

LeRoy Harold Eagle Bear

May 18, 1946 – May 26, 2019

LeRoy Harold Eagle Bear, 73, passed away peacefully on May 26, 2019, at Dougherty Hospice in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, with his wife, Eleanor, and family by his side. A Deaf Sicangu Lakota man, athlete, coach, and community advocate, LeRoy devoted much of his life to supporting Deaf youth and adults and serving the Native American community.



LeRoy was born on May 18, 1946, at his parents' home in Norris, South Dakota, to Russell and Emmaline Eagle Bear. At age 11, he entered the South Dakota School for the Deaf in Sioux Falls, where he participated in football, basketball, track, cross-country, and other student activities. He graduated in 1966.



After graduation, LeRoy remained at SDSD as a boys' dormitory supervisor, serving for more than 15 years. He was greatly loved and respected by the students. He encouraged them to participate in sports and school activities, practice good manners, and take pride in their appearance. As a coach of the school's younger basketball players, he taught the fundamentals of the game while emphasizing a positive attitude, teamwork, and the importance of being a good sport.

LeRoy continued his own athletic involvement through the Sioux Falls Association of the Deaf and the Midwest Athletic Association of the Deaf, competing in basketball and softball. He became the first Native American to receive a MAAD basketball All-Star Award and was inducted into the MAAD Hall of Fame in 1976.



1970 Sioux Falls Deaf Club team
Front L to R: #24 LeRoy EagleBear, #32 Leonard Ortman, #10 Gilbert Little Spotted Horse, and #34 Willard Schumack
Back L to R: #14 Ken Czerney, #22 Jim Mitchell, #12 Gary Newell, #40 Ben Soukup, and #30 Bill Christiansen

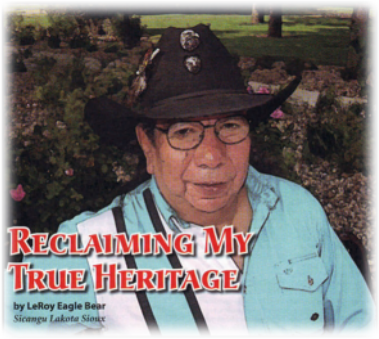
His working life also included several years at John Morrell & Company and 10 years with Communication Service for the Deaf, serving the Native American community. His last employment was at Hy-Vee on Marion Road in Sioux Falls, where he enjoyed working with people and visiting with those he met.



On August 8, 1998, LeRoy married the love of his life, Eleanor Irene Corner, in Renner, South Dakota. They enjoyed spending time together and sharing their lives with family and friends.

Beginning in 1995, LeRoy reconnected with his Lakota heritage and cultural traditions. His participation in cultural ceremonies led him to the Intertribal Deaf Council. After attending an IDC conference in Alaska, he was invited to serve on its board and later became an

Elder of the organization. In July 2005, he chaired the IDC Spiritual Gathering at Camp Lakodia in South Dakota.



LeRoy's service often extended beyond his paid responsibilities. While working for CSD, he helped people obtain transportation and offered assistance wherever he could. He valued people as individuals, regardless of their position, background, or education, and believed that humility and a willingness to learn were essential to serving others.

Having struggled with alcoholism, LeRoy took pride in maintaining nearly 30 years of sobriety before his death. He shared his experiences through presentations to Deaf students and adults, encouraged others facing addiction, and volunteered his time and transportation to help people attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.



LeRoy was active in the Sioux Falls Association of the Deaf, the South Dakota Association of the Deaf, and Deaf Seniors of South Dakota. In recognition of his years of service, he was posthumously inducted into the South Dakota Association of the Deaf Hall of Fame in 2021 in the Community Service category.

At the time of his passing, LeRoy was survived by his wife, Eleanor Eagle Bear; his children, Terry Corner and Gerry Johnson; his grandchildren, Erin Corner, Eric Corner (Kayla), Angela Wible (Thomas), and Brooke Jacquot (Todd); and his great-grandchildren, Zoey Casman, Landen, Harper, Charlotte Corner, Alonzo Davis, Mya Davis, Antonio Davis, Jacob Wible, Audrey Wible, Wyatt Jacquot, Austin Jacquot, Kadence Jacquot, and Sawyer Jacquot. He was also survived by his brothers, Russell Eagle Bear, Arnold Eagle Bear, and Patrick Eagle Bear; his sister, Kris Wooden Knife; and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Russell and Emmaline Eagle Bear; his paternal grandparents, Henry and Agnes Eagle Bear; his maternal grandparents, Emery and Jennie Amiotte; his brother, Floyd Eagle Bear; his sisters, Lois Joyce Eagle Bear and Ethel Eagle Bear; and his beloved pet, Molly.

Visitation was scheduled for May 29, 2019, at Miller Funeral Home–Southside in Sioux Falls. A wake was held at his mother's home in Norris, followed by burial at Looking White Sundance Ground.



LeRoy is remembered for his encouragement of young people, love of sports, commitment to sobriety, and willingness to help others. His influence lives on in the students he guided, the teammates who played beside him, and the family and community members whose lives he touched.