

Wednesday, July 2, 2008

Supporting Native American Rights

Protect the right to use sacred medicines. Recently, I further updated my Native American links and blog links involving both law and non-law topics. I wish to learn more about Native American law -- including issues concerning treaty rights, land rights, gambling, and sacred medicine -- and also about the past and current mistreatment of Native Americans and efforts and accomplishments to reverse such mistreatment. Rather than taking the time, yet, to create a separate blogroll section for Native American blogs, I have inserted them into the More Law and Beyond the Law sections of the Underdog Blog. I welcome recommendations for links to additional Native American blogs and static webpages, including law blogs. I took a particularly greater interest in Native American issues from reading Dennis Banks's *Ojibwa Warrior* (written with Richard Erdoes), and then meeting him in 2006 at the conclusion of the Sacred Run. We are both friends of Jun Yasuda, who joined Dennis from California when he went "underground to the Onondaga Reservation in New York" after California's Jerry Brown -- who refused to extradite Dennis to South Dakota concerning criminal charges over the Wounded Knee event -- left the governor's office. Unless my court schedule changes, I very much look forward to spending some time next week with Dennis Banks, Jun Yasuda, and the other Longest Walkers when they arrive in Maryland early next week -- and hopefully on a leg of the walk -- including a signing ceremony of the Sovereignty Declaration of One Nation to be held July 9 at Greenbelt Park. In *Ojibwa Warrior*, Dennis Banks details his life from childhood, to being ripped by the government from his family and forced into a faraway United States government school meant to take the Indian culture out of Native Americans, and to his ironic joining of the military defending the same government that had forced him to that boarding school. *Ojibwa Warrior* continues with Dennis's learning about Jun Yasuda's Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist order when some members of the order joined a protest against the building of an airport in Japan, and Dennis was sent there as part of his military duties: "The Buddhist monks and nuns sitting still on the ground in front of us were chanting when the police rushed them and started cracking skulls with a terrible sound as if they were striking coconuts. The monks and nuns did not fight back. It was a terrible thing to witness. I saw elderly nuns with blood streaming down their faces... Sergeant Johnson suddenly grabbed his BAR and fired a round into the air. Then he hollered [in Japanese] 'Stop it! Stop it! Halt!'... Then all was quiet." *Ojibwa Warrior* continues with Dennis Banks's return to the United States, the continued virulent racism against Native Americans, and his central participation in the founding of the American Indian Movement. He gives an insider's view of the 1973 Wounded Knee takeover, Leonard Peltier's plight, and AIM's fierce conflicts with Dick Wilson, who was the elected Pine Ridge tribal chair and whom Banks describes as running around with violent goons. Dennis also describes the movement's conflicts with William Janklow, who became South Dakota's attorney general in the early 1970's. In 1978 came the Longest Walk for Native American rights. Now in progress is the Longest Walk II. I have just a little knowledge about the law affecting and empowering Native Americans, and have much more to learn about that area of the law and about other Native American issues. My law school did not offer any Native American law classes. The University of Oklahoma law school seems to be a particularly good source for such study. If you share my interest in this area, please let me know. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Constitutional Law at 00:00