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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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AMERICAN INDIAN EXPOSITION HONORS ARAPAHO SPEAKER AS 2010 INDIAN OF THE YEAR

The 79th Annual American Indian Exposition honored Alonzo Moss Sr. as the 2010 Indian of the Year in Anadarko in August of this year.

Quoting from the Native American Times, in an article written by Dana Attocknie for the August 20, 2010 issue: "Moss told the crowd their native language is their identity, it's who they are. He said a person's identity is not defined by having a tribal car tag or anything of the like. In his words, "The only thing that's going to make me Arapaho is if I speak Arapaho."

"Arapaho is his first language and Moss was raised in a household where Arapaho was the only language spoken when he was a child. He learned English at St. Stephens Indian Mission boarding school in St. Stephens, Wyo. when he was 6 years old.

Moss stressed the fact that many people do not know their native language and there is a great fear that many languages will be lost once the fluent speakers are gone.

He also said he does not particularly care for the word 'elder.' He said elder is a Christian term and the older generation should not feel ashamed to be called old – old man or old woman. He said people should be proud they reached a certain age.

Moss keeps the Arapaho language alive plus he shares his wisdom with

other people working to keep their native languages alive.

He serves on the Northern Arapaho Language Commission. The commission supervises the tribe's Language and Culture Preservation, and endorses qualified people who need certification to teach Arapaho language in schools.

In addition to teaching students, Moss also teaches family. During his reception, his family members stood up one by one when Moss called out their Indian names. He also took Arapaho language dictionaries to the reception and sang for the audience in Arapaho.

"It's been a big honor to be here," Moss said. "It means my work is finally paying off."

*(*Editor's Note: Thank you to the Native American Times editor Lisa Snell and to Dana Attocknie for allowing us to reprint parts of this article for you.)*

*(*Editor's Note: As we near the Winter months it is time to share more stories with you. Several months ago I discovered my great grandmother on my Kiowa side had told some Kiowa stories that were translated by my grandfather and published. I thought others would enjoy reading these stories, too, since we have many Kiowa relatives and friends.)*

TRICKSTER TALES FROM PRAIRIE LODGE FIRES

As told to Bernice G. Anderson, by Maunkee Blackbear Tahbone.

Prelude: In the Far Back Times, tribes about the western prairies told and

retold how-things-came-to-be tales around their lodge fires. They held storytelling sessions at their own tribal powwows and also at intertribal powwows. Even in these modern times (1979), at intertribal powwows, they still have storytelling periods which sometimes occur during daylight hours. But one kind of story is never, never told in daytime, but always at night. Such stories are about the character who was half Medicine Man, half Trickster. (You never knew whether he would be in a mood to do good or to trick you!)

When Trickster was about to leave our world, he commanded the people never to tell stories about him in daytime, so that is the way it has been, to this very day, wherever Trickster tales are told.

All tribes that live around the prairies have a Trickster character. Each tribe has its own name for him, but the deeds and misdeeds of the Trickster reported by one tribe are so similar to those told by another tribe that there is no doubt he is the same fellow. A constant traveler, he was likely to appear in any tribe's camp at any time.

No one actually knows in which tribe any of the following Trickster tales originated. Told and retold by story tellers at intertribal gatherings, every person told the version of each tale that he liked best and let the matter of its origin go at that.

Most descriptions of Trickster, by whatever name, are the same. He was tall, lanky, and ungainly. His thinning hair was black and coarse and hung like a frayed rope on his bony shoulders. His huge nose had the appearance of standing out in front of his face to point the way in which he should travel.

Animals and people knew him well. Insects knew him, too, and so did plants, trees, sun, moon, and stars. The wind, as it journeyed from sky to earth

and across the plains, hills and valleys, often paused and fanned Trickster's perspiring brow as it piped in a whiney voice, "Good day to you, Uncle!" or "Good day to you, Old Man" or whatever the name he was going by. And Trickster always answered in the wind's tone of voice – sometimes high-pitched, sometimes low and sometimes broken in the middle like the voice of a boy about to become a man. Trickster was proud that he had learned to speak like the wind.

All people and things of the earth and sky knew Trickster, and Trickster not only understood and spoke the language of the people, but of all birds and animals as well. He spoke tree-language also and held long conversations with talkative brooks in the valleys and with streams found among towering blue-in-the-distance mountains. He often talked with flowers that blossomed along the prairie and mountains trails. But, whether he stopped to talk or whether he kept on moving, everyone knew when Trickster was coming along. That's what they always said about him, "Trickster is coming along!"

He was very old; no one knew how old, not even Trickster himself. Usually people and all living creatures liked him. Usually, too, everyone was suspicious of him for he was known everywhere as a prankster and cheater. However, when occasion arose, he could be, and often was, a helper and a healer. He had wonderful Medicine Power when he chose to use it, and this explains why he had so many friends. No one knew what to expect of him, though, so sooner or later everyone he met was fooled by him in one way or another.

Being able to turn himself into an animal or bird whenever he chose was one of his accomplishments. He could cause trees and bushes to do amazing

things, a trick which he often performed. But occasionally his tricks backfired. At such times everyone had a good laugh at his expense and enjoyed telling about it when groups sat around the lodge fires on winter nights or under the stars in summer.

The following Kiowa Trickster Tales are given here as they were related to me by Grandmother Maunkee (Doing with the Hands), or Alice Blackbear Tahbone of the Kiowas, who heard them and told them herself around the Kiowa lodge fires all the years of her life. When she allowed me to record the tales she spoke in the Kiowa tongue, simultaneously shaping her words in sign talk. By watching carefully I could catch some of what she was saying, because I had been taught many of the signs. But her gestures were too rapid for me to keep up with her. When she had finished each tale, her son, F. Blackbear Bosin Sr, translated her spoken words into English. Grandmother's English was as faltering as my Kiowa.

A KIOWA STORY WHY THE BOBCAT STAYS IN THE WOODS

Trickster Sainday was coming along. And he was hungry; he was seldom without a gnawing in his stomach. Whenever his huge nose caught a whiff of something cooking or his eyes caught sight of anything that looked like food, his giant feet walked his lanky body right there. That is how it happened that Sainday was at the twist of the trail on a certain hillside when a meatball came rolling along like a fair-sized snowball.

After the meatball came a ball of hackberries; after the hackberries came a ball of black haws from the hawthorn tree.

The meatball saw Sainday drooling at the mouth like a hungry coyote. "You poor, hungry fellow!" she said. "Take a

bite out of my round, fat side. I can spare a little for you." Sainday took a big bite of the juicy meatball. And the meatball moved slowly along.

The hackberry ball said, "You may take a bite out of my side, too. Everyone likes my little round berries. Rolled into a ball like this they are very tasty, so help yourself!" Sainday did. Then along came the ball of black haws. She said, "You still look hungry, poor fellow! Take a bite out of my side, too!"

But Sainday still wasn't satisfied; his stomach seemed without a bottom. After the hawthorn ball had moved slowly along, he jumped up and ran through vines and thickets and over large rocks until he came to where the trail twisted around the hill. He was just in time, too, for here came the meatball, the hackberry ball, and the black haw ball on their journey down to the valley.

Sainday took off his beaded headband to make himself look different – like an entirely new person, he hoped. The trick worked! When the meatball saw him she exclaimed, "You poor, hungry looking man! Take a bite out of me before I roll on down the hill to the valley!" So Sainday took a second bite of the juicy meatball. The hackberry and hawthorn balls told him to take bites out of their sides, also. But as they rolled on down the winding trail, greedy Sainday was still hungry. He cut across more vines and thickets and large rocks until he reached the next bend in the twisting trail.

Sainday was out of breath, but he managed to get there before the three rolling balls. This time he took off his hunting jacket so he would look like a still different person. Then he stretched his lanky frame down beside the trail and pretended to sleep.

The meatball stopped and nudged him on the nose. His nose itched in his effort to keep from sniffing too eagerly

that appetizing aroma. Sitting up, he rubbed his eyes and pretended bewilderment. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Meat Ball, and these are my friends, Hackberry Ball and Hawthorn Ball. We are travelers on our way to the valley."

"I, too, am on my way to the valley," said Sainday, "But I am too weak from hunger to go much farther."

"This hill seems to be full of hungry old men!" said Meat Ball. "Take a bite of me before I roll on. I am plumper than I need to be."

"Take a bite of me, too!" said Hackberry Ball. "And me, too," said Hawthorn Ball.

Trickster Sainday gulped down his third big helping of food. Then he called after the departing balls: "You'll find another hungry man on down the hill a way." Then he made haste to see that he did not make a liar out of himself – this time, at least.

Sure enough, as the balls rounded the last curve in the twisted alligator tail of a trail, there was a man waiting. This time when Sainday opened his mouth to take a bite of the meatball, the three balls noticed a piece of black hawk that had become stuck between his two front teeth and recognized him.

Hurt and disgusted the three balls jerked themselves out of Sainday's reach and rolled swiftly down the hill and into a creek to get away from him.

Not to be outdone, Sainday rushed down and built a fire on the bank of the creek. He put stones into it and heated them red hot. Using a forked stick he heaved the hot stones one by one into the creek where the balls lay. The stones heated the water and made soup out of the three balls. Sainday was sure the soup would be delicious, but just as he was about to dip up a bowl full of it,

using big clam shells that lay on the bank, Kapogeh, the coyote came by.

"Give me some of your soup, Uncle!" Coyote begged.

"Na-na!" Sainday replied. "There's not enough for two such hungry fellows as you and I are!"

With that Sainday turned his back on Coyote and hurriedly began to dip up the soup with his bare hands. But the stones had made the soup so hot that he dropped the clam-shell bowls, and they broke. So he ran along the bank in search of another bowl and something he could use for a spoon. His quest took him around the bend of the creek, and that was his big mistake!

When he was out of sight, Bob-Cat, who didn't mind the heat, dipped his big paws into the creek and tasted the soup. Ummmm was it good! He looked once more in the direction that Sainday had disappeared, then waded into the creek and lapped it dry.

When he had his fill, he leaped up the bank and disappeared into the woods where purple shadows pattern the ground.

Sainday was furious when he returned with a large shell for a dish and a small shell for a spoon but nothing to use them for. He knew, of course, who the guilty one was. There were greasy tracks leading into the woods.

Sainday found the tricky Bob-Cat asleep in a purple splatter of shadows that made him look almost like the shadows themselves. Bob-Cat was so full of soup he was in a stupor and did not feel a thing when Sainday took a sharp rock and filed his long nose down to a mere stub.

Now Sainday, shaking Bob-Cat awake, suggested the two of them go over to a puddle of rainwater at the edge of the woods to look at themselves.

Stumbling along like a sleepwalker, Bob-Cat went with Sainday, but he woke

in a hurry when he saw himself with his long nose cut off. His reflection frightened him so that he shot back into the woods and ever since, has been ashamed to come out in the daytime. He had lost his tail long, long ago, and now he possessed a snub nose.

Bob-Cat never wanted to see his face again, or be seen by anyone. But sometimes in the night, he can be heard wailing about the trick Sainday played on him.

SARAH POHOCUCUT

(*From the Doris Duke Collection)

Brief Intro from Bob Miller, interviewer: Sarah Pohocsucut was born in 1896 and has lived in Comanche County all her life. She was seven years old when Lawton, Oklahoma, came into existence as a small tent town, which was about a mile from where they were living at that time. Her father was Comanche Jack, early day United States Deputy Marshal, before Statehood.

MEDICINE MEN AND THEIR WORK

My name is Sarah Pohocsucut and I am here with Bob Miller, to tell him (the) history of certain things I have heard, and even seen, about an old medicine man known as Pockeyer. He had another name - - medicine name, Quassyah. He comes around to people to eat, maybe dinner or supper, and he'll tell about what he knows. And sometimes they would make him do what he knows about medicine.

So my father says he came to some people to eat, and when they got through eating they told him they wanted him to do something for them. So, he said "Yes, I think I will because I ate your food". So, he went to work and he told them that he could make some things out of nothing, or maybe something. So this man sitting across the room said, "Can you make tobacco?"

We run out of tobacco." (laughter). So, he said, "Well, you go out and find horse manure," he said, "and bring it here to me."

So he brought it to him. And after he brought it, he said, "Well, now I get something out of here." And he went under himself, and pulled out a corn shuck. He fixed it and went to work, and he took that thing and put it in front of him. He put the manure in front of him and he covered it with a black handkerchief. And then he made his medicine movements about it and talked and after awhile he took the handkerchief away, and there was tobacco laying there.

So he said, "Well, I'll fix my tobacco and you can smoke with me." He went to work and rolled it and lit it, smoked it and passed it around. They said, "it's tobacco," but they all seen what it was before it became tobacco.

Then one day, when I was a little girl, I saw him do something, too. It's hard to believe those things, but white men have always done something -- pull something out of a hat -- that rabbit, bunch of ribbons or something like that, but he was pretty good, I think.

He made some trash, he made it, but he had a contest before with a Cheyenne man. But this time he was making it for two, three, four children to see what he did. He got a branch of weed and put it on, and he made his medicine and took it away and he said, "Children watch," he said. "Here's what I invite you for. This is your treat." Oh, that tree, that little tree was more than I expected and it had lots of plums on it. Everybody had a few (plums) off that tree. Everybody liked to ask him to do it many times, but I guess he don't want to do it more than one time for a long time.

Well, it was a wonderful thing that I saw for a medicine man and today (1969) no Indians got medicine like that.

And I wouldn't believe anybody if they say they have.

My father told me that he was visiting this old man when somebody come running to them and said, "This baby got choked, it's dying." He just smoked slowly while they were anxious and wanted him to act right away and do something, but he sat there and said, "Bring the baby over here." And then the baby was just going - - he couldn't hardly breathe because the thing was in its throat, choking it, it wouldn't go down, it wouldn't come up.

So, this old man carried it and said, "What's the matter, baby?" And when they told him it was choking, it was gasping because it was trying to get its breath. After awhile the old man said, "Okay, we'll have it fixed." He'd talk to that baby and then he'd talk awhile, he said, something like a preacher, "You made us," he said, "This little baby is choking," he says, "Fix it for us." And so he'd hit it back here (back of the shoulder) , and it just popped out. That's the way the Comanches seen it. Whenever a child gets choked, they always say, Pockeyer, they call his name and hit it on the back and it comes out. And today, it's still that way. Even his name got that medicine. Even a big man was choking and they hit him on the back with that name and it came out.

So there is something that a lot of people have seen and don't never tell. But I have seen it myself and I know he'd got the medicine - - a real old man, when I was a girl.

So today, I don't think anybody has (medicine) unless they are magicians. This old medicine man's name was Pockeyer, which means "Old dried blanket made out of hide." And his other names was Quassyyah, which means, "Holding Eagle Tail." That was his medicine name, they tell me.

Later his son had that name, known to all Comanches as Quassyyah, but he doesn't have any medicine.

There have been stories about Adobe Walls, that there was this man claimed to be a medicine man. He wanted to recruit Indians to go and fight the people that were killing buffalos over there at Adobe Walls. A lot of people joined him, even the Cheyenne and Arapahoe, joined him to go over there and kill those people.

He told the Indians that he's got a medicine that bullets will go flat on you when they shoot at you.

Well, when they went over there, there was a bluff kind of northeast of the place where the Adobe Walls was. That's where the Indians gathered to get ready to attack.

So while they were there, the sun was coming up and they all said, "Ready, let's go." When they went, I guess a lot of people were there and they all saw what was going on.

The people were in the stockade, and of course they couldn't very well shoot anybody, (they) stayed behind the stockade. And they all went around them and a lot of people (were) killed.

Somebody said Quanah Parker was over there, but I don't think so. I read about where he wasn't there. I know there was more than thirty Comanches killed over there. So, when I went to their Centennial at Fort Sill, one man wanted to find out where Quanah Parker's War Bonnet was, which he wore at Adobe Walls.

I don't know what made me tell him that he wasn't there, but when I was a kid, a little girl, Quanah Parker came to visit my father. It was (a) long time afterwards and he told my father, "You and me didn't go to Adobe Walls," but my father says, "Yeah, I know I didn't." He said, "Well, I didn't go."

I know my father says his Clan of Comanches and his family didn't go because they didn't believe in that man. And I know he didn't have any medicine because medicine (men) was gone by then.

There are a lot of stories about what happened over there. One man said, "You know there was a wagon right outside the stockade and this man rushed over there and threw out the wagon sheet and those men shot him." After he went halfway back to where they were, they got him and his abdomen was all busted open.

They laid him down and there was a man there had medicine, so they said, "Roll that tobacco and give him smoke," he wanted to do something for that man. Somebody standing there said "Oh, it's hopeless, all his entrails are laying way over there on the ground."

But this man said, "Go over there and get things off of a yucca plant, they are long and just like a strong thread." He said, "You get those for me."

They came back and he said, "Somebody boil water, somebody get your sheet out, and so forth." He went to work on (the injured man), and I guess that man know where to put all the entrails, when he put (them) in and he sewed it with them (cactus) things and tied it with this sheet and put some kind of medicine he had on that.

So, I said that my story had a Comanche Indian surgeon there. He was a good surgeon. He fixed it up and that man was living when I grew up and belonged to my church. He died at 30 years.

So I think they were a lot of Comanche medicine men which I never saw and didn't hear of, but that was what somebody told me about this man whose name was Kwihnai, Esikwihnai, that means "Grey Eagle." He lived for a

long time, but I never seen this medicine man. I saw the man that he worked on.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We now have the Lord's Prayer on a CD for those who want to learn how to say it, rather than sing it. Vivian Pahcheka Holder graciously recorded it for us. She is a new learner who has made great strides and does a terrific job on the CD. We can't mention the Lord's Prayer without remembering the late Gloria Cable, who translated it many, many years ago.

When requesting the Lord's Prayer CD, ask for #89. It will be added to our list of available CDs for tribal members.

With the Holiday season coming soon, we want to remind you about the four Christmas songs we have on CD that were translated by some of our elders many years ago, also.

The Lord's Prayer CD (#89) and the Christmas songs CD(#80) both come with a printed sheet so you can see the Comanche words and the English translation as you learn.

Please include your CDIB and current mailing address when requesting either of these CDs, or any of the other CDs and DVDs we have.

Go to www.comanchelanguage.org and scroll to the April 2010 issue to see a complete list of all CDs and DVDs available. You may also request a list by using one of the contacts at the top of this newsletter.

COMANCHE HYMNS II

New CD out by tribal member Marla Nauni. Contact Marla at marlia_32@hotmail.com for ordering information.