

# Wounded Knee's scars not erased by the years

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"The bureaucracy had resulted in conditions of poverty and deprivation among the Indians," Roubideaux said.

"Things were unbelievably tense." He said he had represented Indians jailed for criminal and militant offenses, so he was asked to be AIM's chief negotiator. "They trusted me. They couldn't trust white lawyers," he said.

### Second massacre

"They all really expected the government to move and wipe them out. In fact, we almost had a second Wounded Knee massacre before the negotiations."

Roubideaux said the Indians would have benefited by the terms of the first negotiations, but the militants would not accept it.

"It was too bad that a couple of the AIM leaders were out for national attention. They wanted major recognition. I think the plight of the Indians was lost in the striving for national recognition.

"It got to be where it wasn't constructive anymore—it just kept boiling. The Indians lost favor with the American public, the press and with the Indian people, too. They let a golden opportunity to change the Indian situation slip through their grasp."

Father Manhardt said there is a radical difference between Indians reared on the reservation and those who live elsewhere. He cited Russell Means and Dennis Banks, AIM leaders in the takeover, as examples.

"You have to live on the reservation to understand it," Manhardt said. "Many of these people involved in the

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takeover had not lived here. They just didn't know the values the people on the reservation hold."

But one missionary on the reservation who did not want to be identified, said the same politics exist on the reservation today.

People who support AIM and those who support the Tribal Council seldom say where they stand, the missionary said. He added, however, that there is still a political power struggle between two factions.

The Gildersleeves, their home and trading post, were caught in the middle.

The 11 hostages were allowed to leave after the third day of the siege, but they remained.

"It was our home," said Mrs. Gildersleeve. "Why should we leave?"

After 10 days, though, there was nothing to stay for, Gildersleeve said, so they packed up a few belongings and fled the occupied village.

They went to Rushville, Neb., and lived in borrowed or rented dwellings for three months. They since have bought a white, blue-shuttered, one-story frame home in Rushville, about 37 miles from Wounded Knee.

"We lost everything when we left Wounded Knee," Mrs. Gildersleeve said in the living room of their new home.

The Gildersleeves took out a \$20,000 loan from the First National Bank of Gordon, Neb., to buy the home. In addition, they had to buy all new furniture and household goods.

"We're in one hell of a lot of debt," Gildersleeve said, "but we have hope that we can get out of it."

The Gildersleeves have retained five lawyers in Washington, D.C., to represent them. They seek reparations from the federal government for property lost in the occupation. That includes an estimated \$100,000 in antiques from their "Biggest Little Museum in the United States."

"We tried like hell to get somebody out to help us when those AIM people came into Wounded Knee, but nobody ever came," Gildersleeve said. "We think the government owes us something for not even trying to help us."

### Leaders dispersed

The AIM leaders during the Wounded Knee occupation have dispersed.

Dennis Banks is in California awaiting an appeal for extradition to South Dakota to face charges resulting from the takeover of a courthouse.

Russell Means was released from the South Dakota Penitentiary Thursday after serving 10 days in a dispute over an alleged bond violation stemming from an incident in the Sioux Falls Courthouse. He said he does not plan to resume AIM leadership.

Lloyd Grimm, 61, the federal marshal for Nebraska who was shot and paralyzed from the waist down during the siege, lives in Omaha.

He refuses to talk about the incident.

Lawrence "Buddy" Lamonte, the Indian who was shot and killed during the siege, is buried just east of the mass grave of his ancestors.

Ramon Roubideaux said his law practice was "practically ruined" because of his involvement in Wounded Knee. His law practice involving personal injury and criminal defense cases is now improving, though, he said.

Father Manhardt plans to return to the Pine Ridge Reservation within a year.

And the Gildersleeves still have Indian visitors from Wounded Knee.

"Our Indian friends often come into town and tell us how sorry they are that the bad things happened," Gildersleeve said. "They really want us to go back out and start the trading post again."

"I would like to, but I could never go back there," he said. "I am just getting too old for that sort of thing, and you never know what might happen the next time."

### Seldom visits

Gildersleeve seldom visits his 40 acres at Wounded Knee. His wife, still scared, never does.

And, when Gildersleeve does go to the old trading post, he reminisces about how it was in the old days—when

**'I would like to (start the trading post again), but I could never go back there.'**

he and all the Indians were friends.

"I am about as pro-Indian as anybody," he said.

"They have plenty of things to gripe about, but what right do they have to hold us responsible? I never had a cross word with any of the Indians, never since I went to school with them when I was 14.

"They are really some of the nicest people I have ever met."

Now, he says, the politics and factions on the reservations make it both an unpleasant place to visit and a dangerous place to live.

Roubideaux said he believes there are going to be several more Wounded Knees.

"As long as the conditions of poverty and deprivation are there, the potential is there," he said.

He said the Indians need self-government, not government by permission—which he contends the Tribal Council is.

But for now, Wounded Knee is quiet, except for an occasional knife or gunfight on weekends when Indians go a couple of miles to the Nebraska bordertown of Whiteclay for a weekend's supply of liquor.

If it weren't for two metal signs pointing out the scene of the 1890 massacre, Wounded Knee probably would go unnoticed.

An occasional car meanders up the road to the mass gravesite. Someone will get out and walk through the quiet cemetery, which overlooks the massacre site in the gulch.

Wounded Knee is beginning to heal, but other wounds are bound to fester—infected with Indian frustration over their conditions.

Weeds choke the remains of the 1973 siege.

Underneath, the Wounded Knee trading post lies rusting.

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