

PEYOTE MEETING HELD AT HOME OF ALFRED CHALEPAH, KIOWA-APACHE, FEBRUARY 24, 1968
Comments and Description by Julia A. Jordan, written February 29, 1968.

This peyote meeting was sponsored by Sarah Longhorn, Alfred's mother-in-law, and put on in honor of her great-grandson's birthday. Her great-grandson is Carl Ray Chalepah. Sarah has a peyote meeting for him every year for his birthday. I attended the one held for him in 1966 on his fifth birthday. This year Carl was seven. Carl is the grandson of Alfred and Evelyn Chalépah, and son of Ella Lou Chalepah Noconie. Sarah Longhorn, who sponsored the meeting, lives with Alfred and Evelyn. She asked James Silverhorn to conduct the meeting. Two years ago when I attended, James also conducted the meeting. The meeting was held in a tipi, owned by Alfred, set up about 200 yards south of Alfred's house. The floor of the tipi, or ground, had been carefully cleaned of grass and weeds and smoothed and levelled. Hay and sage were placed on the ground around the periphery of the tipi, and these covered with thick clean burlap. This formed a cushion about 2-3" thick upon which people placed their own blankets, cushions, etc. and sat. The center area was clean and hard-packed dirt. The altar in the center was made of dirt or clay and was crescent-shaped, about 5 inches high and about 3 or 4 inches wide in the center, and tapered toward the horns. The crescent opened toward the tipi-entrance, which was on the east side. The crescent-shaped altar thus formed the west side and boundary of the fireplace, which was in the center on the tipi. Outside of the tipi a few feet away on the northeast was a neat, rectangular stack of wood. The sticks were about 2 and 3 inches in diameter, and for the most part had been bleanded of bark. Most of the sticks were whole branches, about 3 and 4 feet in length, but some were portions of larger logs which had been split.

The weather had been cold during the week, with about 5 inches of snow two days earlier. Saturday, Feb. 24, had been warmer with wouth winds, and much of the snow was melted, but there was a great deal of mud in Alfred's driveway and in the parking areas and around the house and even in the pasture where the tipi was. I got my car stuck in the mud just a few feet away from the main section-line road, and had to walk in to the house. Later Alfred went out and drove the car in after the ground and mud had frozen. Planks and long pieces of metal siding were placed on the path between the tipi and the house for people to walk on. The tipi inside was clear of mud and was very clean.

John Mead, a former anthropology student who had worked with the Apaches drove over from Pampa, Texas to attend this meeting. I met him at Gertie's house in Anadarko, and we drove out to Alfred's together, getting there about 7:00 pm, February 24. Several people were already there, including James Silverhorn, his brother, George, and Horace Guetone, Guy Guetone's brother. People sat in Alfred's living room and talked and joked. Conversation ran on the weather, the difficulties of getting out, the mud and my car which was stuck, etc. Charlie High and Tom Bitsedy, Apaches arrived. James was worried because he had forgotten his drum cover (a piece of buckskin) and no one yet had brought one. They never did say what they would do in case everyone arrived and no one brought a drum cover. Finally someone did show up with a drum cover, but I never found out whose it was. Charlie High tied the drum, which task took about 40 minutes and seemed to require a lot of patience and strength, as well as know-how. He used 7 stones for the bosses, and a long length of hemp rope of about 3/8" diameter, to secure the buckskin cover. The drum was a No. 6 cast-iron kettle on a tripod base. Charlie used a wood tool to help him tie the drum and tighten the buckskin cover. This tool was about 10 or 12 inches long, with carved handle and somewhat tapered or wedge-shaped at the end. Charlie used this tool as a prong and wedge inserting it between the rope and kettle to make a place for him to pass through the end of the rope when necessary, and he also used this tool to pull the rope tight, and take up slack, so that the buckskin cover would be held down tight.