Fargo radio station features Native American program

Fargo – A North Dakota State University radio program designed to reach a native audience is now on the air. You can find the new program on KNDS LP (low-power) FM 105.9.

Broadcast live, the program runs from 3 to 5 p.m. each Sunday and features a variety of music, from traditional powwow songs to contemporary tunes. In addition to promoting Native American musical artists, the show addresses native issues and features interviews as well as commentary.

Co-hosts Justin Deegan and Prairie Rose are enrolled members of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. On the air, Deegan uses his Indian name, We Cha Najin, which means "Standing Man."

Deegan and Rose are two of the most outstanding Native American leaders of their generation, and producer Casey Borchert is thrilled to bring such talent into his studio. "I’m honored that Justin and Prairie are hosts," Borchert said.

Although the Native American radio program made its premiere Oct. 18, the co-hosts have already received positive feedback and glowing reviews.

"I appreciate that finally there’s a native radio program in our community," said Rose. "Listeners can hear about our culture, activities and events. People are really enjoying it; they think it’s cool. And they want to learn about our issues because they not only affect us but everyone who lives here."

"There’s a definite need to inform the general public about the five percent of the population that we represent," Deegan said. "People need to know what’s happening in Indian County. We need to address the issues and talk about possible solutions. We want to provide an outreach to organizations that can help us with these deficiencies. This radio program is a good starting point."

As yet untitled, the program hosted by Deegan and Rose is believed to be the only Native American radio show in the Red River Valley region.
"The FCC releasing low-power FM licenses is a community-based program," Borchert said. "When we were applying for our license, we thought Native Americans were one of the groups that could benefit the most. Shows like the one hosted by Justin and Prairie fit that community-based purpose."

KNDS LP-FM features a lineup of more than 20 deejays. About half are students attending NDSU and the rest are members from the local community. One deejay, Desiree Redday from Sisseton, S.D., is president of NDSU’s Native American Student Association.

The station license is shared between two non-profit groups, the Fargo Theater Management Group and the Alliance for Arts and Humanities. The Fargo Theater group has formed an on-air organization called Radio Free Fargo. Meanwhile, the Alliance has turned their operations over to a NDSU campus organization called Thunder Radio.

Thunder Radio provides about half of the around-the-clock programming. Although 105.9 is a low-power station, listeners around the world are able to access it via the Internet at thunderradio.com.

Thunder Radio welcomes feedback and suggestions, and Borchert, Deegan and Seminole encouraged readers to contact them.

Casey Borchert can be reached at: caseyborchert@cableone.net. Justin Deegan’s e-mail is: najin_82@yahoo.com. Prairie Rose’s e-mail is: prairie_rose@pepp.org. To call in requests on Thunder Radio, call 701.231.7603.

**FEATURES**

*Communication: Indian style*

*by bettina Heinz*

Communication.

It gives meaning to life, and, for Steven Pratt (Osage), a communication professor at the University of Central Oklahoma, in Edmond, Okla., it has evolved into a way of living research.

Intertwined in his role as communication professor is Pratt’s life as a tribal member of the Osage. He serves as a traditional and ceremonial leader of the Osage Nation.

As a graduate student at the University of Oklahoma, Pratt saw faculty researching American Indian communication.
"This was the first time that I actually understood that Indian communication was unique," Pratt said. He also found, however, that this research mostly consisted of comparing and contrasting Indian and non-Indian communication, and not always in accurate ways.

"I really didn’t think the research was accurately identifying the communicative behavior. For example, a lot was being done on Indian public speaking, but from my experiences what was being identified as Indian speaking wasn’t accurate," Pratt said.

As a trained researcher and a member of the Osage tribe, Pratt knew he had something to offer that few others could: native scholarship.

"Traditionally, Indian people have been viewed through the eyes of non-Indians," he said. "I believe that I have a perspective that non-Indian scholars do not possess."

Better scholarship was not his only aim; Pratt also felt that it was important to be able to affect perceptions, of Indians and non-Indians, toward the academic abilities of Indian students. He could do this in his role as university professor.

Much of Pratt’s research focuses on Osage culture and language. His goal is to help eliminate overgeneralizations about Indian in college textbooks and to help colleagues make their courses more culturally appropriate for Indian students.

Pratt developed an orthography for the Osage language; the Osage language as most other tribal languages was oral and did not have an alphabet nor a user-friendly method of spelling. A dictionary of Osage words had been compiled in the early 1900s by a linguist who used a phonetic alphabet which was and still is, non-decipherable by non-linguists, Pratt said.

"Therefore, I had to create an orthography that would be useful in reading and writing Osage for anyone who wanted to learn the language," he said.

Pratt’s work has been presented at numerous academic conventions and published in a variety of academic journals and books. In 1995, he won the prestigious Newberry Library Fellowship, which allowed him to be in residence at the D’Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian. The program "Indian Voices in the Academy," was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Rockefeller Foundation.

The relationships between language, culture, and communication are at the core of Pratt’s scholarship.
"The Osages, like other tribes, are in danger of losing their language," he said. "Once a tribe loses its language it loses all aspects of the culture. I find it critical that all tribes must work towards language revitilization. I enjoy being able to speak my language and I enjoy sharing it with others and sharing my culture with others and my own people."

In the case of the Osage, other than the recordings Pratt has made focusing upon everyday conversation and cultural life, there are not any available resources.

According to Pratt, "being Indian" is partially the result of socialization, and "Indian-ness" is not always available to all Indians due to relocation or loss of tribal languages.

Many Osages chose to not speak their language, move to urban areas, did not follow or learn tribal culture and did not live their lives as Osage Indians, Pratt said.

"As a result we have had many return to our reservation seeking a sense of identity that has been lacking in their lives. In order to enter or re-enter into our tribal community they have to "learn" how to engage in appropriate Osage behavior -- that is, to learn how to view the world from an Osage perspective," he said.

In other words, Pratt observed, the ability to engage in appropriate Osage communicative behavior is not something that is inherent but must be learned in the context of engaging in the day-to-day affairs of doing-being-becoming Osage.

Most college students of Indian ancestry are not culturally competent as members of their tribes, Pratt maintains, because they have not yet learned how to be reflective about their own behavior. This may become apparent, he said, when a college student becomes excited about public speaking only to return to her or his tribe and learn that only elders may speak on public matters.

Today, Pratt moves between the roles of being a communication professor and an Osage Indian Road Man. An Osage Road Man is a person who conducts the traditional ritual of the Osage Christian way of worship that was adopted by the tribe in the late 1880s. The term refers to the person who conducts the ritual and symbolically leads the participants in prayer in following the Good Road of Life. Pratt sees himself as fortunate in that he is able to serve his Osage people, and Indian people, through being involved with the Native American Church.

He also enjoys being a university professor and being able to engage in research and teaching. "Hopefully, I have a positive impact upon students and others within the academic community that I interact with," he said.

His life as a tribal member and his life as a researcher overlap and allow him to publish academic essays such as "Confessions of a Road Man: Being an Indian in Academe."
Writing of one’s own experiences is not always easy for scholars, even if they study events close to their hearts and homes. Until recently, Pratt has been reluctant to write about his own everyday experiences because in the past, the response to such disclosures has often been culturally insensitive remarks, disapproval, complete misunderstanding, and a barrage of inappropriate questions. His work, however, has convinced him of the continued necessity to point out that cultural misunderstandings exist.

Pratt attributes his current understanding to his everyday experiences as a member of the Osage culture but also to the guidance of his academic mentors.

Now that he has finally become aware of the real-life cultural differences in communication and the problems that occur in living and working in a non-Indian environment, he has been able to integrate these experiences into his research.

"Being a university professor is my career and being Osage is how I live my life. Indian people have always had to maintain such a balance in their lives and I feel blessed that I am able to do this," Pratt said.

To contact Pratt, email him at spratt@ucok.edu. To learn more about the Osage Nation, visit its official web site at http://www.osagetribe.com/.

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**Bobby Gonzales challenges students to seek true history**

by Paul Boswell, *White Earth Band of Chippewa*

Bobby Gonzalez is so unique, multi-talented, and intriguing, it’s next to impossible to put a label on him.

That’s not surprising because Gonzalez dislikes labels. A man whose poems, interests, and opinions have no boundaries, Gonzalez is a free thinker in an era where such thinking is not always encouraged or rewarded. He does not fit neatly into any category and that’s one of the many reasons he’s so fascinating.

Gonzalez lives and works in the Bronx, New York, but travels throughout the United States, visiting schools, colleges, and universities. He is a compassionate poet, acclaimed lecturer, and natural storyteller. He’s given presentations at Carnegie Hall, National Museum of the American Indian, and recently visited the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, as a guest of the Era Bell Thompson Cultural Center.

Gonzalez isn’t sure how many miles he logs each year; he’s too busy to keep track. Twelve months a year, he has opportunities to talk with students from all walks of life about things like true American history, historical injustices, and the loss of liberty.
It’s not a coincidence that Gonzalez’ people are the Tainos, a legendary group of natives who discovered the European explorer Christopher Columbus.

Readers who might raise an eyebrow at the notion that natives discovered Columbus rather than the other way around would be reminded by Gonzalez that, when Columbus set foot on the sandy beaches of this continent in 1492, he had no idea where in the world he was.

Through research, interpretation, and debate, Gonzalez challenges many myths interwoven throughout our nation’s history. Not all students want to hear that what they learned in their history classes isn’t true. "Sometimes they get angry because they haven’t been told the truth. Sometimes they’re in denial about what happened. Or they say, ‘That happened a long time ago.’"

"I want to enlighten other folks about what happened to my nation back in 1492, how we were able to survive, despite the physical and spiritual genocide that followed. We share a common experience with other native people as well."

"I hear so often what great a man Columbus was. It’s incredible that he has more cities and towns named after him than George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. But I’d like people to take the time to sit down and read the diary of Columbus and learn about the atrocities he perpetrated upon my people."

"Oct. 12, 1492 is a date that will live in infamy," Gonzalez said. "We see Columbus in the same way as Jewish people see Adolph Hitler. The year 1492 was the time when, in many ways, our civilization ended and what is called America began."

According to Gonzalez, historians estimate during the five centuries since the arrival of the first Europeans about 90 percent of the native peoples who had been living in the Americans perished through warfare, disease, and physical abuse."

As the bicentennial celebration commemorating the Lewis & Clark Corps of Discovery expedition continues, Gonzalez pointed out that the historic trek across the continent had devastating consequences for native peoples.

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 was the sale of an enormous chunk of real estate is now the United States, with France being paid for land that had been inhabited by people for untold centuries. Following the land sale, the natives were then told that they were no longer subjects of the King of France but now ruled by the President of the United States. Then came a flood of settlers, prospectors, ranchers, farmers, cowboys, hunters, trappers, lawmen, outlaws, U.S. Calvary, and so on.
Thus, the ultimate result of the Lewis & Clark expedition was the widespread destruction and oppression of native villages, culture, traditions, languages, and spiritual. So Gonzalez questions whether native people should join in the current Lewis & Clark celebration, touted as a milestone in our nation’s history.

A seemingly harmless holiday such as Thanksgiving also has dark historical roots. "The Pilgrims were grave robbers and slave traders, and they would kill native people who refused to convert to Christianity," Gonzalez said.

"You won’t find that in any history book. Whenever the dominant society tells us their side of the story, it’s called history. Whenever native people tell their side of the story, it’s called revisionism," he said.

"It’s easier to live in denial and with blinders on. But I strongly believe that we can break the cycle of violence if we could look at history honestly and avoid the same mistakes."

"We have to be very careful drawing on what are called historical documents because they can be misleading," Gonzalez added. "They’re written mostly by non-native people and they’re written by men, who have their own unique perspective."

For Gonzalez, the search for truth is never ending. When he discovers information that was previously unknown to him, he is compelled to comment on its meaning. He said, "Sometimes I’m asked, “Why do you write?” The answer is: ‘Why do you breathe?’ I write to live, and I live to write."

Gonzalez encouraged young scholars to study many different sources in order to develop a balanced perspective of history. He said some official accounts are not always accurate but rather the way those in power at a particular time recorded what took place.

"I advise young people to go to their elders and draw upon the oral histories of their people," he said. "You will find out the truth of what really happened."

"So many young natives have been taken away from their indigenous roots and sometimes they don’t even know which nation they belong to," Gonzalez said. "The first step is to speak to your ancestors and ask them for help. That way they can learn your history. It’s what we have in common."

COLUMNS

Faculty Voice: European American with a probable Algonquian Ancestor  by Dr. Richard Shafer

Red Nation News is a very welcome addition to the UND Native Media Center, extending our voices into cyberspace and around the world.
I am an off-and-on Native American, never sure if I believe a relative who claimed we are related to Pocahontas. Many early European settlers were related to her son, John Rolfe, who died in 1622 in a battle between colonists and Indians.

Our family was in America in the 17th Century and we owned slaves in South Carolina, fought as German mercenaries for the British in the Revolutionary War, died for the Union in the Civil War and were polygamists in Utah. My great-grandfather served under Kit Carson and was sent to rescue captive Indian children from being sold into slavery in Mexico. My kids are a mix of Russian-Jewish and maybe a dozen other cultures and nationalities. They are lucky to go to an elementary school that has a large percentage of Native Americans.

I grew up in the 1950s in Durango, Colorado, a mining town established in the 1880s near Fort Lewis. This Army post separated the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute peoples, to keep them from uniting and resisting colonization. The segregation of Indians and whites was still very much evident when I was a young boy. Most Indians stayed on the reservations, except to shop. Since the reservations were dry there were seedy saloons at the end of town that catered to Natives. Unfortunately, the most visible Indians were often drunk. The town did have a famous fiesta once a year and Indians were given a prominent place as performers. Of course, they were being exploited to attract tourists, who photographed them despite the fact they didn’t like to have their image captured.

When the Art Department at Fort Lewis College needed a model for an Indian boy one summer, they selected me. I was better cast as a little cowboy, and was paid a dollar a day to ride on top of the stagecoach that met the 1880s-era narrow gauge train that tourists still flock to ride.

In addition to the two nearby reservations, Durango in the 1950s had a less formal form of segregation. Mexicans lived in a shanty town along the Animas River called the Mexican Flats. There were neither Native Americans or Mexicans in the middle class neighborhood I lived in a few blocks away, and the Mexican Flats disappeared under urban renewal programs a decade or so later.

It was easier to feel sorry for the Mexican kids who went to our school and were obviously impoverished, than it was for the equally impoverished Indians who were less visible. In the 1950s many Indians still had sheep and horses, allowing us to still romanticize their lifestyle.

In the 1970s I taught at Intermountain Indian School, the largest residential school in the United States. I also recruited Navajo and Hopi kids for the Upward Bound Program. I learned a few things about Indians as individuals and as friends, working with people like James Key, an award-winning Hopi poet, and Joe Bitsui, the son of a Navajo medicine man.
They were guys of few words, but they would tell me long stories and their legends as we drove the long distances between the reservations and Utah State University, where our Upward Bound office was located.

One day, for instance, James told me how he had recently lost his car. He was driving across the desert one evening with his date and another couple, heading for a dance. He said that while he was driving he had a vision and was told that he shouldn’t own a car. He stopped on the side of the highway and told his young passengers that they should get out because he was going to send the car rolling over a cliff. After he finished the story, I asked him if he was regretted losing his car. James said he was only sorry that he hadn’t taken his sleeping bag out of the trunk. It made me realize that my own religious convictions weren’t as strong as his.

On one of our recruiting trips to the reservation, Joe told me about suffering from some form of mental illness as a teenager and how his extended family gathered to sing and dance him back to health. It sounded like a better way than being sent to a stranger with a graduate degree in counseling.

In the early 1980s I went to work for the Durango Herald as a newspaper reporter. I had a vast beat that included the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation, several ski resorts, vast mining and gas exploration and drilling sites, ancient Anasazi ruins, and beautiful mountains and deserts. It was as general assignment reporting as you can get, but the tribal government was the hardest thing to cover. Before I had taken over the beat, another reporter for our paper had written extensively about Federal Government investigations of tribal fund irregularities.

The Ute Mountain Ute tribe had hired a white ex-military officer to handle their public relations. He was polite but tough and his main job seemed to be to keep the media away and to keep the tribe out of the news.

I wrote many positive news and feature stories about the tribe including stories about its new archaeological park, its pottery center, and about the advanced irrigation systems it was establishing to increase production of grain, alfalfa and other crops.

Although alcoholism, drug use and crime were very high on the reservation, it was easier to write about powwows or new government programs. Of course, as a professional journalist trained to be objective, this was difficult for me.

In that last two decades, I have traveled much of the world researching and teaching such press models such as development journalism, civic journalism and democratic journalism. All nations are looking to the press as an agent to advance and empower their citizens.

I have come to the conclusion that the best type of journalism seeks to reveal the truth, while being fair and balanced. I hope Red Nation News continues in this tradition and that those Native students who learn good journalism by doing it here, will use their skills to serve those who deserve empowerment.
Student Voice: Luta Berlin (Berlin Red): The new face of Germany

by Holly A. Annis, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

I am from the Midwest, the prairie, the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian reservation, South Dakota, and I am Lakota. While growing up I longed to go to a place where things were old. I loved the idea of structures being ancient. I believed that each wall, each brick, in these ancient buildings could tell a completely different and profound story. In the Midwest there are few buildings that are over a century old and the ranch I grew up on had no buildings older than me. The prairie is ever changing, the wind always blows and it moves things, with each rise and fall of the river the countryside changes, and each new season brings new and different life.
This is also the history of the Lakota people; our history is in the wind, the rivers, and the earth. I longed for a tangible history, something real and solid that I could touch, hold on to and say, "this church was built in the 14th Century," etc. It seemed certain that grabbing a fistful of earth certainly could not compare to the feel of brick and mortar.

When the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (IFA) and my university, the University of North Dakota, presented an opportunity to travel to Germany, I immediately jumped at the chance. "Germany Today for Junior Journalists" was presented as a study tour to familiarize young (which I am not) journalism students with today’s modern Germany and Europe. I packed my bags, kissed my son, boarded a plane for my first trip abroad, and prayed that I would not be judged too harshly for the actions of the American president and government in recent months. Many of my friends told me that "Germans LOVE Indians." I went with visions of dark, ancient buildings, downtrodden people, steely, industrial cities and World War II dancing in my head. I also thought perhaps there would a parade in my honor, what with being Native American and all, and with all Germans apparently loving me and my culture so much, but it was not to be.

Approximately 19 students from different universities around the U.S. were chosen. As we got off the plane in Berlin, I was struck by the color luta (red). So many young girls, old women, young women and all age in between have dyed their hair a brilliant shade of red, a red not found in nature. The shades ran from month’s old sickly pink to freshly dyed and everything in between. I was amazed and began counting all the people I saw with this color. After I reached 100 and remembered what I was there for I stopped… it had only been several hours since we landed in Berlin.

The history of the Plains Indians and the Germanic people goes back almost two centuries to Prince Maximilian Zu Wied. The Prince was a German aristocrat and perhaps more importantly he was a scientist and cultural anthropologist.
In the 1830’s the Prince came to America to study the North American Indians, more specifically the Native people along the shores of the northern Missouri River. He wanted to learn about their cultures, the environment and he wanted to document all of it. He brought with him Carl Bodmer, a Swiss landscape painter, to paint the people and wildlife they would encounter. Bodmer’s paintings have provided many Native people with a sort of snapshot of what their ancestors looked like and pictures of the landscape along the river.

As much as people refuse to admit it, our world and our view of the world is based on stereotypes. The stereotype of America is that we are all war-mongering, lazy, and fat. Do you know that stereotypes and racial lines divide America? It is true. We are filled with patriotic pride, so full that many are choking on it. We have a President that is filling our heads with visions of the evils of the Arab Nation. We have news organizations that won’t show pictures of dead, injured, or dying American soldiers, or Iraqi women, men, children or old people. Those same news organizations will show pictures of dead Iraqis. They don’t refer to them as people, instead they use words like "insurgents." I guess it makes it easier to kill them and easier for the majority of American people to remain apathetic. Our middle class is quickly disappearing and with the power of middle class gone America will become every stereotype that has ever been thought of us.

While I was in Germany I learned many of the German stereotypes that prior to visiting I hadn’t heard of. Did you know "they" (whoever, "they" are) are all arrogant and pompous? They started both World Wars, committed horrible atrocities and yet, the heart of them, the essence of the German remains, as it should. But people are changed by those events and those changes carry on through generations.

On our third afternoon in Berlin we were riding the train back to our hotel after visiting the German Bundestag and our delightful and inspiring guide, Christian, was explaining to several people about the German Monarchy.

An elderly woman from the back of the train rushed up to our group, wagging her finger saying, "Nein, nein..." and there was a lot more that I didn’t understand as my German is really elementary (allowing me only to count to 30, greet people, and a few other niceties).

She and Christian then became involved in a quick, intense, and (strangely) quiet exchange of words. Christian later told us that she had scolded us for speaking too loud on the train. Christian informed her that we were breaking no rules and it was his job to explain things to us and teach us. Later in our stay I asked an employee of the German government about that exchange and she explained, "It is known as Germany’s collective guilt." It was as if people felt so badly about the past, that if there were just quiet, good, and didn’t call attention to themselves, then perhaps people would forget. Since the explanation, that one moment, that quick exchange between an old German lady and young German man, was the most moving of my trip to Germany. It represented the pain of the past and the idealism of the future.
Native America is quite separate from the United States of America. Our history does not begin with the fateful landing of an over-zealous Italian in 1492, nor did it begin with Leif Erikson. Our creation stories take us to the beginning of time in our land, what is now known as the United States. The stereotype of Native people is that we are lazy, savage, stupid, alcoholic, close to nature, mystical, and magical, we are tokens of the past, we still live in tipis, and dress in buckskin. We are considered a burden in our own land.

These kinds of stereotypes and ethnocentrisms rained down all around me while we were in Germany. More often than not I was embarrassed by them. On a trip to a café with several other Junior Journalists, we all took turn ordering. Ordering food or drinks in German was always an exciting experience because we never knew what we would end up with. One of the students, after ordering, turned back to our small group with a look of disgust on her face, and nearly spat, "I can’t believe they don’t even speak American here!" Um, American? I wanted to die with shame. It is no wonder we are hated. After that experience my group of friends was made much smaller.

Each gorgeous city we visited, from Potsdam to Frankfurt, from Slubice, to Hamburg and back to Berlin, were filled with grace and beauty. Each place we visited was precipitated with a remark from someone in our group. Potsdam was too "tourist-y," Slubice was "Germany’s Mexico" and some would never buy anything in Poland, Frankfurt, well, was just too close to Poland, Hamburg is loved dearly by Hamburger and is the "real Germany", and Berlin... well, Berlin is many things. It has more soul than I ever dreamed possible. Only in Berlin can you visit a falafel shop owned by a family from Baghdad located right across the way from the oldest Jewish cemetery in Germany. You can walk down a deserted street with huge old buildings that belonged to Jewish people before WWII and are now in a state of limbo, waiting for Jewish families to reclaim them through the court system.

The silence on this street is almost palpable and, then all of a sudden, the quick clicking of a prostitute’s high-heels as she struts down the street breaks the spell.

Our trip was centered around getting to know and understand the "new" Germany, the country that is just a little over a decade old and the country that survived terrible leadership.

I think by now most people know that their government or leaders do not define a country and its people. Native people and Germans have that in common. We both live on our homeland and yet our governments are new. We are both filled patriotism and that can only come from belonging to the land. Our leaders do not define us.

Cultural Diversity is something to be proud of. Many countries strive to have one voice and one face to represent them. If history has taught us anything it has taught us that people cannot be represented by one voice or one face.
The reason I love writing and journalism is because I have an obligation to tell the story of people who don’t have a voice, or even a face. Germany has a new government, but they have no faces of color in that government. Who represents the Turks in Germany?

After all, the Turks make up 2.4% of the population, making them the largest minority group. According to Elke Pohl, an employee of the Commission for Foreigners of the Berlin government, "nearly 40% of Turkish immigrants have no jobs." A country is made up of all its parts, not just the ones that were there in the beginning.

Visiting Germany was one of the most difficult things I’ve ever done. I was lonely, awed, sad, happy, irritated, and I learned more than I thought possible. It’s taken several months for everything that I saw and learned to sink in and it’s taken several more to process those things. I was off-balance and unsure and I felt guilt about not speaking the language. I owed Germany and our lovely hosts that much, but they were gracious and forgiving. Being off-balance is good for a person, because you have to rely on others and people you don’t know. You have to put your trust into humankind and trust that you will be okay. Germany is not defined by its past, it is defined by its people and the people are the ones to look to.

As we boarded our flight back to the States, I examined my rough and callused hands. I ran them over every old building and monument that crossed my path. I ran them over the places where the wall stood, I ran them over old furniture, marble walls and floors, and even a picked up a fistful of earth. The thing I didn’t realize is that even though you can touch history, it doesn’t capture the spirit of the people, certainly not like a fistful of earth. I closed my eyes and visions of my son, my family and the beautiful Midwestern prairie danced in my head.

Several months later now and I look forward to my next trip to Germany and to my next handful of their earth.

**ARTS**

*A Poem*

by John Thompson

*I saw the feather fall*
*eagle*
*I stood in deference*
*longing to leap the second tier rail*
*bound to the floor and*
*protect defend*
*but this was not my party*
a small circle formed
quickly quietly
elders fancy dancers
I am uncertain
their traditional dress
beautiful but no mere costume

I am uncertain whether the dance continued
marked time or came to a halt
too intoxicating the feather drama
but somehow the event seemed to separate
casual onlookers oblivious as to is import
participants too cautious to flag alert

the drum beat changed
moving from secular to sacred
the spirit moved
mundane to extraordinary gym to temple
welcoming to holy
tradition to trade ritual to rite

he appeared from the circle’s edge
unassuming
jeans cowboy boots and hat
faded jacket
were this a rodeo
he’d be riding

what passed in that private circle
pervaded the entire expanse
and then done
feather retrieved
retreated return to powwow
and the dance continued