

HARRY, AUSTIN

INTERVIEW.

#7889

433

WOLVES

An interview of Austin Harry, age 55,
Tuskegee town (tulwa), Newoka, Okla.

Billie Byrd, Interviewer
Indian-pioneer History
10-15-37

Of all the things that the Muskogee-Creek Indians feared was the wolf when it was plentiful in the early days. They were even scared to mention the word "wolf". There are still some people who fear the wolf yet.

The fathers and mothers gave warning to their little children not to speak bad or unkindly of the wolf. If any reference was to be made to the wolf only the best words were to be used.

This animal is the "ya-ha" in the native Muskogee-Creek tongue, but it was never called the "ya-ha" in those early days but as "este pō-cha thai-ko", meaning great grandfather. Sometimes they were called the "ne-the fol-la" meaning Night Wanderers, and to utter its name was most feared. It seems that no one of the Indians has ever known why the wolf in this respect was so canny of mind.

In one way it is said that the wolf was one of

the best friends to have at night and then in another way it was one of the worst enemy that a man could have. It is said that as certain as anyone joked about the wolf, they, in their uncanny way, knew about it. It has been traditionally true that a person joking, molesting or harming a wolf has to meet up with them or some revenge at some time, sooner or later.

There are instances when it has been known that these animals have been known to do a good turn to some one of the Indians while in other cases they have returned bad deeds to those that committed bad deeds upon them.

The following narrations are samples:

Lucy Harjo was a Creek woman who lived near Holdenville, Hughes County, Oklahoma, when that town was just coming into existence. While there one time, it is said that Lucy Harjo cut up another woman very badly. This other Indian woman had been sitting in her buggy just outside of a saloon. It was not only the woman that was cut up for the horse that was hitched to her buggy was also cut up. After this act was committed Lucy Harjo fled from the scene but ^{not} without pursuers. Somehow she evaded the pursuing U. S. Marshal and

and his followers and escaped to the hills where she sought to rest and obtain sleep for a short while. As she was laying there in the weeds, two forms walked up to her and she knew them to be wolves. One lay down at her head and the other at her feet. Just as a dog would do to a master.

Lucy Harjo awoke to the whining of the wolves who seemed to be restless for they would run a short distance and return to her all the time whining as if giving some sort of warning. Knowing nothing else to do she followed the wolves into the wildest thickets and it was then that she realized that her pursuers had taken up her trail and ^{were} hearing her hiding place and that was the reason why the wolves were so restless.

A young Indian youth who was very fond of hunting shot a wolf one time and the parents feared for him and reproached him for his act, saying, "We have cautioned you against doing such a thing but it has been done, but remember, you often go out alone at nights." The youth answered back that he could take care of himself in not too pleasant words.

Since the youth was quite a hunter, he had spotted a place where a number of wild turkeys roosted for the night and he decided to kill a turkey one night. It was late in the evening when he started out on his horse in the direction of the turkey roost. He was armed with his Winchester and pistol with the usual shells and other hunting necessities. He tied his horse a quarter of a mile away from the turkey roost and he thought it would be best to steal upon them, by walking the remainder of the way.

He had not gone very far when he heard a wolf howl in the direction that he was going but he thought nothing of it at the time. He walked on a ways and the howls were repeated and the youthful hunter did not feel so encouraged and decided to return home and let the turkey killing go for the present. As he started back toward the direction where he had left his horse he heard another wolf howl in that direction and it seemed to be near. As he heard that, he planned to reach his horse in a round about way and when the hunter walked in another direction another wolf howled from that direction so that he realized that he must

surrounded in every direction. With the realization, he began to remember what he had done to a wolf not so long ago and he also remembered what his parents had told him.

He ran until he came to a large rock. He climbed upon it meaning to waylay any of the wolves if they came within shooting distance. The howls of the wolves came closer and closer until the young Indian man was surrounded by wolves. The howling and yelping wolves leaped in his direction even as he thought he was on his refuge. Although he had much weapons and he tried to use them, each of the shells only snapped and he was helpless. Each time a wolf snapped at him, they all moved closer and closer to the rock. One of the wolves finally caught his boot in such a manner as to pull him off of the large rock. All the wolves began to fight over him as soon as he touched the ground. His clothes were badly torn, his face and body were scratched but he was not seriously injured and it seemed that he was just covered with saliva of the wolves. The wolves tossed their victim and rolled him around in every way until the early morning. The wolves would rest

a short time and start in their rough treatment of their victim. It was only when day was breaking that the wolves ceased their play-like treatment of the young man and all began to leave in several different directions with their yelping and barking faintly growing as they got farther and farther away.

When the young Indian man reached his home in a tattered and exhausted condition, his parents said, "We told you what might happen to you."

In 1890, the two tribal towns (talwas) of Tuskegee Canadian and Tuskegee Arkansas submitted a request to the Muskogee-Creek council that they wished to consolidate as one tribal town under the name of Tuskegee. It was upon the approval of the council that these two tribal towns became as one town.

It has been said that in 1799, the Tuskegee Indians were a separate and distinct tribe of Indians residing in the states of Georgia and Tennessee, having their own language distinct from the language of the Creeks but they were adopted by the Creeks be-

fore the immigration of the Greeks to this country so that they adopted the Greek language as their own language.

After the immigration to this country, the Tuskegees selected their settlement near the present site of the Tuskegee church in McIntosh county, but they were non-Christian until the native missionary minister came to their midst soon after the great Civil War.

It is said that Tarcosar Harjo, in company with his son-in-law William McCombs who later became a leading minister, selected the present site of the Tuskegee church. Tarcosar Harjo was an intermarried citizen of the Tuskegee town and had been opposed to Christianizing the Indians but due to a serious illness he called upon a Rev. John Smith to hold a meeting at his house. He afterwards became a Christian and erected a house of worship near the present site of Tuskegee.

Mrs. Nancy Posey, the mother of Alex Posey, the celebrated Creek poet, is a charter member of the Tuskegee Baptist church.

The first pastor of the Tuskegee church was Parhose Harjo Phillips who was among those that com-

P. 8.

posed the petition for the union of the Tuskegee Arkansas and the Tuskegee Canadian tribal towns in 1890. Others composing the petition were: Edmond Harry, Roley McIntosh, David Harry, George McGilbra and Frank Henry.

In the life of the Tuskegee church there have been other noted ministers such as Rev. William McCombs, Rev. James Colbert, Rev. James McCombs and Rev. Joe Colbert.

(Note: The manuscripts of Billie Syrd, an Indian, in their typical Indian style, are changed very little. Ed.)