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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee

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*(*We have more wintertime stories from Comanche Narratives, a dissertation by Galen Buller from May 1977. The first few are told by Lillie Kassanavoid Asee.)*

CHASING MUPITSJ

Well, they say in my Grandma's day when she was a girl, there was some kind of an animal they called Mupitsj. She said this Mupitsj had a bag on his side in his flesh. She also said that he liked to eat people.

He came to their camp when my mother was a little girl.

Somehow this old man knew that Mupitsj was afraid of the baby buffalo calf. They made a sack out of a baby buffalo calf and dried it. This old man kept leaves which he smoked in the sack.

This old man, in his younger days, knew that this Mupitsj was afraid of the baby buffalo calf. So he tied a rope around the calf because he knew that Mupitsj was so strong and could maybe eat all of them up. So they were scared of him.

He told the people to take their tipis down and pack up and move. "I'm going to try what I heard when I was a little boy," he said.

So he tied a rope around the neck of the calf. He got on his horse and threw this bag which looked like a baby buffalo at Mupitsj. It looked just like a real calf. Mupitsj ran.

They said Mupitsj could talk good Comanche. He said, "You all sure have a mean animal." He ran.

The old man had a long rope and he threw the bag which looked like a calf at Mupitsj again. That way the old man chased Mupitsj away because he was afraid of the baby buffalo calf.

COYOTE CHEATS THE SOLDIERS

One time the army was going by and they wanted to see why Coyote didn't run away from them. Coyote had the ground real clean and flat and he had a pot setting in the middle of that clean place and the meat that was in it was just boiling away. The boys asked him how in the world he did that. They asked him if he had magic or something.

But it was on a bank, and under the bank was a cave where he had a big fire. So they thought they would buy the pot because they thought it was magic. They didn't see the fire under there.

They asked, "How does it work?" "Well, boys, all I do is clean the place real good and set it there and it boils," he answered.

"What would you take for it?" they asked. He answered, "Oh, I won't part with it."

They said, "What do you say to taking your pick of our horses? We won't even care if you pick our best horse. Why don't you pick out the best horse?" and they lined their horses for him to see. But he didn't want to trade.

Finally he said, "Well, if you all want to trade with me, I'll take that one." And he pointed to the best horse in the line, the prettiest one. So they took his pot and gave their horse to him.

They camped somewhere else and they made the ground the way he had it. Those boys put a lot of meat in it. Then they left. When they came back, it hadn't done a thing. The meat was still all raw, and the head man was mad.

Alternate Version:

A short while after this adventure, Coyote was sauntering along a creek. He saw many people moving around with mules and horses. Coyote was eager to get some of them. He addressed the people, telling them they could camp by a certain clump of trees. They were small trees which he had already cut into.

The people followed his advice, and staked their horses to those little trees. In the night all the mules and horses broke loose. Coyote, who was watching at a distance from the camp, then drove them off. This is why Indians long ago always used to steal so many horses.

COYOTE AND THE GEESE'S MEDICINE

One day Coyote asked the geese if they could fix their medicine so he could fly with them. "Oh, you wouldn't like it. First thing, you would fall," they said. "No, I promise I won't," he replied. So the head man fixed it so Coyote could grow wings.

"Now listen," he said, "don't you look down. Just look forward to where you are going. If you look down you're going to fall and that will be all."

Coyote said, "All right." So they were ready to go early in the morning. The head man said again, "Don't you look down; no matter what anyone says."

They got so far and one of the geese said, "Oh, look at those people; look what they're doing." They were in camp. But Coyote wouldn't look down. He held his head up high. He didn't want to look down.

They passed camps like that many times, and finally he couldn't stand it and he looked down. He fell down.

The people at the camp said, "Oh this Coyote, where is he coming from? He knocked himself dead. Poor thing."

COYOTE AND THE CAMP MEETING

One time some people were having a camp meeting, and Coyote was just wandering around. His wife was at home. He came up to where the big crowd was, and they were having a camp meeting. Coyote is wild and so he sat way back in the last seat.

When it was over, they were passing the plate around, and he had only a dime so he took it out of his pocket and put that dime in the plate and got a nickel back.

When he got home, his wife asked him. "Where have you been?" "Oh, I was just wandering around and I stopped at a camp meeting. They were passing a plate around and I put my last dime in and got a nickel out," he answered. His wife said, "You crazy man, why didn't you put the whole dime in there. What do you want with that nickel?"

COYOTE CHEATS THE PREACHER

One fellow met Coyote. He was a preacher on a horse. He said, "Hi, fellow. I heard that you were a big joker and cheater." "No, I'm not," Coyote replied.

They were talking a while and then Coyote said, "My medicine that I use is way down that hill and under the hill in my cave. If you don't mind, I will go on your horse to get it."

So the preacher let Coyote use his horse. Coyote went a little ways and made the horse back up. "He won't go. He wants me to wear your cap because I don't have any on, and he won't go for me."

So the preacher took it off and gave it to him. Coyote went a little ways and backed the horse up again. He said, "I guess he wants me to wear your coat. He won't go because I don't have any coat on." So he gave it to him and he put it on. (End of story)

COYOTE AND THE QUAIL

One time Coyote ran into a nest of quail and he asked them, "What kind of birds are you?" One of them said, "We're quail." He said, "Well, if you're that kind of a bird, then you're the kind of bird that scares people." They said, "Yeah, we like to scare people."

They're the kind of birds that hid when you're walking and you can't see them. Then they fly up and scare you.

Coyote didn't like that kind of bird and so he wet on them. When their mother came back she asked them why they were wet.

"Oh, that Coyote came and asked us what kind of birds we were and when we told him he got made and wet on us." She asked, "Which way did he go, that old thing?" I don't know which direction they pointed, but she went that way.

She found him walking along the bank of a river. She scared him and he fell into the water and he had a hard time getting out of that water. Oh, he was mad because that mother had scared him. He found out he had broken his leg. He looked at the leg and decided to butcher it and eat the marrow. He was going to eat his own leg. Nobody was around, but he said, "Hey, you, come help me eat this."

THE WOMAN WHO WAS SEPARATED FROM HER TRIBE

A long time ago, a girl's boyfriend asked her to be with him when the enemies came up on them. So, one morning they camped, rested a little, and had lunch. Then they saw a man

coming up to them on a horse, and they said, "We're ready, here they come."

And so they got ready. The boyfriend told the girl, "Go ahead, run. Don't look back. You stay hidden."

The white people who had come up to them had guns, but these Indians only had arrows. So after the fight, after everything was quiet, the girl peeked just a wee bit and nobody was there. Where they had camped, everybody was killed.

So she picked up what little things she had, like her little hatchet, her blanket and whatever she had and she went.

She went and went. When daybreak came, she hid all day. And when it got dark, that's when she would start walking. No telling how long she had been walking – a month or maybe several weeks.

One day while she was hiding in the thicket by the spring she noticed some buffalo; three of them with their little ones. They were taking their time eating grass. She looked around and didn't see a thing; no one was around. She got her hatchet and started for that baby buffalo and she hit that baby buffalo as hard as she could. She killed it and drug it to that thicket where she started butchering it. Then she dried it (they dried them in those days). I don't know which part of that meat she took but she made a bucket with it, and filled it with some water.

She stayed there until her meat got all good and dry, then she made a bag and put her meat in it. Also, she made her shoe soles out of that buffalo hide. She got her own sinew out of that buffalo. She must have stayed there a long while until her meat got dried.

Well, she had her blanket which she carried with her bag which had the meat in it on her back. She then started

walking when it got dark, and she walked for I don't know how long.

Finally, she saw some other people coming way off. She said, "I don't care who it is, I'm tired of walking alone any way." She didn't care what happened to her.

She let them see her – she climbed on a hill. In those days the head man, the brave one, had to run up there and meet them. When he got close he said, "So this is you." And called her so and so (her name).

He asked her, "Where are the rest?" and she said, "The white men killed all of them and I'm the only one, and I'm trying to go back home."

Well, they took her back and told her, "Your folks have been mourning for you."

THE CHILDREN WHO ESCAPED FROM THE GIANT

Some Comanches had a camp and the kids went to play with their little puppy. They were playing a long way from camp. Then a little girl went back to camp and came back crying. "What's the matter?" they asked. "Nobody is back at camp," she answered. "They broke up camp."

The older girl said, "Oh, they couldn't do that. You go back and get them." The second one went and reported the same thing. Then the third one went and they believed it when the third one said it. So they started walking.

They followed the trail where the tipi poles had drug. They had made marks that were easy to follow. The children kept going and going with their little puppy and baby brother.

They came up to a crow and they asked him where their folks had gone. He warned them not to go over there because that's where the giant was, and he would eat them up. They thanked him and then he said, "I saw your folks

going way over around that hill. Don't you stop when Mupitsj calls."

But the little boy was crying and the Mupitsj heard the boy cry. He said in Comanche, "You all bring my grandson here; you all are making him cry." One said, "I hear Grandma over there. Let's go over there." The other one said, "No, I'm not going over there. The crow said not to."

But they went anyway, so Mupitsj fixed them a bed. They said that if he does us any harm, the little dog will bark and wake us up. The little dog kept waking up and Mupitsj said, "You quit bothering the kids." And then he killed the poor little dog.

So, the next morning while he was boiling the puppy, he said, "You go get me some water because what I'm making for breakfast is boiling dry." So they went.

At the water a frog reminded them of what the crow had said. The frog told them to go on and he would talk to Mupitsj if he called for them. So they went on and Mupitsj said, "You all hurry with the water." Frog answered, "Wait, we're still washing our face. Our little brother messed on us and we have to wash it." He kept going like that and then Mupitsj got mad.

"All right, you all. I'm coming to get you." When he got there nobody was there because those kids had already left. So he said to Frog, "So, it's been you telling me stories."

He started hitting him but he couldn't catch him. He started to look for the kids, but they must have walked fast. So the kids got to a big river. There was a crane there. "Is there any way you could please help us to cross? There's a big animal coming after us." He said, "O.K. I'm going to put my feet in your mouths. You all keep me in your mouth till you all cross. I'm going to let you all cross on my leg." And he gave them a

louse. He said, "You all mustn't crack it until you get to the other side. If you do, I'm going to pull my leg and you're all going to fall into the water and drown." So they crossed.

Then Mupitsj talked to the crane and he told him the same thing he told the kids. But the big giant was greedy. I don't know why, but he cracked the louse before he got to the other side and he dragged his feet and that big giant Mupitsj fell into the water – deep water.

Anyway, he made it through the water and he caught up with the kids. So there was a baby buffalo calf laying there taking a nap. He told the kids, "Now you go around me four times." Mupitsj said, "That little thing ain't going to save you. I'm going to kill all of you." They went around that buffalo four times and then they started walking. He said, "Go on."

Mupitsj was going to kill the little buffalo – but no! The calf got mad and pawed the dirt. Mupitsj said, "You think you can scare me?" But then the baby buffalo calf kicked Mupitsj into the air. He kicked him a second time even higher into the air. The third time he kicked him really high into the air. And the fourth time he kicked him so high he landed on the moon. That's the face you see on the moon now.

*(*The following stories are unpublished texts from Elliott Canonge that appeared in Buller's Comanche Narratives.)*

COYOTE STEALS THE POSSUM'S PERSIMMONS

A long time ago, somewhere, a big possum lived in a hole on a hill. She had some children. One morning she told her children she would hunt for a treat for them. Somewhere, some people had a corn field and were growing big ears. She said, "This will

make for some very good eating for my children." While she was breaking off the ears with both of her hands, Coyote came to her. "You are picking corn," he said. She said, "You are not, like me, looking for corn for your little ones." Coyote joined in and picked some corn, too. Then the owner came and chased them away. Possum ran to her house and Coyote ran in the same direction, and came to her house. The next night, they went there again, and again the owner chased them away. Possum's children came, and their mother said, "We are starving, but every time that corn owner comes and scares us away."

"My crop is wasting away because of all these animals," he said. "I will have to trap them." So along their trail, the owner dug a deep hole and put leaves over the hold.

The next night these animals came again. Coyote was in front and Possum was following him. All of a sudden, he fell out of sight. She was right behind him and she fell out of sight, too. "Now our children will starve," she said. Coyote was not talking. "My children are coming to look for us. They have heard me cry and these little ones have found us." They lowered a tree to Possum and Coyote and they climbed out. The little ones said, "Let's carry out all of the food." The mother said, "The owner is mad at us for carrying off part of his crop."

Somewhere nearby there was a persimmon tree. They picked persimmons instead and piled them up. While they were picking these, Coyote came and took away all their pickings. The mother said, "We can't go back to the corn because the owner is laying in wait." So they went home with nothing.

COYOTE AND THE KINGFISHER

A long time ago, it is said, Kingfisher and Coyote were friends. Coyote was

very hungry, so he said, "I will go to my friend's home." And so Coyote came to him. Kingfisher said, "Hello, friend." Coyote said, "Friend, I am very hungry." The Kingfisher said, "Somewhere near, I will get some food for us." So Kingfisher flew over the water, then dove into the water, and came up carrying a fish. They ate a lot of food. When they had finished eating, Coyote said, "Friend, I am going. It is good that I ate with you. When it is cold, I want you to come and eat with me."

And then it got cold. Everything was frozen. When Kingfisher was going to eat, he could find nothing. Then Kingfisher said, "I will go see my friend, Coyote. I will go eat with him."

And so he arrived at Coyote's. Coyote said, "Hello, Friend," Kingfisher came to eat with him. Kingfisher said, "I am going to eat with you, Friend." The Coyote said, "Sit down, my friend, I will get some food for us." So Coyote went beside the water. He barked and barked, saying, "Kwakwakwara, kwakwakwara." The water was frozen. He jumped in it and broke his hip. When his friend didn't come back, Kingfisher went to look for him. He found his friend and took him to Coyote's home. Then he himself hunted for food for them. Kingfisher fed him until he got well.

COYOTE CHEATS SOME PEOPLE OUT OF PECANS

Coyote went with three of his friends to hunt for pecans. They went to where the creek was deep with a big bank and had lots of trees. But here they could find no pecans. While they were looking, they found one pecan tree standing alone in the prairie and it had lots of fruit on it. "Let's pick it," said Coyote. "I'll climb the tree and flail it for you."

So he climber the tree with a big long pole and flailed it. Lots of pecans

without their hulls fell down and also lots of pecans which still had their hulls fell down. Coyote picked up pecans without hulls. The people picked up those which still had their hulls. One of them picked up a pecan and sucked on it, and, as he did, he fell down the bank with his pickings. He moved poorly and fell down repeatedly. These others went to the bank. Coyote took a big stick and held it out to their friend. He pulled him up with this stick.

"Finally, we'll have lots of good food to eat this winter," they said. They laughed all the way back to their house from where they were picking. Each was carrying his own pickings. They were thankful to Coyote for helping them and in return they decided to hull his pecans for him. (Much of the rest of this story is missing, but it seems that all the pecans Coyote gave these people to hull were full of worms. They were all mad because Coyote had made them all tired walking to this pecan tree and then pecans were no good. Meanwhile, Coyote got some good pecans which he stashed away.)

OLD LADY AND THE COYOTE

A long time ago an old lady lived by herself. She wanted to find some Indians. "Now I will go hunt some Indians," she said. "I am going to pound my meat." After pounding her meat, she put it in a sack.

Coyote heard her, and so he ran in front of her along the way she was going to go.

The old lady came down the road and Coyote was lying in the road. "What is the matter with you?" she asked.

"I am starving," he said. The old lady said, "The poor thing is starving. Take a big bite from my pounded meat."

Coyote barely raised his head, and he took a bite from her meat. Biting it, he

said, "I feel good." Then the old lady went from him.

Coyote, getting up, ran around the hill in front of her. Again he laid down in front of her. The old lady said, "Again the hungry one is lying here." "What is the matter with you?" she asked. "I am starving," he said. "Take a bite from my meat," she said. "I am going a long way."

Coyote was going to bite from it and opened his mouth big. The old woman saw her meat between his teeth. "Coyote!!" she said. Getting a stick, she beat him.

For that reason, Coyote is always afraid of a woman.

COYOTE AND BEAR EATING BLACKBERRIES

Somewhere, Bear was picking mountain berries. As he was eating some of them, Coyote came to him and asked him. "Oh, brother, what are you doing?" "I am picking berries," he said. Coyote asked him where his berries were. Bear told him that he was putting them inside himself.

He said, "I break them off and then swallow them. When I arrive to my children I throw them up." Coyote swallowed lots of them. Then he yelled loudly. He tried to vomit the berries, and said, "I'm trying to make medicine for the bear." "This one doesn't do things good," said Bear.

BEAR MEDICINE

Long ago, it is said, Comanche men had Bear Medicine. One man said that because he had this medicine he was not afraid. It is said that this man went hunting with his friends. While they were hunting, the man with Bear Medicine's friend said, "Surprise, Friend! I see a bad, mean bear." His friend with Bear Medicine said in contempt, "Friend, that's just my dog; this bear I own."

His friend replied, "Don't talk like that to it, because this bear is bad and mean." The one with Bear Medicine said, "Hey, Friend, you show it to me." The man with Bear Medicine got off his horse and ran towards the bear. He grabbed the bear and began wrestling with him. He took out his knife and punched the bear under his ribs in his stomach. There was a big tear and his guts poured out on the ground. This is how he killed the bear and his friend wondered at all of this.

A TURTLE ON THE WARPATH

A long time ago, some turtles lived near a creek. Two of these turtles had one son. He never went far from home. His friends went on the warpath and came back and said, "You didn't go on the warpath." "I will soon go on the warpath," he said. The turtle said, "Mother, make shoes for me and fix me what I will eat. I am going on the warpath. Father, make a bow and arrow for me. My friends laughed at me because I don't go on the warpath. I will drive up lots of horse," he said.

"All right," his father said, "You will go tomorrow." His mother finished his shoes that night.

In the morning, he went on the warpath. Towards the west, he went. He went down to the creek, and then he went on the other side. A big log was lying in front of him. He couldn't climb over it, so he wintered under it.

When spring came, his mother went west of their house. There his mother stood, saying, "I wonder where my son is. His friends came back." Her son said, "Mother! Come pull me over. I can't get over." His shoes were all worn out near his home. He came back to his house and didn't go on the warpath again.

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