

But Ben's life is a tragic story. Now the Indian Bureau used to supervise all the income of the older Indians. They (the Indians) had little knowledge and experience with business practices and it seemed this was especially true of the Indians who happened to have money. Anyway, our office would prepare an annual budget for those old Indians to take care of their needs. They would also be issued a monthly allowance. Then in 1950 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs brought in an old maid (and let this be a lesson to you, Pat, don't ever be an old maid) but anyway she was an old maid--who had been with the U.N.R.R.A. (United Nations Relief Authority), an organization that was operating after World War Two. It provided relief for destitute peoples. She came down here as a Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs but she knew absolutely nothing about Indian affairs. I suppose after those first two weeks she knew more than she ever did later. Anyway, she hadn't been here but two or three weeks before she thought she knew all the solutions. She had the great idea that the solution to Indian incompetence was just to give all the Indians all their money without any restrictions and let them learn how to handle it the old way. At that time Big Ben had about 200,000 in his account.

In order to understand any of this that I'm telling you, it's necessary to understand Indian philosophy. Historically, any Indian who sought to achieve prominence among his tribe's people could do it only in some spectacular way, like by feats of daring and heroism. It was the man who could pull the most coups who could get the respect of the tribe and who would then be destined to some prominence in the tribe. But the white man took away all this opportunity for an Indian to achieve esteem among his own people. Because after the white man, the Indian had to quit scalping, quit raiding, no stealing, even. There grew up a substitute for this whereby