

METHVIN, J. J.

9th INTERVIEW #8945
INDIANS.

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INTERVIEW.

8045.

BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Lillian CassawayThis report made on (date) October 21, 1937. 193 1. Name J. J. Methvin.2. Post Office Address Anadarko, Oklahoma.3. Residence address (or location) 709 West Alabama.4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 17 Year 1846.5. Place of birth Jeffersonville, Georgia.6. Name of Father John Methvin. Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Mourning Glover Methvin Place of birth Georgia.

Other information about mother _____

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 6.

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Lillian Cassaway,
Interviewer.
October 21, 1937.

An Interview With J.J. Methvin.
Anadarko, Oklahoma.

THEN AND NOW AMONG THE
WILD TRIBE INDIANS.
(September 3, 1930).

It was more than thirty years ago, though it seems but yesterday. Our home for the next ten days was to be in a prairie schooner. Bedding and provisions for the trip were loaded in, and wife and children, with much merriment by the children and serious expectancy by the older ones, took their places in the schooner; and we were soon on our journey to attempt a camp meeting among the wild tribes of Wichita Mountains, some forty miles away to the southwest. It was late in the evening when we reached our uncertain destination at the foot of Mount Scott, the highest peak in the Wichita range. We pitched camp near a mountain stream, clear and cool, fascinating and soothing with its music our tired sensibilities as it flowed in rippling rhythm over its pebbly bed. The Indians named the stream Medicine Creek, for here among the trees that fringed and bedecked its banks the Indians had for

METHVIN, J. J.

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-2-

many years gathered to hold their annual sun dance and to make "medicine" to their gods to determine their action for the year. Often in this worship their gods directed them to go on a marauding expedition into Texas or elsewhere to get scalps and steal horses.

After pitching our camp we found that we had become the unwelcome neighbor to a much-displeased Indian, who seemed to look upon us as "undesirable citizens" and wished us to move from his camping ground, but finally agreed to our stay till morning. We had our supper soon, and no one who has not experienced it can know the pleasure of a camp supper after a weary day's travel when there comes to his grateful sense the aroma of broiled beef or bacon rising from the camp fire close by, and it would be difficult to describe it.

Supper over, we prepared for bed, another luxury of the camp. The mother and the small children found their berth in the upper story in the wagon and the large boys and I on a pallet in the lower story under the wagon on the ground.

It was a wild, weird surrounding, and its novelty kept a portion of the company awake till late in the night,

-3-

even after retiring. The wild night wind thundering around the base and frowning summit of Mount Scott and sweeping on over the open prairie, the howling of a wolf on the mountain side, the sound of the tom--tom keeping time with the discordant hi-ya of the Indian song in a camp not far away, the murmuring of the brook hard by, all blended in common music and gave the touch of romance wild and fascinating. Till long in the night was this all enjoyed; but at last it all gradually faded from our vision and consciousness, and the crowd were all asleep.

How refreshed in early morning when we awoke! Sleeping in the open, beneath God's blue sky decked with stars, breathing the pure air, the elixir of life, and living close up to nature strengthens the body, invigorates the mind, and prolongs the life.

We arose with appetites keen and insistent, which were soon appeased by the morning meal. The wrath of our vexed Indian was appeased by a liberal portion of our breakfast, and he became reconciled to allowing us to retain our camp on his stamping ground. The old saying,

METHVIN, J. J.

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-4-

"The shortest route to a man's heart is through his stomach," is as true with the Indian as with the white man. This Indian became our friend and invited us back another year.

As the morning passed on, the Indians began to gather from different directions and pitch their camp close by. They were dressed in the wild, fantastic paraphernalia peculiar to their taste; faces painted, the men with hair long and plaited and rolled in the skin of some wild animal, their ears weighted down with heavy earrings till they nearly touched their shoulders, their bodies in many instances half naked and painted in fantastic colors.

This was a wild crowd to preach to, but at the signal given they gathered in eager expectancy to hear what I had to say. After announcing that I was not there as a cattle man nor the Indian trader to make money, but to tell them the message of God, to show them the way of salvation, I began reading the Scriptures suited to their condition. They sat around upon the ground for hours patiently and attentively listening to the reading. Beyond their patient listening at every service I could not tell

what effect it was having upon them, for otherwise there was no demonstration of emotion manifested.

But the last evening of the meeting had come. It had rained and put out our fire. The ground was wet, the wood was soaked, but we had succeeded in kindling a rather flickering fire of cottonwood sticks. The Indians had gathered around in a half circle and had settled down upon skins and blankets upon the ground. By this dim and doubtful light I was explaining for the last time how to become a Christian and was coming to a close, when I saw silhouetted against the sky, hurrying down from the back of the crowd, an Indian woman. Pushing the crowd aside, in great emotion she came forward, telling in broken English and Comanche how God had come to her soul while listening to the reading of his Book. She would talk awhile in Comanche and then in broken English. She was a happy woman and gave full vent to her feelings. This was the beginning of a new era in the life of the Indians, resulting in many converts in the years that followed.

That was long years ago. Last Sunday I was there again. On an elevation not far from where we held that

-6-

first camp meeting we have a beautiful little rock church, with dining hall close by, and parsonage and plat of ground of forty acres, all beautiful for situation, surrounded by mountains on nearly every side, and looking out over Lake Lawtonka, with its blue waters stretching away to the southward. Here a congregation of enthusiastic Indian worshippers, all dressed and in their right minds, greeted me on last Sunday. They were chiefly the descendants of those to whom I first broke the glad news in those otherdays of long ago. There was no paint on their faces, no rings in their ears, no fantastic paraphernalia, no discordant hi-ya of the Indian song, but all were neatly dressed and ended the day's worship with a true devotion, singing the songs of redeeming grace.

"The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth".