Mutual Respect and Equality
An Advocate for Indian Students in Oregon

by Floy Pepper
With Eliza Elkins Jones

As a young woman in college, Floy Childers Pepper declared that she would never be a teacher. She thought this because her mother was a teacher and she wanted to do something different. Pepper's mother, a German woman married to a Creek Indian, advised her to take education classes in case they would be useful later. In 1939, Pepper received a Master of Science degree from the School of Home Economics at Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical College, a significant accomplishment for a young Indian woman.

Pepper began a distinguished career in education, and several times in later years she regretted not having taken her mother's advice. Throughout her career, she worked with educators all over the country and the world to develop and implement techniques that encouraged the teaching of and about Indian people. She also worked extensively with special needs children, helping to bring them into mainstream classrooms and to modify their behavior. Much of her work, particularly curricula materials she wrote in the 1990s, is used in Oregon schools today.

From the time Floy Pepper was a child, learning was a large part of her life and she continued to take classes in her adulthood. In 1959, after having worked in education for twenty years, Pepper took a course at Portland State University in which she read work by Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs, a follower of the Alfred Adler school of psychology. Heavily influenced by the work, Pepper decided to take a course with Dreikurs. The two became fast friends, and Pepper published her first book, Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom, with Dreikurs and Bernice Bronia Grunwald in 1971 (a third edition was published in 1998).

In her work with Dreikurs and with other members of the Oregon Society of Individual Psychology and the International Society of Individual Psychology, Pepper found a way to express and build on her convictions about working with students, especially Indian children. The teaching techniques she demonstrated and talked about — in
Floy Pepper, during a recent visit to Oklahoma

meetings, classrooms, books, and curricula — were based in her belief in the power and necessity of equality and mutual respect. She strove to demonstrate those values as they applied to both individual classroom and family relationships and to broader social relationships among cultures. Much of her work had to do with giving Indian students and cultures respect and equality in the classroom.

Throughout her career in education, Pepper also worked as a wife and mother. She married Gilbert Pepper, a Kaw,
on March 23, 1940. Their son, James (Jim) Gilbert Pepper — who became a well-known jazz musician — was born in June 1941 and their daughter Suzanne (Suzie) Marie Pepper in April 1944. Both children learned Indian traditions, especially dancing and music, from their parents and Indian grandmothers. Suzie became director of student services in the Parkrose School District, married Steve Henry, and had two sons named Jim and Jesse.

This story of Floy Pepper’s life is gathered from an autobiography she wrote in 1995 and an oral history interview with Eliza Elkins Jones in July 2005.

On March 14, 1917, I so completely confused my parents, James A. and Louisa Childers, by being born a girl that they did not name me for several weeks. I grew up with my sister Zella Marie, older than me by four years, on a 160-acre farm that was part of my father’s Indian allotment. Our farm was located five miles south of Broken Arrow in the center of what had formerly been known as the Creek Indian Nation. That part of Oklahoma was prairie land with broad river valleys, winding streams with tangled brush, and beautiful rolling hills covered with oak trees. It was rich corn and hog country, modern cow country, and sometimes a dust bowl. Grandma Childers owned land to the west. My uncles and cousins owned adjacent land to the east, north, and south. There were no more Creek allotments after 1910 or Creek Indian land. By the time my sister and I were born, we didn’t get anything. Mama was courageous to marry an Indian because such marriages were unusual in those times. Mama was not accepted by the Indians at first and was frowned upon by the whites. In spite of it all, she gained the respect of both the Indian and white communities and gained stature for her family. Mama was warm, loving, affectionate, had a pretty good sense of humor, was education oriented, a good money manager, and a hard worker. As an elementary school teacher, she instilled in my sister and me the importance of a good education. At home, all our games were educational. For instance, she’d call out the capitol of a certain state and we’d have to give her the state, or else she’d call out the state and we’d have to give the name. And she’d do two times this or six times that, to see what we could do. Papa had a great sense of humor, laughed easily, was warm, easygoing, affectionate, had good relationships with people, and allowed me a great deal of freedom. He was a tall graceful man, a wonderful dancer, and a renowned farmer and stockman.

Grandma and Papa taught me to see the beauty in nature and in all things around me and that all things had a spirit that we should respect. They taught me that there really was no death, that when your body becomes old, your spirit leaves you and eventually you come back and live again — perhaps in another form, such as a wildflower, a tree, or some other form of nature. These teachings are the foundation of my beliefs today.
From the time I could toddle, I followed my father everywhere. We would repair fences, do minor carpentry jobs, build water gaps, feed the pigs, search for wild grapes, wild plums, onions, strawberries, and blackberries. As we worked Papa would count, “hvmken (hum-gun), hokkolen (huck-kol-len), tutcenen (tuck-chen-nan).” I would repeat “hum-gun, huck-kol-len,” and so on. That is how I learned to count in Creek. I learned to sing Creek Stomp Dance songs and to Stomp Dance while we were cleaning out and stamping down new dirt on the chicken house floor. Papa would sing and I would reply:

Yo-o-o-o. Hee. Yo-o-o-o Hee.
Hey-yay. Hey-hay. Hey-yqy,


I grew up living in two worlds. I lived in the white world because that’s where I grew up. We were an Indian family among white people. I grew up with the white children, but there were Indian children, too. They were there all the time except when fall came they all disappeared because they all went to the Indian [boarding] school, and my sister and I were always left behind. If we did certain things, why, people said, “well, that’s the Indian in you coming out.” And other times I was told, “oh, you act like a white woman.”

Zella and I had both Indian and white friends. We played together. Many of our Indian friends attended government residential schools. My sister and I used to cry and wanted to go to boarding school with them. I remember my mother saying, “You girls have to live and make a living among white people. You must go to school with them and learn their ways so that you can progress with them. You have to meet the demands of living in a divided world — vocationally, spiritually, and socially. You must be able to fit in wherever you find yourselves.”

I was born at a time when the Indians were already involved in acquiring many white ways and values. Being of both cultures, I was sensitive to both with leanings toward my “Indianness” due to the close early association with my Indian father and my Indian grandmother. As a member of one of the Five Civilized Tribes, we were accorded more privileges at an earlier date and did not face as many prejudices and discriminatory situations as did other tribes. The members of the Five Civilized Tribes were granted citizenship rights and privileges in 1901, twenty-three years before other tribes.

Even though I was born into cultural conflict, I did not feel it as a youngster growing up in Oklahoma. It was not until I left Oklahoma as an adult that I came face to face with the racial difficulties of being Indian. Probably the ease and security I felt as an Indian were due to both my
parents' attitudes and beliefs. They taught my sister and me to be proud of our Indian heritage and to retain our identity as Indians. They gave us a strong sense of family, a sense of equality, and a real feeling of love for the land and nature.

I graduated with a B.S. degree from Oklahoma A&M in 1938 and received a graduate assistantship for the following year to work on my master's degree. Mama and Zella thought I should take it, so I did. Aunt Tillie was very upset and angry with me because I already had a college education and I should get out in the work field to earn that "almighty dollar."

She withdrew her support from me except to send me about a dozen pair of hose, which I appreciated. Mama suggested I take some education courses as electives since I might want to teach someday. I remember saying, "Mama, I will never teach as long as I can do something else." I took elective courses that I was interested in and ended up having minors in art, physical education, science, and English literature.

The topic I selected for my thesis was "The Costumes of Ten Indian Tribes at the Time of their Removal to Oklahoma." My research included visiting museums in several towns in Oklahoma as well as lots of library research. I visited elders from the various tribes to get a more personal slant on the subject. I received my master of science degree in the spring of 1939. I was the youngest ever to graduate from Oklahoma A&M with a master's, and the fact that I was an Indian made it more noteworthy.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs tried to recruit me when I graduated in 1938. In 1939, the agency came after me again. Consequently, I went to work teaching for the BIA at Fort Sill Indian School for sixty dollars a month. The BIA had a two-year apprenticeship program, but since I had a master's degree they waived the second year. As an apprentice teacher, I was to learn as well as to teach. My knowledge of Indian arts and crafts was only fair, so that is the area I studied. I learned to do all types of beadwork and to make moccasins. I was placed as one of the supervisors of the Practice House.

Zella had been transferred from Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma to Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. She came to help me move to Fort Sill Indian School, near Lawton, Oklahoma, to begin my teaching career. On the way to Fort Sill, we stopped off at the Oklahoma Indian Fair at Anadarko. While viewing the exhibits, we met a personable young Kaw Indian man.

Zella introduced me to Gilbert Pepper, who was the baker at Fort Sill Indian School. He was on vacation and on his way to the World's Fair in San Francisco. I fell in love with him at Fort Sill. Gilbert was transferred to Haskell in November 1939, and I stayed at Lawton. In order for the BIA to transfer us together the next year, we had to be married. We had planned to have more time together before we got married, but we were married March 23, 1940, during Easter vacation, in the Baptist church in Lawton. In the fall, we were transferred to the Chemawa Indian School near Salem, Oregon.
Gilbert and I drove to Oregon. We checked in with the white superintendent at Chemawa, and after much discussion we were assigned our housing quarters, which turned out to be an apartment in a duplex. It was rather bleak. The house was dusty and sparsely furnished with old wicker furniture in the living room. When you sat on the sofa, the cushion and you went through to the floor. There were no rugs, chairs, tables, or curtains, though there were a damaged mattress on the rickety bed and two dead mice. We stayed the first week in the guest quarters while our place was cleaned, furniture was requisitioned, and the kitchen and back porch were remodeled.

Gilbert and I looked so young — even if we were almost twenty-three years old — that most of the employees and all the students thought we were students. The second day we were there, we were scheduled to help chaperone students to the state fair in Salem. Some of the boys tried to make a hit on me, and the girls flirted with Gilbert. We had a heck of a time gaining and maintaining our positions of authority.
As the arts and crafts teacher, I discovered that the Indian youth had no knowledge of the history of their tribes. The history of Indians was not being taught. The white history was being taught. The students knew what tribe they were, but they didn’t know what that meant. My sister and I were friends with the gentleman who was in charge of Indian education in Washington, D.C. I told him I wanted to teach the students about their tribes. He told me to go ahead. So, with his permission and with the superintendent’s permission, I divided the students into homerooms as to tribes and started the study of their background. I was able to institute homerooms one morning a week, during which time students were separated into tribal groups to study their historical heritage.

The historical information was all written. It was written in white man’s language, in white man’s books. Since I did not know anything about Northwest Indian basket weaving, I asked permission to visit the museum at the University of Washington in Seattle. I also helped to plan a spring pageant that focused on the history of some tribes. I found out information, and I brought it back to the children in Chemawa. I think everyone should know where they come from. I knew where I was from from the time I was born. My mother and father instilled that in me. Oklahoma history was taught in the schools at home, and I learned it there. Oregon history was taught here, but not in Indian schools. In the Oregon public schools, they taught a biased sort of Indian history. Whenever there was a war, it was always the Indians’ fault. Whenever there was a dispute over anything, it was the Indians’ fault. And that’s not always so. It was about fifty-fifty.

The second year at Chemawa, I was assigned part-time to a class called seventh grade. The ten students in that class were ages twelve to sixteen and were several years behind grade level and considered problems in school. The students and I discussed their interests and what they wanted to do later in life. I had no training for teaching the ABC’s or the 1-2-3’s or reading, but I searched and found high-interest books with low reading levels. We also used comic books and other materials not commonly associated with schools at that time.

For arithmetic, I asked the farm manager what he needed built. When he indicated that he could use another chicken coop, we set about learning to build one as a math project. I was a pretty good carpenter, thanks to following Papa around in my youth. So the students could learn about measurements, I added a cooking class, and everybody learned to add, subtract, and multiply. They also became interested in reading and did more to teach themselves and each other than I could have ever done. As I look back, what I believe happened was that the lack of pressure and humiliation allowed the students to feel free enough to risk making mistakes — even to the point of being able to laugh at themselves. My part in their progress was having to scramble for and provide materials.
War was declared in December 1941. Gilbert went into the shipyards in Portland as a welder. I resigned from the Indian Service in March 1943. We moved to Vanport, a wartime housing project located just north of Portland. I thought this was an excellent time to try other jobs, so I worked as a dress saleswoman in a large department store, a waitress, a census taker, an income-tax preparer, a cashier for various rides at an amusement park, and the playground recreation director for the Vanport housing project. I didn’t stay long in any of those jobs as I found out very quickly I didn’t like doing them.

I had applied to work in the Vanport nursery schools and was hired as the acting director. I opened and staffed four nursery schools and had them in good working order by the time the director arrived. I then worked as the head teacher in one of the nursery schools until a few weeks before the birth of our second child, Suzanne Marie Pepper, in April 1944.

Gilbert and I both found that Indians in Oregon were not treated with the high regard that we were used to in Oklahoma. As long as we were employed by Chemawa, we had no trouble opening charge accounts, buying cars, or securing insurance. Once away from there, life became more complicated. At the Indian school, you belonged because there were Indians. Away from the school, you didn’t belong because you were Indian. Our car insurance was due. We attempted to renew it and found that, in Portland, Indians were put into a category with less coverage and higher rates. I was thoroughly outraged and wrote letters to Governor Sprague, whom I had met at Chemawa, and to the editor of the Oregonian, which were published. After about two months, I heard that we could go across the river into Vancouver, Washington, to purchase the insurance we wanted at regular rates.

Other aspects of how we were treated that bothered us were that sometimes we would not be allowed to enter nightclubs and we couldn’t get decent seats in restaurants. When we were interested in buying a house, we were discouraged from looking in certain neighborhoods. At school sometimes our children were called names and teased about getting drunk every weekend. One teacher made racially slurring remarks to my son in class. I took the teacher to task and threatened to report him to the Board of Education, which I probably should have done. Racism was quite evident. It made me twice as adamant about being good at whatever it was I was going to be. I had to be the best or I wasn’t good enough.

In the fall of 1946, I read that Portland Public Schools was short of home economics teachers. I approached the Home Economics Supervisor with a log — much bigger than a “chip” — on my shoulder. I stated the position I wanted, gave her my qualifications, and proceeded to say that I was part Indian and wanted to know right now, before going through a regular interview, if that was going to make any difference. I obtained the job and discovered that I needed a home
Floy Pepper in Canada for a children's convention, where she spoke about special needs children from different countries, helping a child to get rid of his headache.

economics teaching certificate. I was one of the first minority persons to be hired by Portland Public Schools and probably the first Indian. Two years later, I encouraged a black home economics teacher, a friend of mine from Vanport, to apply. Eventually, she was hired.

One year I was assigned to teach eighth-grade social studies, arts and crafts, and home economics. The principal, Miss H., was to visit my classroom for evaluation purposes. I was teaching about Andrew Jackson and his ruthless methods of removing Indians from east of the Mississippi River to Oklahoma. I was discussing broken treaties, disregard for human life, and inequities imposed on the Indians. Miss H. said she had never heard a discussion from that point of view before and that she found it very interesting and wondered where I found the material. I told her I had learned it from my Indian grandmother.

When teaching Indian history, the things that I used to say all had to be documented with facts. If there wasn’t a fact to substantiate it, then it wasn’t the truth. All white people had to do...
was to say it. The difference is that Indians and other minorities had to be able to prove whatever we said as fact, and if it wasn't written, it wasn't fact. In later years, everything that I wrote for curriculum was documented by history, by the written fact.

I continued to teach home economics but was interested in counseling. In the fall of 1959, I took a course at Portland State University called “The Maladjusted Child” from Dr. Raymond Lowe and was introduced to Psychology in the Classroom by Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs. Dr. Dreikurs was born and raised in Vienna, Austria, and a psychiatrist. He moved to the United States in 1937 and settled in Chicago. He was interested in education, and that interest never wavered as his career in psychiatry progressed.

Dr. Dreikurs was teaching a workshop at Oregon State University during the summer of 1960. Dr. Lowe suggested that I go to Corvallis and take the workshop, “Prevention of Maladjustment.” At noon, I was checking into a motel when Dr. Dreikurs and Maurice Bullard drove up. Dr. Dreikurs asked me if that was my car and my typewriter. I said, “Yes.” He turned to Maurice and said, “You will no longer need to drive me to classes. This young lady will drive me where I need to go.” He insisted that I join them for lunch. From then on, when “Dr. D.” was in Oregon, I was his driver. Thus began a friendship that lasted for twelve years — the rest of his life.

After attending Dr. Dreikurs’s summer school classes in 1960, a group of us got together and founded the Oregon Society of Individual Psychology (osip). Another group had attempted to form a similar organization a couple of years before but did not get it off the ground. Jerry Becker was elected president and I was elected secretary. Through these efforts osip became known. I also published the first editions of the Education Division of the American Society of Adlerian Psychology.

IN LATE 1964, I TOOK ON THE job of head teacher, directing the school at Edgefield Lodge Residential Center for Emotionally Disturbed children. Edgefield Lodge was a week-day residential treatment center for children ages six to twelve, located in east Multnomah County and funded by the Multnomah County Commission. The treatment was carried on in a milieu setting, which meant that all of the staff were involved in treatment. Families agreed to come in for counseling and training and to pick up their children on Friday afternoons and return them Sunday evenings. The staff was trained in behavior modification techniques prior to opening and as an ongoing educational process throughout the years.

I came to the position with a firm philosophy based on Adlerian psychology, child development principles, and a belief in positive relationships involving mutual respect and equality. As the number of students grew, I hired four more teachers and, with Mickey Robeson, proceeded to teach them the concepts of mutual respect and equality, group discussions in the classroom, encouragement, and preventative discipline.
The first year, before Multnomah County Education Service District (MCESD) took over the budget, I had very little money to spend for supplies and materials. I felt the students needed art, music, and physical education. There was a little white house on the campus that was not being used, so I was able to secure that for the arts and crafts building. I contacted the Industrial Arts Association of Portland Public Schools and asked for help. They built two carpenter tables with vises attached and donated all the equipment needed for our classes. I contacted a couple of building construction companies, and they supplied all the lumber I needed for the years I spent at Edgefield. I contacted the Carpenters’ Union, and they built cabinets and moveable shelves for the arts and crafts house as well as bookshelves for use in our classrooms.

I contacted the Home Economics Association of Portland and found several teachers who only worked part-time and agreed to volunteer their services and portable sewing machines to teach the students to sew. I found a great lady, Felice Wolmet, a music therapist from Vienna, who happened to know Dr. Dreikurs and who worked tirelessly with the students for a mere pittance of what she was worth. Edgefield Lodge hired a young man who taught physical education and did therapeutic training with physically deficient youngsters. Eventually, we were able to hire an art teacher who was especially good in painting and clay work. I felt we finally had a well-rounded and balanced curriculum for our youngsters.

I joined the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC) in 1965, when I started working in special education. In 1971, CEC put together an Ad-Hoc Committee on Minority Groups to look into the special education practices concerning minority children. The purpose of that committee was to see that minority groups — all minority groups — were entered into the educational stream. The committee was made up of representatives from the Asian American, Mexican American, African American, Hispanic American, Native American, and European American groups. I was appointed to the committee to represent Native Americans. We laughingly called ourselves the Jelly Bean Committee — one red, one black, one tan, one brown, one yellow, and a token white.

We worked for three years putting together materials to help minority students remain in the mainstream of the schools. There was and still is much work to be done. Many students could not speak or understand English. We knew that the intelligence tests minority students were required to take were biased. New tests needed to be made and standardized to take into account cultural factors.

In August 1973, we had a national meeting called “A Topical Conference on Cultural Diversity.” I headed up the Indian section of that conference and gave a keynote speech entitled “Survival or Genocide: The Dilemma of Education for Indians.” As a result of that conference and my work on the ad hoc committee, I was asked to write a chapter, “Teaching the American Indian Child in Mainstream Settings,”
in a book entitled *Mainstreaming and the Minority Child*, which was edited by Reginald Jones and published by CEC in 1976.

I was in demand as a speaker for a lot of different occasions. I spoke on equality. I spoke on how to teach Indian students, because they had to be taught differently than other students. I spoke on getting along with people, how you can do that. I just opened my mouth, and it all came out. I used to tell people they needed to have group discussions with their students, and people said that when you get Indians in a group they wouldn't discuss anything. Yet, I could take a group of Indian students and within ten minutes have them all chattering about something. I think I did that by showing belief in them. You have to show your belief in them and trust them to speak.

When presenting the concept of group discussions, I preferred to work with a group of students to demonstrate the technique. I had been told that Indian students “do not talk and it would be useless to try to carry on discussions with them.” I said I had faith in the students. I asked for a group of seven to eleven students from one classroom to meet with me; the grade level did not matter. It came time for the students to enter and to be seated in front of the group of teachers, supervisors, and parents. I had arranged for name tags so I could identify the students.

There were fifteen boys and girls from the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades (not at all like the group I had asked for). I had arranged the chairs in a semi-circle, with me in the center chair. The students came in, and the boys and one girl sat to my left while the other girls sat to my right. I started my usual opening by having the students introduce themselves. The girls giggled, and the boys grinned and wiggled. Right away, I knew I was in trouble. I continued for about fifteen minutes and decided to call for a coffee break. I talked with the ringleader of the boys and asked what was going on. He asked me if I knew that the students were from different schools, not from one classroom. Did I know that the girls were from a girl’s school? That explained the situation to me. I told him that we had a job to do: we had to show the audience that students could think, that they have good ideas and solve problems.

I reconvened the meeting, told the audience what I had discovered, and stated that we would continue, regardless. I then posed the following questions: “What do you do in class that bugs the teacher?” “What does the teacher do?” “If you were the teacher, what would you do?” After getting this information, I continued: “Why do you suppose students act up in class?” From then on, it was a lively discussion. I was able to help the students see their mistaken goals in their behavior. Usually, after students understand their behavior, they continue their present behavior but to a lesser extent and they usually do not enjoy it as much. The audience was amazed that the students talked freely.

It was interesting that the youngsters did not want to leave. I invited them to stay and suggested we talk about the traditional values of their
elders as compared to the values they presently held. They came to the conclusion that they preferred the values of their elders. The demonstration was a success. When I got through, I said the audience could ask the Indian students anything they wanted to, but that the Indians didn’t have to answer if they didn’t want to. They asked one boy why he answered me and discussed in the group. He said: Well, Mrs. Pepper would have waited on me all day... she wanted to know what I had to say, and she listened and stayed with me until I got it said.” You have to give it time.

Working with the American Society of Individual Psychology, I traveled all over the world. I was taking the Society’s teachings all over, and I talked about Indians along the way. The integration of the Society of Individual Psychology and working with the Indians are much the same. I used them both together, and that’s what made it so strong.

In 1965, Floy Pepper began working in the Special Education Department of the Multnomah County Education Service District in Portland. In cooperation with parents, teachers, students, and principals, she worked with Portland Public Schools to integrate special-needs classrooms into the public school system. During this time, Pepper also continued to teach classes on behavior management and the emotionally disturbed child at Portland State University, as
she had done since 1967. In 1975, she and Mickey Robeson founded the Rudolf Dreikurs Institute, “a non-profit business that offered marriage and family counseling services and offered consultative services to schools.” The stress of these responsibilities weighed on Floy, however, and her doctor advised her that she was likely to have a stroke if she continued.

I RESIGNED MY POSITION AT MCESD as Supervisor of the Emotionally Handicapped Program on March 20, 1983, after eighteen years of dedicated service. In June of 1983, after two months of retirement, Gilbert and I decided that I needed a job. I was about to run him crazy, following him around and asking, “What are you going to do now?” “Is this all there is to retirement?” “Is this all you do—clean house, read, watch TV, and sit?”

So I went to work for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), Research and Development Program for Indian Education. My task was to produce a monograph for teachers who teach Indian children. Robin Butterfield was to write the curriculum monograph, and the director, Joe Coburn, was to write a monograph for the administrators. He had a heart attack three weeks after I was hired, so Steve Nelson and I inherited the job of writing the administrative monograph. In four months, I had the draft ready to present to teachers. A few weeks later, we finished the draft for the administrators. The department had selected five sites to field test the material: Great Falls, Heart Butte, and Lame Deer, Montana; Fort Hall, Idaho; and Auburn, Washington.

Each school selected a building team to head up the project. The teams met in Portland for their orientation and returned to their respective schools to lay the groundwork. Robin and I visited each site at least once a month, giving the teachers training workshops and at-the-elbow feedback training in how to present Indian culture within daily classroom lessons and how to work with Indian students in the classroom. We did many live demonstrations, modeling for the teachers the principles and activities we were talking about and helping the teachers gain confidence in their own skills.

Since we were field testing the materials we had written, we added and made changes as necessary. At the end of two years, we took the teachers’ suggestions and our changes and compiled them into three monographs ready for publication. In 1985, NWREL published “Effective Practices in Indian Education: A Teacher’s Monograph,” “Effective Practices in Indian Education: An Administrator’s Monograph,” and “Effective Practices in Indian Education: A Curriculum Monograph.” These monographs have been well received by teachers and administrators who work with Indian children and are used throughout the United States and Canada.

I always had trouble in knowing whether what I was writing made sense and it had to make sense in order for it to affect teachers, so I always had Gilbert read everything that I wrote. If
it wasn’t clear in his mind about what I was wanting to say, then I’d rewrite it. He was a clarifier for what I had to say. There were a couple of teachers later on who worked with me, but I’d take him over them because he knew what I was thinking before I thought it.

When my work at nwrel was completed, I was out of a job. I began to freelance workshops, keynote talks, and consulting to school districts and colleges. I also started to write articles and curricula pertaining to Indian education. This work has been a source of joy and pleasure for me.

In 1989, I became associated with the Portland Public Schools Multicultural/Multiethnic Education Task Force and with the American Indian Curriculum Advisory Committee, which had been set up at the Portland School Board and superintendent’s request. Dr. Matthew Prophet, the superintendent at the time, was an African American and supported multicultural education. In 1990, I became co-chairperson of both groups, and acted in that capacity on the task force for many years. In 1993, I became chair of the American Indian Curriculum group. Both committees involve a great deal of time and effort, and the attendance record of members of both groups has been spasmodic and disheartening.

During the spring of 1995, the Oregon Department of Education requested that I serve on the State Education Standards Committee. I agreed to if I could join the History Section. I wanted to make sure that multicultural concepts and issues were included and that American Indians would be given their rightful place in history. I feel that I made an impact on the committee and that the history educational standards will reflect that.

Before I went to Salem, I believe there was one page in the history book about Indians in Oregon, and I insisted that they were worth more than one page. I tried to instill in the committee an understanding of Indians and what they stood for and what they did. I remember I went to the committee in Salem with a book called First Oregonians, put out by the Oregon Council for the Humanities. That made a great impression on the curriculum department.

I wrote curriculum for all ages and all subjects. I started out in Home Economics, as a specialist, and then the curriculum advisor wanted to know if I could do some curriculum work in science. I said I thought I could, so I started with science and moved gradually to history and all the other phases of it. In writing it, I liked the structure of curriculum. The structure was based in a main subject rule and then you deviated from that. For example, you could talk about the main qualities of stone and then break it down into different categories, such as sandstone, granite, and so forth.

I became a senior curriculum writer for Portland Public Schools and was writing in the areas of child care, personal relationships, and family relationships. I wrote the knowledge and information I received in Dr. Dreikurs’s class into the home economics curriculum. We believed in equality, and that’s what the osip was founded on. That influenced everything I did.
What I believe, what I talk, what I vote — everything I believe in is based on equality. Equality and respect is the sense of being, the sense of achievement, and you have to be able to feel it as well as to live it. And if you don’t have it, why, you will feel inferior and you will show that. You provide an example for your students by having respect for yourself.

As I reflect back over my life, I realize that I was influenced by a number of Indian cultural values. My philosophy of life, my beliefs on interpersonal relationships, and my attitude toward teaching are based on the principles of respect and equality. These two concepts were beliefs that my parents instilled in me as a youngster and, as I discovered in about 1960, are the foundations of American Indian relationships and Adlerian psychology. I understand the influence that Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs and Adlerian psychology had in shaping the last forty years of my life. What is interesting to me is how the two — Indian values and Adlerian psychology — melded together to help make me what I am today.

When I speak of equality, I am referring to social equality. I believe that everyone has the right to a feeling of dignity, a feeling of worthwhileness, and a feeling of accomplishment regardless of their race, color, creed, or economic status. The two Indian values that I have adhered to throughout my life are the concepts of “direct contribution,” which is enlarged from the traditional Indian value of generosity and sharing — whatever Indian people have, they share — and the Indian practice of basing relationships on equality and mutual respect, or recognizing individual differences. Another Indian value I live by is the importance of family — the extended family — which includes more than one generation: aunts, uncles, cousins, and other significant individuals. Another value I appreciate is the concept of cooperation. Cooperation is necessary for family survival and human survival.

Floy Pepper suffered the devastating loss of her son Jim in February 1992 and her husband Gilbert in October 1992. Still, she has continued her involvement in education. The work she began in Chemawa continues today. In Oregon’s 2004 middle school/high school curriculum, “Indians in Oregon Today,” she is credited as the writer. In September 2004, she joined her grandson, Jim Henry, who is on the staff of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, to speak briefly at the museum’s opening. Pepper has received many awards for her work in education, including a Lifetime Award from the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology in 1990, recognition as a Special Contributor to Indian Education by the Oregon Indian Education Association in 1992–1993, the Ed Elliott Human Rights Award from the Oregon Education Association in 1996, and the U.S. Department of Education Lifetime Achievement Award “for her dedication and outstanding contributions to improving education for all children” in 2002.