

ABLE BIGBOW, KIOWA

INTERVIEWED BY: JULIA A. JORDAN

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DATE OF INTERVIEW: 07-26-67

GENERAL SUBJECT: STORIES OF CHIEF BIG BOW AND JESSE JAMESPARTICULAR TOPICS DISCUSSED:STORY ABOUT KIOWA BOY CAPTURED AND RESCUED FROM ENEMY
SUN DANCE

STORY ABOUT BIG BOW COMING HOME FROM TEXAS

STORY OF HOW OLD MAN BIG BOW CAPTURED A BOY IN TEXAS AND
RAISED HIM

FORTY-NINE DANCE

STORY ABOUT A MAN WHO FLIRTED WITH HIS OWN WIFE AT A
FORTY-NINESTORY ABOUT HOW ABLE HELPED JESSE JAMES GET STOLEN
CATTLE OUT OF OKLAHOMA

OUTLAW CAVES OR HIDEOUTS NEAR HOBART

BACKGROUND OF INFORMANT:

Able Bigbow was born around 1883 and died in 1970. He was the son of Little Bow and the grandson of the famous Big Bow who was born at the time of the Cutthroat Gap Massacre in 1833, and who became one of the leading warriors and most prominent leaders of the Kiowa tribe in pre-reservation and early reservation period days. Able attended the Kiowa School (probably at Anadarko) very briefly. According to a "stepson", Charles Palmer, "He went in the front door and walked out the back, and that's all the schooling he got." At the time of this interview he was a spry, alert, slender old man with his long hair worn in this yarn tied braids, and a sparse moustache of the type worn by several of the old time Kiowas. He was living with his daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Charles Tartzah, in the Hog Creek community west of Anadarko on Highway 9. He spoke English with a very thick accent, and was often difficult to understand. However Charles Tartzah, or Charles Palmer or other members of the family would often help in talking to him. He loved to talk and tell stories. His stories in Kiowa were told with much expression and many hand gestures. In October of 1967 Able was the center of attention at ceremonies held at Ft. Sill, when a tipi was dedicated in memory of the old chief, Big Bow, and presented to the Post Museum.

NOTE: This interview took place at Charlie Palmer's trading post near the Apache "Y", west of Anadarko on Highway 9. Charlie assisted in the interview by talking to Able in Kiowa and explaining the questions to him. Able speaks English fairly well, but with an accent and style of expression of an almost disappeared generation of Kiowas. For example he says, "square town" instead of "town square", and "hold me back" for "hold on to my back". The style of his story-telling, with its exclamations and repetitions, is probably as close to the old Kiowa style as could be put into English.--J. Jordan.