

HILL, WILBURN.

INTERVIEW.

13484.

Billie Byrd,
Journalist.
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Interview with Wilburn Hill,
Okemah, Oklahoma.

Magi c Power

The Indians have always had faith and been the strongest believers in the power of medicine men and their powers when using the medicine for personal or tribal protection in illness. Some Indians have used it not for the best use but to cause bodily harm in the practice of witchcraft. The power of the herbal medicine was put to good use in many of the early troubled wars and uprisings.

It was the older leader and medicine men who were noted and gifted for their power of preparing the strong and effective medicine that would enable any of the Indians to escape any harm, pursuit and bodily harm. When any of them were pursued by enemies if they had previously been put under the power of medicine, they could turn aside, disappear seemingly from human sight, and become a tree, grass or other common object alongside the road or path. While under flight from pursuers and mid the gun shots from pursuers, the magic

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of the medicine man worked to enable a person's body to become as a sieve with none of the shots doing any harm and the person was successful in escaping.

Any group of Indians out hunting or on travels were never without their tribal medicine man. It was the medicine man who knew of the best ways of saving his people and he was much respected by his people. He was depended upon to always act in any emergency during wars and flights. That was why he took a leading part in the efforts to protect and keep his people from any harm that could be prevented by his powers.

There was an old medicine man (name not known from legendary tales) who took a leading part in a small band of Indians. This certain band were traveling around and trying to keep out of sight of any soldiers, but they learned they were almost within sight of a company of soldiers. The Indian band became restless and excited, wondering just what to do -- to flee or be seen where they stood. The medicine man took the lead in cautioning them to stay together and do just what he was going to tell them. He began to gather up blades of grass, giving a blade of grass to each one and telling them to take a

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squatting position on the ground and to hold the blade of grass in front of their faces. These instructions were carried out, but the soldiers were still marching towards the spot where the Indians were squatting. Just at a very short distance from the squatting Indians, the soldiers angled off in another direction and went on by without seeing the Indians.

The greatest enemy to the Indians was in the use of salt, fat, flour, sugar or anything else sweet. The white meal (hum-pe-ta hut-ke) was the source and basis of the secret power. The white meal consisted of special foods taken by the prophets, medicine men and other leaders. It was made up of mostly corn -- the pounded corn meal made into bread, pounded corn prepared as a drink of which the Indians are very fond, and one or two articles of food. All this had no seasoning. This made it difficult for the whites to understand the secret power of the Indians.

The starting of the decreasing of the powers of tribally prepared medicine from legendary tales began almost with the capture of two white boy children, who grew up among the In-

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dians and were adopted into the tribe. They grew to manhood in company and in all the environments of the Indians and when the war (Civil War) was in swing, although they took part in some battles, the two white men were unharmed and came through many heavy battles. The whites wondered about it until there happened to be two other white men captured by the Indians. The adopted white men and the captives ones began to talk to one another and during those talks, the secret of the power of Indians was told and the knowledge was transferred to other whites.

With knowledge, the white men began to be generous with their giving to the Indians, salt, sugar, meat, flour and other articles to food to break the charm. Although the Indians had never used these things they began to realize how very necessary they were to them, and how the added flavor made many of their meals very delicious. The power of medicine was not so effective from that time on.

The Indians learned to use the fire arms early in their life just as they learned the other white customs but they did not altogether leave their bows and silent arrows when

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hunting or even in wars. Through the strict observance of the white meals, the older Indians were strong and could stretch their bow strings to the full and send the arrows a long distance.

Many of the hunting grounds were many miles away from the homes of Indians. Some went to the Wichita Mountains, some to the far north and other out of the way and unhabitated places. Those distances were great in miles but to the hunters themselves it never did seem far. They again brought in the use of the magic power of herbal medicine and the many miles were shortened. This was known as E-ka-na De-kel-ga (shriveling the ground). In their chants for the medicine the wolf took the main part as the wolves were noted for their endurance and ability to travel long miles and cover a large area.