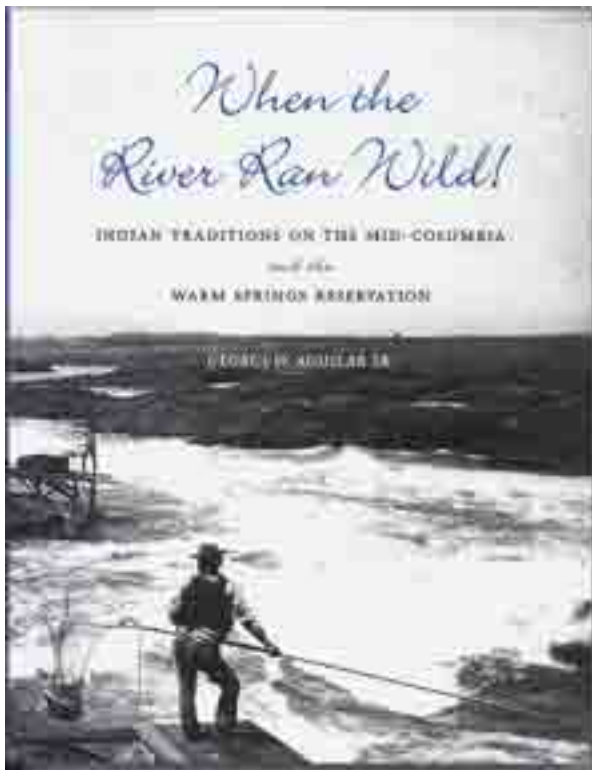


W I L D H O R S E R E S O R T C A S I N O

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For Immediate Release

Tamastlikt to welcome author of personal story of 20th century Indian life on the Columbia River



When the River Ran Wild!



George Aguilar

Life for Columbia River Indians in the first half of the 20th century was a sad time. Not only was the federal government bent on devastating their river but also Tribal members ran into racist putdowns with nearly every encounter with American officialdom.

In a remarkable first-person book just such an Indian, now in his seventh decade, describes those stories as well as some of the happy times—and there were many. George Aguilar, author of *When*

the River Ran Wild! will speak of his experiences and sign his book at Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute on Sat. Sept. 3 at 1 p.m.

Born on Feb. 22, 1930, Aguilar is a Kiksht Chinookan with the Warm Springs Tribe. Within two years of his birth both parents died and he was raised by his grandparents, Hattie and James Polk, Jr., from whom he learned the traditional Tribal practices by, "watching, doing and above all being a good listener." His education ended at the eighth grade and he worked many physically demanding jobs, including three years in the Army. He and his wife, Ella Kurip, a Ute from Fort Duchesne, Utah, have five children and live on the Warm Springs reservation.

"It's my turn now," says Aguilar, to tell of watching his grandmother make moccasins by the light of a coal-oil lamp or of riding to the huckleberry picking while strapped to the back of his grandmother's horse. And how he learned to use traditional techniques for catching salmon, along with hearing all the ancient tales attached to each fishing site along the mighty Columbia.

But Aguilar provides more than personal stories, although those are the best part of this well-written chronicle. He also provides background through his research into the journals and diaries of early White missionaries and settlers, such as Gabriel Franchere, Rev. Henry Perkins of Wascopum Mission, and A.B. Meacham. He found other stories in anthropological papers and historical studies that record the voices of people who practiced and remembered ceremonies and practices that were lost or changed during the difficult years of removal to the Warm Springs Reservation in north-central Oregon. He heard others from tribal elders who have kept the history and stories of the River People in their memories.

What were the traditional fishing taboos at the camps along the big river? Or how was life lived in the 1930's at the famous Celilo Falls fishing site? Describe the traditional plants—in absorbing detail Aguilar tells us about venerable cultural practices. But more current is the story of the boarding schools where Indian parents were forced to send their children. What was that like?

Or how three police cars in Central Oregon, enforcing the 1940's ban on Indians possessing alcohol, pulled over his Uncles Henry and Alvin returning with their children from a fishing outing and found their whiskey. The officers, not getting the information they wanted quickly enough, beat the men with fists and nightsticks in front of their wives and children. When the uncles

were seized and locked up 13-year-old Aguilar got his first driving experience, taking everyone home to Warm Springs in a 1936 Ford Tudor at 25 mph in second gear. As he writes, "many of those who are 75 to 90 years old can tell stories like these."

He tells his own story of returning home in 1952 from an Army posting. "The clean-cut noncommissioned-uniformed Sergeant First Class of the U.S. Army made no difference to the Whites; there was still an Indian in it." Aguilar tells us this as he describes how he waited a long time in a barbershop in The Dalles only to be told, "We can't cut your hair, but there's a place on the other side of town that will cut Indians hair. Go over there."

As Aguilar might agree, not all change is for the better, but not all change is bad, either. The book is a great read for anyone interested in cultural traditions of the area's Native peoples, traditions that have taken a battering but remain alive today, just like the people who've kept them alive.

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute is located at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, 10 minutes east of Pendleton. From Interstate 84 take exit 216 and follow the signs five minutes to Wildhorse Resort and the Institute. Coming from the north, take the Mission exit from Highway 11 just northeast of Pendleton and follow the signs for about ten minutes to the Wildhorse Resort and the Institute. Tamástslikt is open 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. In addition to exhibits telling the story of the three Tribes' history and culture, there is also a Museum Store and the Kinship Café.

For more information: 541-966-9748 or www.tamastsligt.com. Direct dial the museum store at tollfree 1-866-282-2022. Tamástslikt is owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

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