

FBI agent works to keep focus on shootings

By Liz Carey

Staff Reporter

ANDERSON TWP. – Ed Woods, a former FBI agent, never met Jack Coler or Ron Williams, but he honors their memory daily.

The Anderson Township resident

runs www.noparolepeltier.com, a site devoted, he said, to providing both sides of the story in Leonard Peltier's plea for clemency or a pardon.

On June 26, 1975, FBI agents Coler and Williams were executing a warrant for the arrest of a young Indian named Jimmy Eagle at the Pine Ridge Reservation, S.D. The two were met by gunfire, and died from gunshot wounds they received there.

Peltier, a 30-year-old Lakota and Anishabe Indian, was arrested and later convicted of aiding and abetting the murder of the two agents.

And for the 30 years since, protesters and activists have been calling for Peltier's clemency, citing his innocence and failure to get a fair trial.

But following a chance meeting

with Coler's youngest son, Woods began an investigation into the matter. A 30-year FBI agent, Woods said he never met Coler and Williams personally, but his interest in their story grew the more he investigated Peltier's story.

"My mission was to honor the memory of two young FBI agents who were brutally murdered," he said. "I think I've been fairly successful in keeping open a dialogue for reasonable people who want to listen to both sides of the story."

Peltier supporters have worked tirelessly for his release saying he was at varying times, not guilty because a "Mr. X" in a red pickup truck actually did the shooting, that he was not guilty because he was not guilty but a political prisoner, Wood said on his Web site www.noparolepeltier.com.

But Woods said he finds Peltier's stories an indication of guilt, not innocence, and that Peltier has become more of a myth or legend.

The events have spurred books and movies, such as "Incident at

Oglala" produced and narrated by Robert Redford.

For Woods, it was important to get as much information as possible about the events, including a trip to Pine Ridge.

"The first thing that struck me was that it was 30 years ago," he said. "It has changed a lot. But it really gave me a sense of out where it was and what happened."

Woods, whose grandfather was a Native American, said he feels strongly about Peltier's claims the government instigated the incident and violated the rights of the Indians at the reservation.

"I know all the other issues involved, I'm an avid Native American rights advocate, and I make that clear," he said. "But I'm not an advocate of murder."

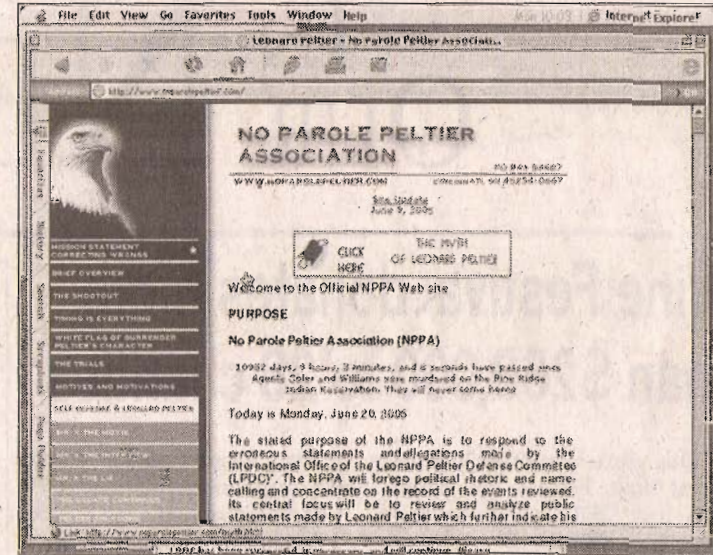
For the past 29 years, the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee has fought to have Peltier released or pardoned. In 2001, the LPDC expected President Bill Clinton to pardon Peltier. He was not.

On June 15, the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee faced their most recent court battle when

attorney Barry Bachrach argued the charges brought against Peltier were invalid because the two FBI agents were on sovereign Indian territory and therefore out of the jurisdiction of the U.S. government. The case is still pending.

Barry Bachrach, attorney for the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, could not be reached for comment. However, on a partner Web site, www.freepeltier.org, supporters of Peltier called Woods' Web site an attempt to confuse the public.

"It comes as no surprise that a new organization named the 'No Parole Peltier Association' or NPPA is in fact another guise for the FBI to continue their campaign of disinformation against Leonard Peltier," the organization responded to Woods site. "The NPPA consists of a Web site sponsored by an FBI agent, asking people to sign a petition against Leonard Peltier's parole release. Once again the FBI are going beyond their jurisdiction as law enforcement officials to defame Leonard Peltier, while further misinforming the public



Anderson Township resident Ed Woods' Web site seeks to keep man behind bars.

about the case."

Despite accusations from the Peltier supporters and allegations from LPDC that Woods' Web site crossed the line from "provocateur to criminal," Woods continues to provide both sides of the issue to the public.

"Since Peltier's people are putting forth their version that basically disparages the memory of two young agents, I wanted to pro-

vide a constant dialogue that looks at this issue," he said. "Peltier has had more bites of the apples than any inmate in the history of incarceration. ... I just don't want people to forget that there were two young men willing to sacrifice their lives for their country who were murdered that day as well."

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