



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center*

## **Grace F. Thorpe collection - Scrapbook: Return Surplus Lands to Indian People, 1971**

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[[newspaper clipping]]

The Washington Daily News, Wednesday, April 12, 1972 Page 43

portfolio

News photos by Charles Arnhold  
[[3 image]]  
[[caption]] Grace Thorpe [[/caption]]

Grace unites Indians  
BY JUDY FLANDER

Grace Thorpe went into action in Washington this week, wearing her "Alcatraz boots" -- heavy, laced, workman' boots she wore for comfort the three months she spent "occupying" the deserted prison island in San Francisco Bay with an Indian group in 1970 --, a brown pants suit, several lengths of beaded necklaces and her eye make-up. Appearing before the Senate Appropriations Committee yesterday in behalf of the Indians who don't live on reservations, she said, "an Indian is an Indian wherever he may live," and she asked for a \$2 million in separate urban Indian funds for their needs which she said are critical.

More than 60 per cent of America's remaining Indian population of 800,000 live in cities, said Miss Thorpe who is working toward "an Indian Renaissance in the 1970s, prophesied by Chief Eagle Feather of the Sioux."

Like her father before her, the remarkable athlete Jim Thorpe who took five gold medals in the 1912 Olympics and was founder and first president of the American Football League, Miss Thorpe is a peaceful member of the Sauk and Fox tribe of Oklahoma. Except for the league, her father, who died in 1953, wasn't an organizer. But Grace Thorpe is.

Big, exuberant, gregarious, she tells you she was in the WACs during World War II and you believe her. As a mover in the new Indian rights movement, Miss Thorpe's major preoccupation has been trying to get the government to give surplus land and facilities "back to the Indians." A technique has been to "occupy" a surplus site until somebody gets mad enough to call the police and get the Indians arrested for trespassing. Miss Thorpe has been arrested several times and she treasures a picture which shows six policemen bodily carting her ample frame off a surplus premise, while the seventh carries her massive handbag.

What's it like to live on Alcatraz? "From the outside, it looks so awful," she said, "but it's really kinda pretty. You are just a mile from Fisherman's Wharf, and you look around and there's the Golden Gate Bridge on your right and the Bay Bridge off to the left. And water all around you. It's cold and damp but I liked it." She and a nurse lived in the guards' quarters where they had a fireplace and windows opening on the bay.

"The purpose of the occupation of Alcatraz was to focus attention on Indian problems and it certainly served its purpose," said Miss Thorpe. "Alcatraz was an inspiration to our people, it was the catalyst, it signaled



the return of our people."

Miss Thorpe defines the "return of the Indians" as a rebirth of the confidence, self-reliance, strength, health and happiness her people had "when the white man arrived in America."

One of the Indian occupations of surplus land has paid off in the form of a college, Degnanawidah Quetzalcoatl University in Davis, Calif., for Chicanos and Indians. The University, of which Miss Thorpe is a co-founder and member of the board, was formerly a surplus Army communications site. But the Indians weren't able to swing the college by themselves. "We couldn't break loose any government money," she explained. So the Indians formed a coalition with the Chicanos, who could. "There are 7 or 8 million Chicanos," said Miss Thorpe, "but the Indians are only one half of one per cent of the population. We're a political nonentity."

To help give the Indians more clout, the National American Indian Council was formed last month and, naturally, Miss Thorpe is an active member. "We have to get back the people we've lost in the city communities," she said.

Altho she never lived on a reservation, Miss Thorpe attended Indian schools -- "I'm a high school dropout" -- in Yale, Okla. where she was born 50 years ago. Briefly married, she met her husband while "sitting on a ditch while watching movies in New Guinea" during World War II. She has a daughter, Dagmar, 25. Formerly in public relations and advertising, Miss Thorpe now works full time in the Indian rights movement and gets by with the little she makes giving lectures. "I've used up most of my savings." Her residence is in Davis, but Miss Thorpe travels extensively, usually staying with Indian families when she's not occupying surplus property.

Her "Alcatraz boots" have become a necessity. "They've got high arches. It's like walking on six inches of carpet. I wear them whenever I'm going to be on my feet a lot."

Which, for the dynamic, driving daughter of James Thorpe, is most of the time.

[[image]]

[[caption]] The late Indian Jim Thorpe and his daughter, Grace  
[[/caption]]

What they wore to the luncheon for Pat Nixon

(UPI) -- Joan Kennedy, whose attire frequently has stolen the show at White House functions, showed up in a \$7.95 Red Cross uniform at a Capitol luncheon given by Senate wives Tuesday in honor of Pat Nixon.

Mrs. Kennedy, wife of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., was wearing the same official garb of the "ladies of The Senate," a group made up of Senators' wives who meet regularly and roll red cross bandages.

Judy Agnew, wife of the Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, presided Tuesday, and the wives of two other former Vice Presidents, Mrs. Henry A. Wallace of the Roosevelt Era and Mrs. Hubert H. Humphrey whose husband was No. 2 during the Johnson Administration, also were present.

Mrs. Humphrey, whose husband again is seeking the Democratic nomination, said she would go to Pennsylvania this week for two weeks of campaigning.

Mrs. Nixon was presented with a porcelain figure of Wendy from Peter Pan because "She is so popular with children all around the world."

Mrs. Nixon wore her navy blue Easter suit, trimmed in white with a white flower at the neckline.

[[boxed]]  
Service programs win national awards

Ten women's clubs have been named finalists in a \$200,000 community improvement program co-sponsored by the General Federation of Women's Clubs and Sears, Roebuck and Co.

National finalists selected from state winners are located in Orlando, Florida; Hopkins, Minnesota; Mount Holly, New Jersey; Amityville, New York; Tremonton, Utah; Roanoke, Virginia; Shenandoah, Virginia; Omak, Washington; Charleston, West Virginia; and Superior, Wisconsin.  
[[/boxed]]

THE BETTER HALF/By Barnes  
[[image - cartoon drawing of a man showing his wife a board with a nail in it]]  
[[man's dialogue: "It's a gadget to increase your efficiency around the house."]]

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