
NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMNEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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Editor: Barbara Goodin

“Letter From The President”

MarꞖaweka,

It is with great sadness that I write this because of the passing of our friend, Margaret Poahway. She always helped me when I needed to know a word or phrase, and was always there for me when I needed her. I will truly miss her.

It is a great loss for our language group, but a tragedy for our Numu Tekwapu. There will never be another one to replace her. This loss should awaken some of you. Our language is not to be taken for granted. Every day seems like we lose another one of our Treasures (speakers).

With this said, I hope you will find a way to learn the language so it will carry on and not be on the list of the languages that have already been lost.

Ura,
Billie Kreger

SADNESS IN OUR HEARTS

by Barbara Goodin

We are all saddened by the loss of one of our own – our good friend, Margaret Poahway. She was a walking encyclopedia of Comanche knowledge. Although she was not an enrolled member of the Comanche Tribe, she was raised among the Comanche people and absorbed all that went on around her, including the language. Many of our elders deferred to Margaret when we were searching for a Comanche word that had been forgotten by others. She was a strong supporter for the preservation of the language and spent many hours working alongside others who felt the same urgency to preserve our language for future generations. We appreciated her dedication and will all miss her.

IN MEMORY

Margaret Jane Monenerkit Poahway

Funeral for Margaret Jane Monenerkit Poahway, 79, Cache, was held at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, March 1, 2003, at Cache School Multipurpose Center, with the Rev. Nick Tahchawwickah and the Rev. Vidal Yackeschi officiating.

Burial was at the West Cache Intertribal Cemetery, west of Cache.

A prayer service was held Friday at 7:00 p.m. at the Comanche Nation Funeral Home in Lawton.

Mrs. Poahway died Tuesday, February 25, 2003, at her home in Cache.

She was born August 22, 1923, at the Lawton Indian Hospital, and married Lester Poahway in 1945. She was a homemaker and at one time was employed by Oklahomans For Indian Opportunity, and later worked with the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee on several important projects. She was a long time member of the Sherwood Tsotigh Memorial United Methodist Church of Cache, and continued to be active in the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee.

Survivors include seven sons: Franklin Whitewolf, Lawton; Phil Monenerkit, Norman; Jarvis Poahway, Indianola; Mike Poahway, Forrest Poahway, George Poahway and Jonathan Poahway, all of Cache; seven daughters: Pat Gilpin, Sandra Moore and Tammy Zambrana, all of Lawton; Sue Burgess, Elgin; Janice James, Walters; Marlinda Johns and Faustina Asenap, both of Cache; two brothers: George Hunt, Everett, WA; and Jimmy Ray Caddo, Elgin; a sister, Laurene Caddo, Kentucky; 39 grandchildren; 39 great-

grandchildren; and many nephews and nieces.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Tichini, and her father, Monenerkit; her biological mother, Faustina, of Peru, South America; her husband, Lester Poahway; a daughter, Francene Breaux; and two sisters: Rose Paddyaker and Anna Belle Tosee.

Editor's Note: The following tribute was submitted by Ron Red Elk.

Margaret J. Poahway

d.o.b. 8-22-23

d.o.d. 2-25-03

Us̄ suk̄a kewainahai t̄abitsi N̄um̄u

What is a real Comanche?

Us̄ kewainahai kena ʌ hip̄kat̄. 1/8 blood quantum. Her peers knew her to be a real Comanche. She could walk the walk and talk the talk. She quite possibly knew Taa N̄um̄u Pu?e better than most.

Which is more important for the Comanche people to remain a unique and distinct group of people – blood quantum or the ability to walk the walk and talk the talk? I contend that it is the knowledge of our traditions, history, songs, dances, stories, and the glue that binds all of those things together – the language.

If this is true, why are we not doing more to remain real Comanches? Recently I was reminded that years ago N̄ pabi Dick had asked me, “What kind of Comanche are you if you don’t know the language?” I don’t recall my response at the time, but I probably was shamed. My response today would be, “I’m not a real Comanche yet, but I’m getting there.” What are you doing to be a better Comanche person?

What can we do to be successful in this very important effort? Native peoples that have a successful language program have several things in common, these being 1) transfer of the language from the elders to the very young, 2) bringing the language into the home, and 3) Native-language-only environments.

One of the most promising ideals for the language to be used in the homes, to the very youngest Comanche, is called Baby’s First Steps in Language Learning. In our case, it would be Baby’s First Steps in Comanche. This project would develop a Compact Disc (CD) with a lyric sheet and a book designed to guide you through your baby’s first two years of language development. The CD would surround your baby with Comanche sounds, phases and sentences. Traditional Comanche children’s songs and rhymes would be included in the sound system. Children learn sound best in combination with music and poetry. The entire inventory of Comanche sounds would be presented throughout the CD. This project would bring the language into the home. The transfer of the language of our elders to the young would be accomplished by using our elder’s pool of knowledge to develop this CD.

Comanche-language-only environments may be a little more difficult. You have to remember that it took many years for our language to get to this state of obsolescence. It is going to take the effort of all of us to turn this around. I think there has been a beginning in this area. What I’m referring to is the many hymn singing sessions that have taken place over the past few years. This is encouraging! We just have to expand this to other areas of Comanche life – Spiritual, Government, Language classes and social events, to name a few.

I began this discourse to pay tribute to one of our speakers that passed on. Then I began to ramble on about what should be the most important subject in a Comanche’s life. Taa N̄um̄u Tekwap̄ ise t̄as̄u Taa N̄um̄u Pu?e. Oh, well, if we can gain a few more recruits to carry on this important work, that would be a fitting tribute to her.

CLCPC BINGO & FOOD SALE

The CLCPC will sponsor a Bingo/Food Sale on Saturday, April 26th at the Comanche Elder Center at 1107 S.W. H

Avenue in Lawton. It will begin at 1:00 p.m. with a Bingo, and will continue until the prizes are all distributed. A variety of food will also be offered during this time, from popcorn to hot dogs. So bring all your quarters and come join us for an afternoon of fun and games.

WANTED: COMANCHE SINGERS

We are looking for young Comanche girls or young ladies, with a good singing voice, who would like to learn to sing the Lord's Prayer in Comanche. Geneva Navarro would like to work with someone who would be interested in learning the song in Comanche, and possibly learn the sign language to go along with it.

Some of you young ladies who are thinking about running for some type of office or pageant would be awesome singing and signing this beautiful song.

To learn more about this, contact Geneva Navarro at 536-6848 in Lawton.

DO YOU KNOW THESE MEN?

Our friend, Scott Zesch from Texas, sent us a copy of an old photo and asked if we knew who the men were. He said the photo was taken in 1927, when some Comanches went to San Antonio TX for a Wild West Show. He thinks they may have been from Mowway's group. Can you identify any of them? Are they your ancestors? We'd like to hear from you. E-mail us at the address at the top of this newsletter.

OKLAHOMA NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH LANGUAGE FAIR

The University of Oklahoma will host a Native American Youth Language Fair on April 8th at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History in Norman.

The Fair was organized by Mary Linn, curator of Native American languages, in partnership with language teachers across the state.

Competitors, ranging from preschool to high school age, will demonstrate their language and presentation skills through song, poetry, stories, drama and dance in the language of their tribes.

Native languages are taught in 21 public schools in Oklahoma, with an enrollment of more than 500 students. In addition, there are numerous community-based programs aimed at preserving Native languages, educating young people about their heritage, and encouraging the use of tribal languages.

A panel of judges made up of elders from different tribes will evaluate each performance. Strict accuracy in the language will not be judged. Rather, the performances will be evaluated on how much the tribal language is used, the spirit of the performance itself and the stage presence of the performer. Every student who participates will receive an event tee-shirt and an award.

Geneva Navarro (Comanche from Lawton), a member of the planning committee for the fair, has been involved with the Indigenous Language Institute (I.L.I.) Native Language Youth Fair competition in Santa Fe since its inception in 1993. She believes the Oklahoma language fair will help promote the teaching of Native languages in Oklahoma schools.

The theme of the fair is "Learning My Language, Learning My Ways." It will be a full day event including a luncheon and awards banquet. The top 10 poster entries will be exhibited in the museum throughout the day for final judging. A public performance by the first-place winners in the language presentation competition will take place in the museum's Kerr Auditorium following the awards banquet. The top three performers and poster winners will receive a trophy.

Funding for the Native American Youth Language Fair was provided by the Friends of the Museum.

Registration for the fair closed in March, but everyone is invited to attend the event.

More information is available on the museum's web site at: www.snomnh.ou.edu.

COMANCHE GIRL HONORED

The Oklahoma Federation of Indian Women honored Megan Oberly Kelley as First Runner Up at their Miss Indian Oklahoma Pageant. Megan represented the Comanche Nation in the competition, giving her greeting in the beautiful Comanche language. Her platform was "Preserving Tribal Languages." For her talent Megan told the Comanche story of how the Comanches put the monster (Moopits) on the Moon.

Megan earned a 4.0 Grade Point average at Bacon College and is now attending Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and majoring in Mass Communications.

Megan is a 2001 graduate of Walters High School and the daughter of Margrett Oberly and Emmett Kelley of Fort Gibson, Oklahoma. Her grandparents were the late Eva and Acey Oberly of Walters, Oklahoma. (**from the CLCPC: Congratulations, Megan! Megan was a dedicated student of the Comanche language while she was attending school here, and learned to sing several of our Comanche hymns. We wish her well.*)

COMANCHE CODE TALKERS

We are devoting part of our newsletter this time to the Comanche Code Talkers. There are several reasons for this.

First I want to share some information with you about a gentleman (and I use that word in the truest sense) who has been a champion of the Comanche Code Talkers for years. Major General Hugh F. Foster, Jr., retired. He has been a vocal advocate to all who would listen, and read. Following is an excerpt from a letter written to Senator James Inhofe, Republican from Oklahoma, dated January 29, 2003.

"Dear Senator Inhofe,

This is a respectful reminder that your Bill S2491 of last year, which proposed award of a Congressional Gold Medal to the Choctaw Indian Code Talkers of WW-I and to (the) Comanche Code Talkers of WW-II, never was effectuated.

I was the training officer for the Comanche Code Talkers in late 1941, and worked closely with them in developing their code (which was to be unintelligible to any other Comanche). In 1995 the Director of the National Security Agency said in a letter to me that I was "...the only surviving non-Native American to have actual experience in the creation of one of the codes." Wherefore I conceived it to be my burden to achieve parity of recognition of (the) Comanche Code Talkers of WW-II. The recognition you proposed was especially gratifying.... Unfortunately it never bore fruit.

It is my understanding that a companion Bill had been passed by the House. This suggests to me that a resubmission of a current version of S2491 would be supported again by the House.

Hopefully two new Bills (or whatever it takes to achieve the awards) can be merged quickly with other legislation as may be appropriate and moved along to the President for his signature...

I know you have many matters to consider which are of far greater import to our nation at this point in time. However, all the "spade work" has been accomplished. In an admittedly oversimplified view it will merely require resubmission of the same documentation with a current date. I respectfully solicit your support in this matter.

Sincerely,

Hugh F. Foster, Jr.

Major General, USA (Retired)"

The following article appeared in The Lawton Constitution on March 9, 2003:

Legislation Would Honor Code Talkers

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe has introduced legislation to honor Choctaw, Comanche and Sioux Code Talkers with the

Congressional Gold Medal for their service in World War II.

“The Choctaw, Comanche and Sioux Code Talkers are true American heroes whose accomplishments have too long been forgotten,” Inhofe said.

Though not yet citizens of the United States, 18 members of the Choctaw Nation were recruited during World War I to become the first soldiers to use their native language to transmit messages over the radio that were unintelligible to the enemy.

Similarly, 14 members of the Comanche Tribe and 11 Sioux were recruited to be Code Talkers during World War II and served in both the European and Pacific theaters.”

It appears as though General Foster’s perseverance has paid off! I would like to urge all of you to write Gen. Foster and express your gratitude for his unselfish act to gain recognition for our Code Talkers. Then write Sen. Inhofe and encourage him in his efforts to get his Bill passed. Their addresses are:

Senator James Inhofe, R-OK
453 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

and

Maj. Gen. Hugh Foster Jr.
97 Turkey Lane
Furlong PA 18925

Now, I want you to know more about General Foster. He graduated from West Point in 1941 and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Signal Corps. He was initially assigned to the 4th Signal Company of the 4th Infantry Division. It is while he was here that he trained the young Comanche men who would later become known as the Comanche Code Talkers. Gen. Foster is the only surviving non-Indian to have actually participated in the development of an Indian language spoken in code for military use.

General Foster has had a distinguished military career, and retired in September 1975 while Commanding General of Fort

Monmouth, NJ, after more than 34 years of continuous active military service.

Since that time he has given many presentations about his experiences with the Comanche Code Talkers. He explained his earlier presentations “...were extemporaneous, without slides.” Starting with the July 16, 2002, session he began using a slide show with “...fancy title slides, color pictures, and an illustration on how we spelled foreign place names, etc.”

In his own words, “My spiel begins with remarks about the Comanche Nation, the logo, the Social Clans, the Military Societies, Pow-wows, etc. Then I swing into the Code Talker bit. In most cases I talk about 30-45 minutes.” I know in talking to General Foster personally, he received much help from Forrest Kassaravoid (now deceased) in regards to the Comanche information he provides during his presentations.

General Foster is truly a champion of the Comanche Code Talkers. I am proud to call him my friend. Although I have known him only a short time, I feel like we are old friends.

BOOK SIGNING SCHEDULED

Dr. William C. Meadows, author of **The Comanche Code Talkers of World War II**, will be in the main conference room of the Comanche Complex Education Center from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 16th to sign copies of his book.

The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee will host the event, along with family members of the Comanche Code talkers.

Copies of his book will be available for sale on that day for those who would like to purchase a copy.

Another book signing has been scheduled for Sunday afternoon from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton. Books will be available for sale at that time, also.

BOOK REVIEW

by Barbara Goodin

THE COMANCHE CODE TALKERS OF WORLD WAR II

by William C. Meadows, 320 p.p., paper, \$24.95 + \$4.50 shipping & handling. Order from UT Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin TX 78713-7819.

Absolutely superb! I have waited, with much anticipation, for the release of this book. Finally after the first of this year my wait was over. I opened the cover with mixed emotions – would it disappoint me as so many other books written about Comanche people have, or would it be everything I hoped for in a book written about our Comanche Code Talkers? It was everything I hoped for – and more! My hat is off to Dr. Meadows.

The extent of his research is obvious from his notes and bibliography. He includes several appendixes to further our knowledge, and tables to highlight various subjects. Most importantly, his primary resources were all the surviving code talkers and their training officer, Major General Hugh F. Foster. Unfortunately, only one of the code talkers and Maj. Gen. Foster would live to see the completion of this book. Dr. Meadows dedicates the book to all the code talkers.

The book begins with a brief summary of the role assigned the Comanche Code Talkers in World War II, followed by a history of code talking in the military, then moves on to the pre-enlistment lives of the young men and their role in the war. One chapter is devoted to actual combat experiences and allows the reader to follow them through the horrors of war. He concludes with post war experiences of the code talkers.

Dr. Meadows states in the preface that his “work is directed to those interested in...Comanche history, twentieth-century Native American history, World War I and II, Native American military and veterans’ studies, military history and signals intelligence.” In my opinion, his work is all

the above, but it is also an invaluable source for the Comanche Code Talker’s families to learn more about their loved ones.

Comanche people, by nature, are not ones to boost or brag. Combined with the fact that the role of the code talkers in the war, for the most part, went unnoticed, it was not until many years later their role was acknowledged. Family members will be privy to first-hand interviews and accounts told in their own words.

One of the works sited throughout the book is Prairie Lore, a publication of the Southwestern Oklahoma Historical Society, of which I am editor. In mid 1991, I sat down with Roderick (Dick) Red Elk and a tape recorder and documented his account of the code talkers in particular, and the war in general. What followed were several hours of painstaking transcription of his words. I am proud of the final work, and know that our friend Roderick would have fully approved of its use in this very important work to preserve the history of the Comanche Code Talkers.

Dr. Meadows has treated his subject with great respect, both for their role in the service to their country, and the code talkers themselves.

I highly recommend this book to Comanche people who want a true and accurate account of our Comanche Code Talkers, and especially to the descendants of the code talkers, who will come to see their loved ones in a new light – that of someone who served their country bravely and courageously – true warriors!

PRODUCTS FOR SALE

Comanche Lessons, set #1. A set of four Comanche Lessons, complete with a word list for each lesson. Specify audio cassette or CD when ordering. If we don’t receive your preference, we will automatically send an audio cassette. \$25 includes s&h.

Comanche Dictionary. A 133 page soft bound dictionary begins with an introduction of the spelling system and the alphabet sounds. Offers a Comanche to English section,

followed by an English to Comanche section. \$22 plus \$3.50 s&h.

Picture Dictionary. A primer for learning the language explains the Comanche alphabet and the sound of each letter. Examples of many simple words and brief sentences. Includes worksheet/coloring pages and an English to Comanche vocabulary list. \$10 include s&h.

Comanche Song Book. Collection of 116 songs written in Comanche with an English translation for each song. \$10 plus \$3 s&h. "Coming Very Soon! CDs to accompany song book!

NEW! Comanche Flash Cards, set #2. A set of 48 cards showing a picture and the spelling of simple Comanche words. \$5 plus \$1 s&h.

Comanche Language Tee-Shirts. Comanche Language logo in full color on left chest. Available in solid red or royal blue. Children's sizes small (6-8), medium (10-12), and large (12-14), \$10 plus \$3.50 s&h; Adult sizes small through XL \$12 plus \$3.50 s&h; Adult sizes 2X and 3X \$15 plus \$3.50 s&h. Specify color and size when ordering.

Bumper Stickers.* NŪMŪ TEKWAṖŪ in large letters, with Comanche Language Preservation on the second line. \$2 each includes s&h.

Authentic Handmade Comanche Dolls. Beautiful 20" soft bodied dolls, dressed in traditional clothing. Both girl and boy dolls available. \$40 each plus \$3.50 s&h. (Special Orders Only, allow 6-8 weeks delivery)

Tote Bags. Navy with red trim. 16"x12"x5" with back pocket. Front has the Comanche Language logo. \$12 plus \$3.50 s&h.

Ball Caps. Three styles: Men's royal blue with red bill; Men's turquoise with southwest design on bill; and Lady's solid royal blue, all with Language Logo on front. \$10 plus \$3.50 s&h.

Collar/Hat Pins.* Language logo complete with feathers, 3/4" long. \$4 includes s&h.

Earrings.* Same design as collar/hat pin. \$8.

Lapel Pins. 1 inch Cloisonne pin. \$5 includes s&h.

Buttons.* Two styles. #1: "NŪMŪ TEKWAṖŪ" and #2: "Ihka Niha, NŪMŪ TEKWAṖŪ. \$2 each includes s&h. Specify style number.

***Limited number available.**

If you have an e-mail address, please include it in case we need to contact you about your

order. We are running extremely low on the products that have an asterisk beside them. They may not be offered again.