, lay near death, and Vincent remembers her as his link to the traditional Muskokee life before the Civil War. As a young girl, she was among the Loyals who died from typhoid fever in Kansas and Oklahoma.

Mendoza dedicated this book to his grandchildren and it is clear 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 Sacred Heart Indian Baptist Church, where Vincent's grandmother, Neoma McIntosh, was preacher. The McIntosh family moved house was a great event in the Mendozas' life.

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

Events

Scouting conference set
HARTFORD, Conn. — The American Indian Scouting Association will hold its 17th annual seminar for youth and adults at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., July 15 through 16. The host tribes are Pequot Nation, 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. Fries, Boy Scouts of America, 1325 Walnut Hill Lane, P.O. Box 192079, Irving, TX 75015-0797.

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; tribal scholarships, internships, extracurricular activities, other awards; and future plans.

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

The MNM reserves the right to crop all submitted photographs.

Address submissions to: The Muscogee Nation News, P.O. Box 580, Okmulgee, OK 74447.