

11-1995

## Legacy and Testament: The Story of Columbia River Gillnetters – Book Review

Chris Friday

Western Washington University, [chris.friday@wwu.edu](mailto:chris.friday@wwu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://cedar.wwu.edu/history\\_facpubs](http://cedar.wwu.edu/history_facpubs)



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Friday, Chris, "Legacy and Testament: The Story of Columbia River Gillnetters – Book Review" (1995). *History*. 25.  
[http://cedar.wwu.edu/history\\_facpubs/25](http://cedar.wwu.edu/history_facpubs/25)

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Humanities at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in History by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact [westerncedar@wwu.edu](mailto:westerncedar@wwu.edu).



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING

---

Legacy and Testament: The Story of Columbia River Gillnetters by Irene Martin

Review by: Chris Friday

*Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Nov., 1995), pp. 628-629

Published by: [University of California Press](http://www.ucpress.edu)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3640583>

Accessed: 28/10/2014 12:41

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of California Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Pacific Historical Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

and the disciplinary actions resulting from disobedience to little understood rules. The picture of boarding school life from their memories evokes a sympathy for the very young and an admiration for the varied survival mechanisms invented by all the students and their strong group loyalty.

Lomawaima analyzes boarding school policy in terms of the stated policy, the provision of educational and employment opportunities, and an unstated policy of education for subservience. To further the stated policy, Chilocco's program emphasized skills-training in a number of vocational areas for the boys and home-living skills for the girls. Lomawaima slices through the rhetoric of educational and employment opportunity to reveal the unstated policy of subservience education through training in the lowlier skills in each trade, the orientation of the students to menial labor, and the lack of attention to academics.

Lomawaima's analysis of the student data is put quite simply. Indian students made Chilocco their own and created their own school culture. Quite apart from what policy wielders and school administrators wanted, the students themselves made Chilocco what they wanted it to be. In *They Called It Prairie Light*, Lomawaima lets them tell their story.

*Northeastern State University*

MARILYN WATT

*Legacy and Testament: The Story of Columbia River Gillnetters.* By Irene Martin. (Pullman, Washington State University Press, 1994. xiv + 184 pp. \$19.95)

Who controls the commons and with what end in mind? Irene Martin proposes that Columbia River gillnetters have rights to fish for salmon that are "rooted in custom and community" (p. 109). Since the 1920s, canning companies on the Columbia began to buy fish from independent boat owners rather than running fleets of their own. As a result, small groups of those fishermen established "drift rights" by clearing snags and debris from the stretches of the river bottom. Competition among fishermen, complicated by the sale and inheritance of drift rights, led to court battles that confirmed the legality of drift rights as property. Up to 1990, Martin explains, "[d]rift rights were a community's way of organizing access to fishing grounds" (p. 33). In that year, however, the Washington Supreme Court ruled: "Only the Department [of Fisheries] is in a position to establish the orderly promotion of gillnet fishing on the Columbia River" (p. 99). That decree, along with the placement of

salmon on the endangered species list and the competition for the resource with Native Americans (who have treaty rights) and with sport fishers, has proven a death knell for the lifeways of Columbia River gillnet fishermen.

Were Martin to have stopped her discussion at the point of documenting and explaining how that lifeway came to be and then came to pass, *Legacy and Testament* might have lived up to its name. Martin has done an excellent job of describing the folkways of lower Columbia River gillnetters, how ethnicity affects the social organization of the work, and the manner in which fishing families seek other economic remuneration by fishing in Alaska, by logging, and by farming. When she argues that Columbia River gillnetters have rights equal to those of Native Americans, though, she enters into highly problematic territory. For her, the recent turn of events represents "a wresting away of resources from one owner/user by another" (p. 118). Although she does not explicitly declare it, one is left with the inescapable sense that gillnetters are the "new Indians." Equating at least seven millennia of aboriginal occupation to six decades of independent gillnetting, and comparing use to treaty rights dramatically overstates the case. Moreover, Martin's argument that "Biology...should be the basis for decision making" (p. 117) is contradictory, particularly after she so vehemently calls for community considerations in fisheries management.

*Legacy and Testament* deserves to be read to gain insights into how gillnetters understand their work and current situation, and to see how "wise use" advocates construct their arguments, but this volume ends up as polemic. The story still begs for a close historical analysis of the social, environmental, and political developments that not only involve Columbia River salmon but also competition for control of the commons broadly defined.

*Western Washington University*

CHRIS FRIDAY

*The Specter of Communism in Hawaii.* By T. Michael Holmes. (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1994. xiii + 257 pp. \$36)

For a few years around 1950, some people in Hawaii and a few in the United States were concerned or agitated over what Michael Holmes calls "the specter of Communism" in the Territory of Hawaii. A number of writers have recounted the events that constituted the "specter," but no one has satisfactorily described or explained the phenomenon itself. Holmes's narrative, based on a 1975 dissertation of which this reviewer was a reader, does not