

Book Reviews of Karuk, The Upriver People.

1. "Nicely detailed descriptions of the little-known Karuk Indians of northwestern California, known as the Upriver People. The geography of the territory, everyday life of clothing, houses, subsistence, preparation of food. A beautiful Karuk myth about how pain came into the world, before which "no man felt any torment, and a man could even be killed and not suffer." The arts, the oral literature, the types of basketry made. The social bonds, family rituals, the nature of death. Dances. Ceremonies (including the fine World Renewal Ceremony). History of the people. The revival of a vanishing culture. The photographs flesh out this warm, knowledgeable study and Bell's feel for the people is striking. Here are the ways, the land. "The mountains of the Klamath and Six Rivers National Forest that surround Karuk country are lush, with more vegetation and precipitation than the Sierra Nevada. They serve as a barrier for moisture-laden winds blowing in from the Pacific." And the times and gentility of the people. "Myths told by song were the most important type of narrative. They were usually recited on cold winter evenings around the fire, and were primarily accounts of the deeds and exploits of the Ixareeyav." Bell, an anthropologist, captures the spirit of an indestructible people." (The Book Reader, Nov-Dec. 1991)

2. "Author Maureen Bell...makes an interesting--and refreshing--point regarding the dissemination of knowledge of past cultures in the preface of her book Karuk: The Upriver People: 'Whatever answers are given herein, the reader should remember that our knowledge of aboriginal cultures is never exact, that our speculations based upon the information given by informants and archaeological remains are hypothetical models, not absolute facts....' It is not surprising than an author/researcher willing to make an honest statement about her topic would also tackle those hypothetical models in responsible fashion, and Bell, who now resides in Sacramento, proves to do just that.

"Bell's book begins with a geographical description of the land the Karuk call home--the Klamath River area. She then goes into brief educated speculation regarding the origins of the tribe itself. From there the book looks at a number of aspects of Karuk culture, interspersed with numerous fascinating photographs, maps and graphics (including a cover painting by Yreka artist Ralph Starritt). Bell devotes detailed (but clearly written) chapters to geography, everyday life, Karuk arts, cultural organization, ceremonies, and history. She then brings us up to date with a final chapter on the revival of a vanishing culture (including background on the 1965 incorporation of the Karuk Tribe of California to 'preserve traditional knowledge about the Upriver People,' before taking us back into time in an appendix to relate three Karuk myths: how pain came into the world, Bluejay Medicine Man, and how salmon was given to mankind.

"In this book, Bell cuts miners no slack, blaming them for almost single-handedly bringing an entire culture to the brink of extinction. And it would have been nice to know the answers to such questions as how many Karuks actually had a strong belief in their religious system, but these are the kind of questions that cannot be answered. Maureen Bell grew up as one of nine children in a large Irish family. Her interest in the Karuk culture began as a youth, when she made friends with several girls who were

members of the tribe. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology with a minor in regional studies from California State University, Chico." (Siskiyou Daily News, November 1991)