



The Navajo Nation
Yideeskáądi Nitsáhákees

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Navajo President Buu Nygren proclaims ‘Jack Ahasteen Day,’ says process to nominate cartoonist for Pulitzer Prize has begun

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren today proclaimed June 12 as “Jack Ahasteen Day” in honor of the renowned former Navajo Times editorial cartoonist.

The weekly newspaper reported online, “Ahasteen departs Navajo Times.” The lead sentence uncere- moniously reported, “The Jack Ahasteen Comics will no longer be printed in the Navajo Times.”

“The Navajo Times is not the Navajo Times without Jack Ahasteen,” the President told the long-time political commentator and artist as he signed a proclamation Wednesday.

He said he wanted to proclaim Jack Ahasteen Day “all across the Navajo Nation and to the world” to honor Mr. Ahasteen’s work and dedication over five decades.

“We’re humbled to honor you today,” he said. “Thank you for the 50-plus years that you provided the Navajo Times. You summed up the whole newspaper in one image.”

On Monday, it was reported that Mr. Ahasteen’s 52-year-long reign as the editorial conscience and comic relief of the largest Native American newspaper in the country had come to an end.



Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren on Wednesday proclaimed June 12 as “Jack Ahasteen Day” in honor of the renowned former Navajo Times editorial cartoonist.

By Monday evening, Mr. Ahasteen told his Facebook followers that he had asked the newspaper to renegotiate his pay.

On Tuesday, he reported that he had recently created a limited liability corporation titled Ahasteen Graphics, LLC.

"I have a board of directors now and my board is advocating on my behalf for my increased pay," he told Facebook followers.

But none came.

Mr. Ahasteen said he was first hired as an illustrator by the newspaper in 1972 by another legendary Navajo Times figure, the late reporter and editor Bill Donovan, who asked him for another cartoon week after week.

After so many years as the paper's beloved editorial cartoonist, known for his perceptive caricature, timely, funny and acerbic political wit portrayed with a distinct Navajo flavor, news of his dismissal was met with a flurry of online protest and objection.

President Nygren told Mr. Ahasteen, his wife Irene and their daughters and grandchildren that if the Navajo Times was listening, he really hoped it would reconsider its decision.

The President said the proclamation was a humble way to honor Mr. Ahasteen's outstanding contributions to the Navajo Nation and his enduring legacy as an artist, storyteller and cultural ambassador.

"Jack Ahasteen's unique style, blending traditional Navajo symbolism with modern comic art, has become instantly recognizable and has earned him a place as an iconic figure in Navajo society," the proclamation reads. "On this day, we celebrate his achievements, express our gratitude for his dedication and reaffirm our commitment to supporting and nurturing the artistic talents within our community."

Before he signed the proclamation with Mr. Ahasteen and his family around him, the President announced that he has assigned his staff to begin the process to have Mr. Ahasteen's work nominated for the 2025 Pulitzer Prize in the public



service category where editorial cartoons are recognized.

"This award has never been awarded to a Navajo," the President said. "I'm very optimistic that the judges of the Pulitzers are going to see your work and they're going to come away with appreciation for the work that you've done for journalism's highest honor. Nobody's more deserving that you for 50-plus years of dedication."

OPVP Legal Counsel Candace Begody-Slim, the first woman and youngest editor of the Navajo Times, said she met Mr. Ahasteen in 2006 as an intern at the newspaper.

"Jack would always come into my office and ask, 'What's the big news this week?'" she said. "It was always a highlight of the week being able to talk about ideas and for him to come up with a great product at the end. He's a great example of a decent, hardworking Navajo man."

She said over many years he served the Navajo Nation with excellence.

"I want to reiterate the President's words," she said. "The Navajo Times is not the Navajo Times without Jack Ahasteen. You are really an institution on the Navajo Nation. We're very proud and very happy to have worked with you again."

