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AVERYT, ALBERT NORRIS, Jr.

INTERVIEW

7689

INDEX CARDS

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Pierce Institute
Methodist Preacher
Kiowas-Comanches-Apaches
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Hunting
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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Lula Austin

This report made on (date) September 28, 1937

1. Name Reverend Albert Norris Averyt, Jr.

2. Post Office Address Durant, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) 1220 West Main St.,

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month July Day 11 Year 1885

5. Place of birth Wynnewood, Oklahoma.

6. Name of Father Albert Norris Averyt Place of birth Hope, Arkansas

Other information about father Father was Missionary among Western Indians

7. Name of Mother Maddie Corley Baker Place of birth Bonham, Texas

Other information about mother Grand-daughter of Reverend W. B. Baker,

who was Superintendent of Armstrongs Academy in 1855.

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____.

An Interview with Reverend Albert Norris Averyt, Jr.
1220 West Main Street, Durant, Oklahoma.
By - Lula Austin, Field Worker.
September 28, 1937.

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My father, Reverend Albert Norris Averyt, was born January 21, 1854, at Hope, Arkansas.

My mother, Meddie Corley Baker, was born July 26, 1864, in Bonham, Texas.

They were married in Texas in 1879.

My parents came in a covered wagon with all their possessions to Johnsville, Indian Territory, (later known as Byers) in 1880.

For two years father served as principal of White Bead Hall, Pearce Institute.

In the fall of 1885, he went to Wynnewood, from there to Purcell, then to Norman as pastor of the Methodist Church. The latter became the first self-supporting station in the state. He then went to Minco, where he was presiding elder. He was there two years, then moved to Duncan in 1895 or '96.

While living in Duncan, a very bad tornado struck the town, doing much damage and killing three or four people. He then moved to Muskogee, which was in the Canadian District. He was there four years, then moved to Ardmore, serving there as presiding elder. From there he moved to Altus and served

as pastor of the Methodist Church. While living at Altus he homesteaded a place near Guymon. In order to retain his place, he served one year there. After that he left Mother and us children and went to Antlers. He moved us to Fort Gibson where he was pastor, and later to Broken Bow. Father then moved back to Fort Towson, which was his last pastorate. He died there January 20, 1917.

My father traveled in a buggy. He would be gone two and three months at a time, enduring many hardships. The winters were very cold. Many nights he would dig snow a foot deep from under the buggy in order to make his bed there, keeping a fire when he could find wood or buffalo chips.

The wild Indians held great respect for him and would never bother him. He went among them freely and never felt afraid. He preached through an interpreter. The Kiowa, Comanche, and Cheyenne Indians would camp at the foot of Mount Scott, and hold meetings, which would last two or three weeks.

At one of these meetings at Mount Scott an Indian

woman got up and made a talk. We could tell something had moved her. The interpreter told us her son had been very sick; that the Medicine Men had been called in and made Medicine over him. She had climbed up on Mount Scott and offered her prayers to the Great Spirit, praying all night. Early the next morning the Great Spirit answered, and told her the boy would get well. Sure enough, when she went back her boy was better and later recovered. He was at the meeting with her.

The Medicine Men, when calling on the sick would have all leave the room. They would then take a rattler from their Medicine kit which was decorated with feathers and wave it over the patient, saying strange words. Then they gave them medicines made from herbs. The Indians would not talk about the Medicine Men. They were sacred to them. All Medicine Men wore a peculiar painting on their faces.

As a young boy I watched the western wild tribes shoot the beeves that the government issued to them at the old trading post near Cache and Medicine Creek in the western part of Oklahoma. When the animals were turned

loose the Indians would jump on their horses and run after them, shooting them with a rifle or bow and arrow. Then the women would skin ^{the beeves all} it and devour it raw. They would strip the intestines, then char them over the fire, and eat them with great relish. Little children ate the raw meat like dogs, smearing blood all over their faces.

The wild Indians were fond of dog meat and many dogs that were following their masters through the Territory behind the wagons disappeared.

I remember when I was a boy nine years old, my older brother and I were in the woods gathering pecans. We were up in the tree when a big Indian rode under us with a very angry look on his face. He made signs for us to come down but we began to climb higher up the tree. When brother noticed the Indian preparing to shoot an arrow in our direction, he cried out; "Don't shoot, we the Jesus man Papoose". With a smile the Indian made friendly signs to us, and when we came down from the tree, he helped us gather pecans and invited us to his teepee to eat. The "Jesus man" was the name the wild Indians gave my father. During the meal meat was passed to me and brother nudged me not to take

any. Later he told me that it was dog meat. I wish brother had let me eat it, so I could say now that I had eaten dog meat.

Father Averyt was a wonderful man. He never could see the dark side of life. He went among the Indians and they loved him, calling him "The Jesus Man".

My desire as a little boy was to be a missionary. I delighted in going with my father and during vacation he would always take me with him. We camped together killing game to eat. Many times I have heard the tom-toms of the Indians all night, and watched them dance.

I remember on one trip with father we came upon a flat. A fire was burning down there that drove the prairie chickens out by the hundreds. Father killed all that he could get in the buggy, and when we arrived at the next little settlement distributed them among the people.

One day I went with father and the Hornbeek family to spend the day west of Minco. Father and Mr. Hornbeek went out to kill some quail. He walked within ten steps of a big buck deer which he thought was going to

charge him. But suddenly he turned and ran. Father shot at him, and later found him in the woods dead.

There were lots of panthers in the country.

Brother and I once had a narrow escape. We had gone pecan hunting, both riding the same horse. We were returning home about dark when our horse shied and snorted. In a few minutes a large panther screamed and sprang from a tree almost on our horse, but our horse was quick and dashed away carrying us to safety.

My father firmly believed in presentiments. One night he was on his way to keep an appointment at a little town near Stigler. A brother minister was with him. In the middle of the afternoon father received the impression that they should not go on, but the other minister said, "They are expecting us, we must not disappoint them". They stopped and prayed. They heeded this impression and went to Stigler. In the evening a cloud came up and grew more threatening in the direction of the little town they had first planned to go. Later, they heard that the little church was blown away. A crowd had gathered but when the minister did not arrive, decided they had better go home.

On another trip father was working his way back home. We came to the forks in the road, and when the team tried to take the road that led home, he tried to make them go the other road to a little crowd that was expecting him, but his team would not go, so he traveled the road home. On reaching there, he found three of his children sick in bed, and mother not able to be up.

One fourth of July, mother took us and the Hornbeek children on a picnic west of Minco. We stopped near a large spring. Mother with the two girls went to visit an Indian in a teepee nearby. We boys decided to take a swim in the spring. We were enjoying ourselves greatly, when a big buck rode up, then dashed away and sent out runners spreading the news among the Indians. They began to don their paint and go on the war-path. Mother heard the noise and rushed back to where we were. It didn't take us long to hitch our team to the wagon and dash away as fast as we could.

The following incident impressed me as a youngster. Father and I were passing a large Indian camp; an old Indian, who looked to be ninety years old, was

standing in front of his teepee. As we approached we could tell by his look that he was angry. He leveled down like he had a gun. Father reached down in the buggy like he was going to get a gun. Quickly, the Indian straightened up and said; "Me no shoot, me no shoot".

When the Spanish American War broke out the soldiers were ordered out, leaving only a skeleton garrison. A rumor got started that the Indians were going to stage an up-rising. They returned a company or two, but there was no trouble.

While living in Duncan the people of the town contributed money to put up a flag pole on which to fly the American flag every day. Two men of the town lowered the American flag and hoisted the Spanish flag, as a joke. An alarm was given and the Spanish flag was shot full of holes. The two men were found and taken to a pool and ducked until they were nearly drowned. As fast as they would crawl out of the water they would push them in again.

One or two summers when school was out father put an extension on the wagon and took his family with him

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as he traveled the district. One night we had to make dry camp. We burned buffalo chips to cook our meal, and made our beds down under the stars. Next morning we discovered that we had camped among the prairie dogs. And were we frightened when we saw several large rattlesnakes five or six steps from our beds? They were sluggish as the night was chilly. Fortunately, no one was bitten.

I have seen the dead buried on platforms above the ground. If it was some prominent brave, they would place him and his treasures in his wagon bed and bury him. His horses were killed and burned on the grave, sending them to the happy hunting ground with him.

Reverend W. R. Baker was Principal of Armstrong Academy in 1885. While there, he and his wife went on a trip, leaving their two sons at school under the care of boys at school, giving strict orders not to let them leave the school, but they slipped away and went to Blue River to fish, and were both drowned trying to rescue each other. Both were under ten years of age. Their graves are in the old burying ground at Armstrong Academy.

Grandfather Baker was a very wealthy man. He owned many slaves and lots of cattle. At one time, in 1870, he lost 15,000 head in a Texas freeze. I have a bill of sale where he paid \$14.00 for a negro woman and \$200 for her son. He was adopted by the Choctaw Nation and made a Chief.

Grandfather Averyt was a doctor. He came from Arkansas to Wynnewood. He was killed by a train while living there. Averyt Avenue is named for him.

Reverend Averyt has papers that belong to Reverend W. D. Baker. They are now at Mrs. H. H. Polk's, who lives in Magee, Mississippi. They are letters of meetings and conferences in early days, Civil War Documents, tax receipts, and a paper describing a piece of land in the Indian Territory, the letter mentioning so many feet from such a tree to the next tree.
