

WILLIAM COLLINS, JR., HIS STORY (SCHOOL EXPERIENCES; CHILDHOOD)

I was born on the Ponca Indian reservation south of Ponca City, in a tent--delivered by my grandmother and several midwives. I understand both my grandmothers were present, Mary Gives Waters and Laura Primeaux Collins.

My paternal grandfather, Charles Collins, upon holding me for the first time said, "Finally, we have a boy!" I have or had three older sisters--one living, two dead, one half-sister. My paternal grandfather died in 1924--the year in which I was born. My Zodiac sign is Aries, nee April 15, 1924.

When I was six years old, I was sent to the Pawnee Indian School, at Pawnee, Oklahoma, a distance of approximately 45 miles from Ponca City, not as the crow flies. Thirty miles as the crow flies. The one thing I can figure for this distance was to discourage running away, or to lessen the otherwise frequent parental visits. None of this occurred in the mind of a six year old, but just wait. The pains of "growing up" were just commencing.

I was impressed, first of all, by the (what I thought at that time) immensity of the buildings; huge, monolithic, sandstone block structures. Little did I realize that this was to be my home for the next 6 or 7 years, at least 9 months out of the year. We never saw our parents from September to May, or they us. I guess they came down 2 or 3 times in all the time I was incarcerated there--that's all I can remember as to their visits, which is open for dispute.

The last event of the tribal year of activities was the Ponca Indian Pow-wow, usually held the last week in August. Naturally, when the pow-wow ended, we went right on into the school year.

My most vivid and lasting impression I retained of my father and mother was when they lined us up to take castor oil, a day or two before the bus came to take us away to school. I remember that spoon looked like a shovel as it was thrust under our noses. My three sisters would be first, from the oldest to youngest. I don't know why they saved me for last. It only increased my suffering watching and listening to my sisters