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HARDING, A. B. INTERVIEW.

Field Worker: Warren D. Morse

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BIOGRAPHY OF A. B. Harding  
Hobart, Oklahoma

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THE PAPOOSE AND ITS SQUAW MAMMY

When we visit the Indian camp we find them in numbers in each tepee, the native green grass on their cold ground floors, heated by hot embers and wood, the smoke escaping through the top of the tepee where the tops of the tepee poles are tied together, this opening allows the accumulated heat to escape rapidly each time the canvas door of the tepee is opened, the most bitter cold weather is endured with comfort by the little papoose and its mammy.

The mammy (the squaw) provides the wood for fuel and the papoose does not play with the fire during mammy's absence, but is ever mindful of mammy's instructions to remain on its pelt pallet until she return.

These squaw mammies never change their work as a housewife, the white woman and baby under such conditions would have disease and could not exist as does the Indian.

The first thing in the morning the squaw mammy, with a pan of water and using her hand dashes the water on the face and hands of the papoose, drying them with grass, furs, or whatever may be at hand.

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The breakfast may be a piece of raw rabbit, a bone from cold boiled meat, anything satisfies, a piece of bread would answer for pie or cake.

This papoose must also learn to swim, so its mammy provides its bath by tying a rope around the chest under the arms and he is tossed into the creek, if he starts to sink she pulls him out by the rope, his failure to swim permits him to strangle, and to avoid this punishment he soon learns to swim, for there is no escape -- he is thrown into the water at close intervals.

We were invited by a group of Cheyenne Indians to visit their camps and one day we had that pleasure, this gave us an opportunity to observe just how the Indians lived at home.

We found each family in an individual tepee, without table or chairs, and animal pelt was handed to us and all were seated on the ground floor, where we conversed with the Indians, understanding their signs and jesters better than their language.

We had observed the Indians on the plains prepare

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Meals by cooking land terrapins, mule steak and the like but on this occasion they expected the pale face visitors to dine with them, the food appeared to be clean and carefully prepared, cooked in a large iron kettle, Uncle Sam had provided, placed on the outside of the tent. We boys had decided to try a meal with our Red brothers and the time was drawing close for the dinner bell to ring, accidentally we strolled about the tepees near the kettle and there observed an old squaw mixing bread dough, we could hardly believe our eyes, the old squaw was busy with both hands working the dough and the pan she was mixing in was a green antelope hide, this was more than we could stomach, our appetites disappeared, in fact we could hardly keep our hearts from jumping out of our throats, we knew our friendly red men would never forgive us should we not dine with them but we just could not participate and making the best excuses possible, we went our way.

We well knew better than to attempt a meal with them, but we had a great curiosity to learn just how the Indians could be so healthy and endure their hardships in life,

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eating the foods we had known them to prepare. We left there with full knowledge that they were not the least particular as to the kind just so it was meat, fresh or stale, raw or cooded.

Our advise is never to accept an invitation to dine with the Indian. White man just cannot.

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