

HAZEL PETE SAVES THE DAY [DRAFT]

Hazel Pete could twist me around her little finger. She first came to me on the important personal business of trying to get as much academic credit as possible from the Santa Fe school of art [*NEED NAME*]. One of my assignments as an academic dean involved collaboration with the Registrar's Office, mainly to help explain our curriculum and transcripts to the outside world and to help adjudicate the transfers of credit from other institutions for students entering Evergreen. Hazel, whose braids were already steel-grey, had earned the Santa Fe credit quite a while ago, and we had to figure out how much of her work there counted for how many Evergreen units. As usual, I was torn between sympathy for the person facing me and the abstract duty of making sure that all credit accepted by and awarded by Evergreen could count as hard currency. Hazel and I worked it out to the satisfaction of the Registrar.

My strongest memories of her from those early days, however, come from the number of visits she made to my office when the academic deans' area was located in LAB I. Our offices were on the first floor, around the lounge between the faculty mail boxes and the glassed-in meeting room. My desk stood along a side wall; a chair for individual appointments stood against the wall on the right-hand side of the desk. Two more chairs were lined up at my back against the opposite wall. At my desk, I was sitting in profile to anyone in the lounge when my door was open, as it usually was unless I was engaged in confidential business with students or colleagues or unless loud conversations were going on in the lounge. Hazel somehow figured out a way, when I was doing paper work or talking on the phone, to slip silently into my office and sit absolutely still. Sometimes I wouldn't even see her come in but just felt her presence behind me. I would swivel my chair around, and there she would be – patient and pleasantly smiling with a twinkle in her eye. A great actor has said that one can build up power and dignity and persuasiveness on stage by sitting absolutely still; Hazel may never have heard of this trait, but she exemplified it.

“O.K., Hazel, what can I do for you?” She would begin with, “We were wondering if ...” A request would follow, involving support for a visiting speaker, or a performing group, or a symposium, or a festival. Sometimes the support would entail the deans' official blessing of the special event. At others, the Native American contingent on campus needed some additional clout to have space allocated for the event, or to insure the collaboration of another office on campus. At still other times, the request was for some matching funds from the budget I controlled for supporting performances and exhibitions. There was no hard sell. The request was always made modestly, simply, and reasonably. I do not recall ever having turned Hazel down. Whoever the “we” were who sent her surely knew what they were doing. And when she would turn the conversation to how I was doing, the gesture was not perfunctory. She cared.

Hazel was one of the students involved in an important project for the Chehalis people. I had first heard about it when dealing with GERRY ??? [*NEED TO FIND OUT FROM NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES OR CHEHALIS TRIBE THE NAME OF THIS ORGANIZER AND FROM REGISTRAR THE DATES OF HER AND THEN HER CO-WORKERS' CONTRACTS; IT WOULD BE GREAT TO GET A COPY OF HAZEL'S CONTRACT FOR THE PROJECT*] in a series of contracts and attempts to get financial backing for travel and research costs. She was concerned with developing Chehalis

Tribal archives. The earliest documents mentioning the Chehalis people had been written by Roman Catholic missionaries, the Oblate Fathers (the “priests” of Priest Point), who had come into the region to spread the Word and seek converts. They had written their reports in French, and the documents were now housed in their chapter house in Montreal. Gerry [?] worked hard on her French, made the trip to Montreal, and photocopied the crucial documents for later translation. The next step would involve having several Chehalis people negotiate part-time individual contracts for the study of archiving techniques and for the work of archiving the documents. Hazel would be one of these researchers. Whereas the other people were signing up for four quarter-credit hours, Hazel was signing up for eight, because she would also be doing internships in public schools to present Native American songs and artistic techniques to the pupils and teachers. For these activities, she was seeking to earn eight quarter-credit hours.

It would be useful to find some money beyond the College to support the tuition of the contract students and the costs of setting up the archives. For what comes next in the story, I shall ask you to bear with a digression.

From 1967 on, I had been involved in fund-raising for projects in the humanities and, to a lesser extent, in the arts. Between 1967 and 1971, I wrote the proposals and served as project director for four grants made by the National Endowment for the Humanities -- in the capacity of Humanities Coordinator in the Great Lakes Colleges Association, a consortium of twelve private colleges which included Oberlin College. When I came to Evergreen, I wrote the proposal for and directed the workings of an NEH Planning Grant, which we used for some planning but mostly for analyses of what our interdisciplinary college had been doing in the humanities during our first two years.

In these early days of Evergreen, the academic deans did most of the initial interviewing of candidates for the faculty, often by flying around the country and having the candidates in the various regions come to meet us in Washington, D.C., New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. When I would go east, I would combine the interviewing with visits to foundation offices in New York and the Endowments and Office of Education in D.C. Because I always asked for travel funds as part of the grant proposals so that I could make periodic reports in person, I was able to defray some of the interview-travel costs for Evergreen. This kind of piggy-backing, however, led to some drastic psychological shifts for me. At the beginning of a working day in the East, I would be with a candidate for the faculty, simultaneously trying to describe what we were after while assessing whether this person, sitting on the edge of her chair, might be right for us. Then I would get a cab and sit on the edge of a chair in a foundation or Endowment office, trying to talk the officer grilling me into giving Evergreen some money, or trying to be persuasive about how well we were using the money already granted to us.

At the time when we were planning for the Chehalis archives project, I was due for a trip to New York and then Washington, D.C. for interviewing and foundation-hopping. I asked the people in the relatively new Evergreen grants office to identify for me a funding source which was particularly interested in supporting work in Native American culture and history. They found for me a family foundation in New York which included such an interest in its mission statement, and my secretary made an

appointment for me to visit the foundation during my trip. I took along copies of the description of the Chehalis project and of the contracts which all the prospective students had negotiated. After that I would be visiting NEH to make my final report on the Planning Grant, to put in a good word for several NEH Youthgrants for which Greeners were applying, and to lay the groundwork for a further grant proposal.

The visit to the family foundation in New York, after the preparations, the high hopes, and the rehearsing of a fervent sales-pitch, was a failure. Whoever had done the research in the Evergreen grants files had read an outdated bulletin from the foundation rather than the current one. When I started to talk about the Chehalis project, the foundation officer said, "We no longer include support of Native American proposals as part of our mission. Our current mission-statement makes that clear. Would you like a cup of coffee?"

A different sort of problem awaited at the National Endowment for the Humanities. I had to deal with a new administrator. Not only does the adage about new brooms sweeping clean apply here; there may also be a suspicion in the mind of a new program officer that the grantee had been favored in the past as part of an Old Boy network (yes, Old Boy – this was in the early 1970's). The officer appeared somewhat suspicious of me as an object of favoritism, but he was even more suspicious about Evergreen. I had patiently explained to his predecessor what we were trying to do, and why. Eventually I had gotten through. But here was a new person, who had just been studying our catalogue and the descriptive materials in the Planning Grant proposal and preliminary reports.

Well, yes, he could find some merit in our interdisciplinary, team-taught coordinated studies programs. And he understood a group learning contract as a kind of full-time course. But he had grave doubts about our allowing any considerable number of students to earn any considerable amount of credit through individual contracts ... grave doubts. When you are getting ready to ask someone for money, you do not want him to have grave doubts – or any doubts – about your probity, credibility, and standards. I tried to give him examples of successful, credit-worthy contracts. He persisted: "Do you happen to have any actual contracts with you?" I had thought of clearing the New York foundation materials out of my briefcase and leaving them in the hotel room. But I hadn't done so. I fished around and gave him Hazel Pete's contract for the archival work and the public-school internship activities. He examined it carefully, very carefully. He said, "Wait a minute – it's drawn for eight quarter-credit hours. That's only half-time for you people. Do you mean that she's going to be doing all of this and getting only half-time credit?"

I was able to go on about how there will be soft spots in any system but that, because of the kind of doubts he had just expressed, we were trying to assure that Evergreen credit would indeed be hard currency. He suggested that perhaps we should revise Hazel's contract to grant more credit, but he had gotten the point. The rest of our conversation turned on the kind of proposals NEH would be favoring for a new and more ambitious Program-Grant category. Hazel Pete had saved the day.

The last day to be dealt with here came at the graduation ceremony in June of that year. Several days before, Hazel had materialized in my office again, waiting

patiently for me to get done with whatever I was doing. This time, she said, “I was wondering if it would be all right for me to bring my drum to the ceremony and play it and chant on the green mound as the people are gathering.” At that time, the graduation ceremony was, to put it gently, “informal.” Aside from the dignitaries on the platform, hardly anyone wore gowns. Those graduates who did so generally presented parodies of traditional academic regalia. I had not been planning to appear in regalia, but I said, “I’ll tell you what, Hazel. If you promise to play your drum for all of us, I’ll wear my gown for you.” The deal was struck, and that was how things went at graduation.