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BLACKBURN, LEWIS ALVIN

INTERVIEW

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Claremore, 1890
Indian Medicine
Outlaws

Mary J. Stockton,
Interviewer
May 24, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH LEWIS ALVIN BLACKBURN
Tulsa, Oklahoma

An interesting character residing for many years in and around Rogers County is Lewis Alvin Blackburn, part Indian, and a native of Jefferson County, Illinois, where he was born on July 23, 1878.

His father was a well known contractor and builder of that section. Lewis, or better known to all his classmates and friends as "Lew", attended school at Haskell Institute, a famous Indian educational school located near Lawrence, Kansas, that city being made famous by a raid staged by Charles Quantrill and the James and Younger outlaws from Missouri, during the Civil War.

For an occupation "Lew" chose to follow in the footsteps of his father, majoring in Architectural Engineering. He located at Claremore in the year of 1890 and immediately found employment in constructing, or supervising the construction of several buildings, now prominent land marks of the community around Claremore, where he now lives. He constructed his own home and was one of the supervisors in the construction of our new Armory Building, just recently completed.

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In 1898, he was united in marriage with Miss Maud Cosey of the Indian Territory, and to this union there were five children born, three of whom are still living. A son, Otta, who is familiarly called "Dick" by his Claremore friends, is one of our trusted firemen. He has a wife and baby. Dick is also the First Lieutenant of the National Guard here. The other son, Marshall or "Ickie", as we know him, is a well known boxer and pugilist. "Ickie" is a large, husky young man of thirty years.

Mr. Blackburn spent many leisure hours with his gun and trusted dog, hunting, fishing, swimming, and hiking. Wild game was abundant. There were quail, rabbit, squirrel, wild turkey, deer, mink, muskrat, wild pigeon, bear, and buffalo in some places. The streams were full of fish.

Mr. Blackburn also spent many hours with his dear friend, Will Rogers, riding bucking broncos, herding cows, and roping calves. "Lew" said that Will was always cracking jokes, and acting like an common old cowboy.

Dancing was also a favorite pastime for Lew and his pals. They would ride for fifteen or twenty miles to attend the old-time square dance.

Lew tells an interesting story of medicine as prac-

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ticed by an old time Indian woman. When he was a young man he contracted malaria and had periodical chills, commonly called "thirty-day chills", which refused to yield to the ordinary treatment. He suffered many things of many physicians but got no relief until an aged Indian woman took him in. To this day he is a booster for her remedy and the skill with which this untutored daughter of the forest ministered to him in his affliction, with such happy results. The receipt is very simple and may be of interest to someone in this old world some day. Take a handful of roots from the gooseberry tree and pound with a heavy mortar, or something similar to that, until a fine dust or powder is formed. Then boil the powder with clear, fresh water. This makes a fine tea, or chill tonic. The tea will have a ropy appearance; Lew says "like the old pioneers' whiskey." Dose: Drink a cup of tea when you arise in the morning and occasionally through the day and the result will be marvelous." So states Mr. Blackburn, and he recommends this as a sovereign remedy for the malaria fever and chills.

Lew knew many of the notorious outlaws that infested and terrorized this country in the early days; such as Turn Cochran, Bill Doolin, Tom French, and Henry Starr, men noted

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for their outlawry, who again and again dealt swift and deadly justice in their own special way. Lew and Henry Starr were great friends; the latter having done a number of real favors for Lew in the olden days before he became an outlaw. As a result of this close friendship Lew kept Henry Starr's frequent visits to Claremore a secret and played cards and pool with him when there was a ten thousand dollar reward hanging over Starr's head. It is said that Lew wept when word came that Henry Starr had been killed at Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Thus, an Indian, once a friend in need, will always be a friend even until death. Nothing can make 'em talk if they are your friend.