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BRUNER, JOSEPH.

THIRD INTERVIEW

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13105

Journalist, Effie S. Jackson,
February 28, 1938.
Interview with Joseph Bruner,
Sapulpa, Oklahoma,
President of the American
Federation of Indians.

My mother's people were full blood Creeks of the
Locha-pa-go Talasees family from Alabama. They belonged
to the Anti-treaty Party. My mother, Lucy, was born at
Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1832. Her people were being
brought with the second emigration. She was born on the
way. This "town" of Creeks settled in the valley along
the north side of the Arkansas River where Tulsa is today.
This "town" extended to the Big Bird (Fuswa-Thlocco)
settlement where Sand Springs is now.

My mother told me how they brought the old traditional
names and customs with them. Because they settled along
the banks of the river they called the location "Tulsey-
Lochapaka" (Luchapago), "Tulsey" meaning town and Luchapago
meaning "Turtling place," therefore "town of the turtling-
place" Arkansas River.

The legend goes that they actually brought the sacred
fire to their new hearth and home. They possibly brought

-2-

the ashes as symbolical of the tribal fire. I do know that my mother's people founded the old "Busk ground" near the "council tree." This tree still stands on its stately location on the grounds of the Charles B. Peter's home, 18th and Cheyenne- Tulsa, Oklahoma.

There the annual green corn dance was held around the sacred fire. Those festivals were my first memories. No high school or college boy plays football today any harder than I trained myself for the competitive baseball games of my day. I still have the breach clout I wore and my scarred ball sticks. It wasn't only the ball sticks that were scarred but our heads; we played a fierce and vicious game and were proud of the scars we carried away. (Mr. Bruner proudly displayed the scars on his head and face-marks of bravery of bygone days-EJ.) I lived up to the standard both of the tradition of the game as it was told me and the method of playing it that I witnessed from earliest boyhood.

To go back to my mother's story. Archie Yahola was their first chief after their settlement here. He is buried in an unknown place near the center of present Tulsa. Che-yaha was next chief, then Tulsey Fixico, captain of the

BRUNER, JOSEPH. THIRD INTERVIEW.

16105

-3-

Indian Home Guards who was killed during the Civil War.

When the Civil War broke out my people joined Opuithli-yahola (Anti-treaty) who joined the Federal side.

When his forces met the Confederates at Hominy Falls and Bird Creek the whole Lucha-pago settlement joined him, the men fighting bravely, the women on horseback taking all the earthly possessions they could with them. After the battle of Bird Creek the mad flight north began. I have heard my mother tell of that flight. To comprehend it you must bear in mind that Opuithli-Yahola was taking all of his followers with him, women, children and even the aged and sick. It was almost like another "Trail of Tears." The women and children fled in advance under orders, the soldiers were to follow. Kansas was to be their destination. In fact, Leroy, Kansas, became their camp and home until after the war. Opuithli-Yahola gave the Federal Government a thousand able-bodied men. Among them was my mother's first husband, who was killed in battle.

Some personal stories my mother told me of the flight might be of interest. Mary Hutpa, a Kasihta, an aunt of

the present Mrs. Lizzie Sapulpa (widow of Jim Sapulpa) had been intrusted with a bag of gold belonging to Spocogee, leader of the Kasihtas. Knowing that Mary was in the advance flight while he had to stay to fight, old Spocogee thought she would be able to save his bag of gold. The flight was sudden. In their fright the women threw away everything but their most prized possessions; their haste could not be encumbered with anything that seemed unnecessary. So Mary threw away the bag of gold and kept her precious turtle shells, for these were her main adornment in their tribal dances. When Spocogee found he had lost his gold they said he tried to swear in white man's words, his anger was so great. As for Mary she made her turtle shell bands help her. She was paid to give her Indian dances in the Kansas camp. When Mary died she left the shell ornaments to Lizzie Sapulpa. I went to buy them but Lizzie had already sold them for \$25.00. I have been trying to trace the owner of those shells ever since. They continue to change ownership.

After the war was over the Lucha-pa-go people returned to their "Tulsey-town" to find everything in ruins. It

BRUNER, JOSEPH. THIRD INTERVIEW.

15105

-5-

was at this time that my mother married John Bruner. I knew very little of my father's people until 1898. At that time I was a member of the House of Kings in Okmulgee, and there met an old ex-slave named Payro. He was a member from one of the three negro towns of the Creek Nation. When he heard my name called he came over and told me that he had been my grandfather's slave and had come to this country with him. Payro said my grandfather's name was George and that they had been landed people in Alabama. After the appearance of a magazine article last October giving my biography, I received a letter from a woman in Alabama asking me if I was any relation of Joe Bruner, an early day wealthy Creek Indian land owner in Alabama. I am sure from what Payro said that this Joe Bruner must have been a brother of my grandfather, and I was given the family name, Joe.

My grandfather had four sons, Rider, Daniel, John (my father) and George. He settled near Fort Gibson and after his death old Payro remained faithful to the boys. George Bruner was captured by the South and held a prisoner during the war. His son, Billy Bruner, older

-6-

than I am, is still living at Salina, I believe. After my mother's marriage to John Bruner they lived in a log house about three blocks southwest of the present post office in Tulsa. There I was born in 1872. I had an older brother who died when he was four. When I was very young my parents moved two and a half miles southwest of what is now Red Fork. They lived there until my father's death when I was six years old, then my mother moved up to the old Bruner land on Rock Creek, six miles northwest of the present town of Sapulpa.

He lived at what was called "Chissum's Crossing" on Rock Creek; this was the old mail route going northeast from the Sac and Fox Agency. She had sort of an inn and fed the post riders. It was at this time, about 1880, that Mother married Timmie Fife, who is still living one mile west of Sapulpa and is the husband of Sarah Sapulpa, daughter of "old Sapulpa." In later years my mother and Timmie Fife were divorced. My greatest thrill as a boy was my memory of the man-hunt conducted by Old Tiger Bones, Timmie Fife and Jim Sapulpa in guiding United States soldiers to the hideout of a group of outlaw murderers.

-7-

I went to school at Wealaka Mission from 1884 to 1888. Lilah D. Lindsey was matron there at that time. From 1888 to 1890 I attended the Baptist Indian University, now Bacone. During 1891 and '92 I had my fling as a cow-puncher on the Turkey Track Ranch. This ranch covered thousands of acres, it was a strip twenty miles wide extending north from the North Fork of the Canadian to the Cimarron. This was the Sac and Fox Territory; the present location of Cushing was our headquarters.

In 1893, I married Margaret Dart of Kansas, white, one-sixteenth Shawnee. I have one daughter, Josephine, married to Anthony Baltese, a Pottawatomie. They live at Fort Defiance, Ohio, where Mr. Baltese has government supervision over the Navajoes. Since my marriage I have lived the greater part of the time on the old Bruner allotment on Rock Creek, where my mother lived.

I was elected a member of the House of Kings (1898-1900) from Lucha-po-ga town and since that time until the present have been a member of the House of Warriors. In 1934, June 8, I was instrumental in organizing the American Federation Of Indians in Washington, D. C. A general convention was held at Gallup, New Mexico, August 29-29, 1934, when

BRUNER, JOSEPH. THIRD INTERVIEW.

13105

-8-

a permanent organization was formed. I was drafted as president and have remained as president ever since.

The American Federation of Indians met in Salt Lake City last year and will meet in Tulsa this year in August, 1938.

The object of the Federation is to raise the standard of Indian life to show the progress of the Indian. The Federation meeting is not held at the same time as the Exposition because the Exposition is given too much to exploitation and to commercializing the arts and industries of the various tribes. It is retrogression emphasizing costumes and customs which progressive Indians have laid aside. We want to step forward not backward.

Yes, I knew "old Sapulpa." He was never a chief but sometimes was called that as a nickname. He had no other name but "Sapulpa." Legends dear to the heart of the Indian surround his early orphan life in Alabama and Florida. From the stories he told he fought the whites savagely and successfully (that is they could not run him down.) There may have been some facts to his hair-breadth escapes and plunder stories. He enjoyed

telling them. That he was shrewd is shown by his business ability in handling his early trading store and making himself an outstanding leader among his people. I remember going to the store when I was a boy. It was about a mile and a half southeast of the present postoffice in Sapulpa.

I knew the old wagon road from Nealaka; it ran in front of Sam Brown's store, across Grube Childers' ferry on the Arkansas a quarter of a mile north of Nealaka Mission, on to the old town of Frye, Robert Frye's old trading post, four miles north of Bixby on up the river by the old "busk ground" around the bend about where the Third Street viaduct is today, on along the river to the Adam's settlement (Sand Springs) only near the springs, following river valley north (of present Sand Springs) to the Bird Creek (Fuswa-Thlocco) settlement on through what is Wekiwa today, the Sortie Gooden place to the land of the Osages.

One place I remember that was of especial interest to me. It was the first store I ever knew. It was where the old Charley Page house is today by the Third Street viaduct (on Sand Springs road). This was the old Josiah Perryman store, the first store in Tulsa, established as an Indian trading point long before the railroad came to Tulsa. After the rail-

road came Perryman moved down to M in at First, southwest corner.

(Lincoln Post oak, D. O. Gillis and Joe Bruner are the only three people I have found who vouch for a store at this location on the old Arkansas River road to what is ~~now~~ Sand Springs. Often there is an allusion to a very early Perryman store, possibly belonging to Lewis, along the lower part of the valley between Frye and the "buskin ground." E. J., Journalist.)