

"Letter From The President"

by Ronald Red Elk

Spirit of Place Symposium

Appreciating the Comanche Relationship to the Landscape of the Southern Plains

Friday, October 15, 1999

The symposium began featuring Reaves Nahwooks' interpretation of Spirit of Place. His presentation was well received by the group, as indicated by the many questions that were asked during the time allotted for that purpose.

Carney Saupitty and myself gave our presentations after lunch. I explained the work of the Comanche Language Committee from our inception to our future goals. Carney gave his perspective of the Spirit of Place as it relates to his oral history that was told to him by his family.

The symposium was attended by well over 100 persons. There were scholars from several Texas Universities, National Parks personnel, Texas MAP Society, Archeological Society, Historical groups from Texas and Texas landowners. Those attending from the CLCPC in addition to the above mentioned were Lucille McClung, Theresa Saupitty, Gloria and Vernon Cable, Billie Kreger, Bill and June Southard, Edith Gordon, Bud and Barbara Yackeschi, Carney Saupitty Jr., Susan Nahwooksy, Marie Parton, Rosalie Attocknie, Frances Red Elk and Sally Tonips.

Some of our friends from previous visits to Texas, Janet and Keith Saltsgiver, Fred and Kay Campbell, Linda Pelon, Daniel Gelo and Dan Potter, were also in attendance.

The symposium was jointly sponsored by the University of Texas at Arlington's Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography and the Special Collections Division of the UTA libraries. The symposium was funded by Summerlee Foundation of Dallas.

Soobesa Numanuu sumu oyetu Numu niwunu ? etu. Ukitsi nana tuasa Numu niwunu-hutui. Ubu nitu tuasa Numu niwunuhutuinnuu.

NEW LOOK

We have a new look! Richard Codopony Jr. has re-designed the logo for our organization which will be used on all our paperwork. You can

see it now as a watermark on the front page of this newsletter. Actually, we have two variations: one like the watermark you see here, and another with words inside the circle. Richard is an accomplished artist in his own right, and we are pleased to feature the work of this young Comanche man.

We will also have our logo in colors, and want to be able to put it on the back of shawls and vests for our group when we attend functions together. We also envision other products featuring our logo. As anxious as we all are for this to happen, it will be sometimes in the future.

TRIP TO MEDICINE MOUNDS

by Deloris Wooth Karty

Members of the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee (CLCPC) traveled in two vans to visit Medicine Mounds in Texas on Saturday, September 18th. The day that started cloudy and cool soon turned into a beautiful clear day. With a quick stop at McDonalds for a carry-out breakfast, the group was soon traveling westward on the Quanah Parker Trailway and passed the beautiful monument near Altus. We visited along about family events and enjoyed good laughs together. Before we had a chance to get tired, we could see the three mounds far on the horizon to the south.

Medicine Mounds

The four cone-shaped erosional mounds occupy the landscape south of US 287. They permit a birds-eye view of the surrounding area for more than sixty miles. This was a favorite campsite for the Comanches, who arrived in the late 1700s, because there was abundant spring water, good hunting, the gathering of medicinal plants and for worship. These mounds were considered to be sacred; the tallest known as Medicine Mound and the second tallest, Cedar Mound.

The Legend of Medicine Mounds

The recorded legend concerning these mounds involved the healing of a Comanche medicine man's daughter. He had prayed and mixed his medicines as he had done for many others who needed his healing, but nothing seemed to work to cure his own daughter. One morning when he came out of his teepee, he was very despondent and looking out into the distance he suddenly felt a spirit in the rock-capped peak of the great mound. It told him to put his trust in the spirit dwelling there. He had eaten frugally for days and now without touching food or water, he went

apart to pray and fast until the spirit sent him a revelation. Finally, it came and told him to take his medicines to the high rock and mix them there so that the power of the good spirit could enter into them. He did as he was told and then treated his daughter with the new medicine. Later he found his daughter in a deep sleep, but she no longer had fever and in a short time she was awake and feeling well again. Thereafter, this medicine man and others who learned of the source of his powers, paid seasonal visits to the spirit on the high mound, which is said to have special healing powers.

We arrived at the Downtown Medicine Mounds Museum, which is located at the junction of FM91 and FM1167 in the ghost town of Medicine Mounds, Texas. The proprietor of the Museum, Myna Potts, told us about some of the local history and of her efforts to preserve the area. The museum has over 200 pictures of area settlers, early newspaper articles of interest, as well as memorabilia, old books, scrapbooks and Indian artifacts of the area. There is an old outhouse in the back, which she has taken great efforts to preserve. We later learned that the cobblestones for the few remaining buildings came from the Wichita Mountains! We know that's why they are still standing. Good stuff, those cobblestones!

A special invitation was extended for Comanches to attend the dedication of three historical markers, which were dedicated on October 9th to the Community of Medicine Mounds, Hicks and Cobb General Store and the WPA Sanitation Project.

In addition to some of the handout material available at the Museum was a Daily Prayer, which reads:

"So far today, God, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or over-indulgent. I'm really glad about that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed and from then on I'm probably really going to need a lot more help! Thank you, in Jesus' name. Amen."

A reporter from the Quanah newspaper joined us at the Museum and interviewed several of the ladies and wanted to take pictures. We had to cut our visit short and hurried along to the Medicine Mounds Depot Restaurant in Vernon, where Billie Kreger had made our lunch reservations.

The depot was built in 1910 along the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway Company and is located on Highway 287. The reporter, Myna

Potts and another lady joined us for lunch at the Depot to continue their visit. The restaurant had large Dream Catchers and pictures on the walls, including a great picture of Woogie Watchetaker. Lucille McClung really enjoyed eating the roasted peanuts, because they threw the hulls on the floor - and did we have a whole lot of peanut hulls under our table! They served a great meal, too.

After lunch, our next stop was at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Alton Holk, the owners of the property on which the Medicine Mounds are located. From printed information about the mounds, they are not open to tourists, but we were informed that the area is open to Comanches who want to visit their ancient camping site. Mr. Holk drove ahead of us to show the way to the area where Comanches have camped, as recently as a year ago. He said they bring their teepees and hold their ceremonies overnight. He said the area is always left clear of any debris, which helps to maintain the area in its original state, and reflects the Comanches' respect of the mounds.

Members of our group walked around and gathered red cedar and other herbs. It was not possible for us to get to the top of the mounds, as we had thought. There was no road and no clear path to follow to scale the rocky and sandy soil of the mound. We were disappointed that we would not get to the top. However, we took time to look around at the surrounding country side. Before departing, we gathered together to reflect on the area and to sing a few Comanche hymns and for prayer. It was a moving and special experience.

Mr. Holk stated he would take us around to the west side of the mound, so that we could get a better view. Much to our surprise, the west side was not as steep or rugged as the east side, and we could have probably climbed to the top from that side. However, because of the time of day, we decided not to attempt a climb, but would save that climb for another time. Mr. Holk escorted us to the Copper Breaks State Park, which is about 13 miles south of Quanah. I guess he thought we might get lost, but we appreciated his concern.

Copper Breaks State Park

The park is located south of Quanah, or 11 miles north of Crowell on State Highway 6, and contains 1,933 acres consisting of juniper, grass-covered mesas and a beautiful lake. According to the park information, this region was within the realm of the Comanches and Cynthia Ann Parker was re-captured nearby and returned to her relatives. A large visitor center at the park

headquarters houses displays of the natural and historical aspects of the area. Exhibits include artifacts, fossils, dioramas, paintings and photographs.

It was here that our group saw several photographs of Comanche relatives and acquaintances. Among the identified photographs were Lee Motah, Pete Coffey, Doc Tate, Earl Chasenah, Mollie Perkaquanard, Sam DeVenney and Wekeah Bradley.

The Quanah newspaper reporter caught up with us again at the park and took more pictures. She wanted us to see several historic sites in Quanah, so we followed her into town. There we saw the Quanah Railway Depot, which is currently being renovated, the Hardeman County Historical Museum, which was the original jail built in 1894. Historical exhibits include a Space Room furnished by NASA and the Smithsonian Institute. We were also shown a mural painted in 1943, in the Post Office Building, with Quanah Parker in the center, showing his hand raised in peace. The Parker monument is located on the northeast corner of the Hardeman County Courthouse Square, dedicated on September 14, 1991, and includes words he is said to have pronounced in a blessing on this town:

"May the Great Spirit smile on your little town, May the rain fall in season, and in the warmth of the sunshine after the rain, May the earth yield abundantly. May peace and contentment be with you and your children forever."

The time was moving so quickly, as we moved from one historical site to another, and too quickly we had to begin our trip back home. We waved our goodbyes to our host and turned our vans homeward.

Everyone was quiet for awhile, reflecting on all the places we had seen. But the silence was soon broken when Lucille, Theresa and Marie began singing Comanche hymns. It was a beautiful time. Very soon, we were back in Altus and made a quick stop to call Barbara and Kenneth to let them know we would be arriving in Lawton within a very short time, so they could return the rented vans. It was also time for the children to get snacks to last until we got back home.

This day trip to Medicine Mounds and Copper Breaks State Park was very informative and enjoyable. Everyone said they enjoyed the trip and hope that others will take the time to visit the area soon. All of the local people were so gracious and appreciative of the Comanche

interest and invited us to come again.

Members who made this trip included Billie Kreger and Penny, Gloria and Vernon Cable, Edith Gordon, Esa Attocknie and her two granddaughters, Lucille McClung, Theresa Saupitty and Mycah, Marie Parton, Barbara and Bud Yackeschi and myself, Deloris Karty.

"S̄um̄ Oyet̄ Tan̄ Nanan̄m̄n̄n̄."

Ronald Red Elk

1999 COMANCHE NATION FAIR Story Telling Contest

The Comanche Tribe's Fair Board asked the Language Committee to coordinate the Story Telling contest for the "last Fair of the Century." They offered 1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes of \$100, \$75 and \$50, respectively. President Ronald Red Elk and member Kathryn Sovo took over the responsibilities of conducting the fun event.

Advance notice of the story telling contest appeared in all area newspapers, and the registration began at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 2nd, during the second day of the Fair. Three judges were chosen and promptly at 2 p.m. the contest began. Stories, told in Comanche, were both humorous and historical in nature, and a couple of story tellers wanted to tell their stories, yet not be included in the contest itself. The panel obliged them.

Final winners were announced later that afternoon in the main arena. In fact, First Place winner, Richard Codopony Jr. (from Apache) was given the opportunity to tell his story again to the crowd assembled at the arena. Second Place was awarded to Edith Kassanavoid Gordon from Indianahoma and Third Place went to Marguerite Parker from Cache. Ūra to everyone who signed up to tell a story and congratulations to the winners. "Num̄ Tekwap̄!"

Thank you also to the Comanche Chairman and all the tribal employees for giving the Comanche Language Committee the opportunity to contribute to the success of the 1999 Comanche Nation Fair

Fair Booth

Our organization set up a booth during the Comanche Nation Fair with two purposes in mind: 1) To let people know about us, and 2) To give away some learning/teaching items to Comanche people. We accomplished both

purposes. During the three day event (October 1-3) we gave away approximately 200 Language Newsletters (both current and back issues), hundreds of our brochures, and provided free Comanche Picture Dictionaries to about 60 families, in addition to giving away several Indian comic books and 1 small doll.

We also made people aware of some of the products we sell in order to fund our efforts, and are most appreciative to the Fair Board for allowing us to be there and participate. It was a thoroughly enjoyable, but tiring, week-end.

CULTURAL SERIES

A series of cultural activities took place during the time we were on "hiatus" from the Lannan Master-Apprentice Team Project when Year Two ended on August 31st. These were planned on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 until 8:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton.

We began the first part of the series with a presentation on the "brush dance." Other parts included "story telling," "peyote songs," "hand games," and "'49 songs." Although it was a intended as a learning series, it was also a fun series. Questions and answers were encourage both from presenters and participants, and audience participation was encouraged by all attending. Comanches were given a special invitation, but the series was open to the general public.

For myself, the most fun evening was the hand games. Rosalie Attocknie explained the history of the hand game, told us about the rules and scoring, and then we all gathered around to actually play a hand game. Of course, there was no money involved, but the winning team got their choice of fresh fruit, then shared them with the losers! At this event, there were no losers in my mind, we were all winners because we had such a fun evening and learned an important aspect of our Comanche culture.

AN ADDED NOTE: We have submitted a grant proposal to a local funding agency for a 12 week Cultural Series to take place in the spring of 2000. We hope we are successful and will let you know the results after the first of the year.

1999 FALL ENCAMPMENT

The Fall Encampment was a huge success! If you didn't get to attend you missed out on a wonderful experience.

Four beautiful tepees graced the grounds of the Museum of the Great Plains, and all had occupants at night! We can only imagine how our ancestors might have lived in the days of long ago. Vice-president Billie Kreger was event chairman and did a wonderful job of pulling everything together and helping make sure everything ran smoothly. (What would we do if there weren't any "wrinkles" though??)

Tepees began filling the camp area Thursday evening and it was a beautiful sight to see. Walter BigBee and his family traveled from New Mexico to be with us and they spent every night in their lodge. Wouldn't you know it rained both the first night and the second night, but our Comanche people are hardy souls and they didn't complain not once!

Friday morning started out with a light breakfast and then Van Codynah helped us with the Brush Dance, the way it was taught to him. We all made "shades" from nearby tree branches (don't mention that we trimmed the trees for the Museum!) and proceeded. It was a cultural learning experience and fun, too.

Morgan Tossee and his able crew next proceeded to demonstrate setting up a teepee. They made it look easy but we all know their experience and the precise way they worked accounted for that. With tongue in cheek, he told us his wife usually set it up, but she was unable to be there, so he and "the guys" put it up.

After lunch, Edith Kassanavoid Gordon, assisted by granddaughter Kathryn Sovo, gave a demonstration on cradle making which was very interesting.

The next event was meat slicing, with Rosalie Attocknie showing us the way Comanches sliced meat. Although this presentation was supposed to only last an hour, the ladies all got hands-on experience, and it lasted much longer than that. In fact, KSWO T-V sent a news crew about that time and our ladies were featured on the 10:00 o'clock news that night! While the meat (chuck roasts) were being sliced up, the cook got the wood fire going and started cooking. Our dinner that evening was sliced meat cooked over a wood fire. Mmmmmm good!! (One of our ladies, who shall remain nameless, had such a hard time keeping her thin pieces of meat in long pieces, she finally told us she was slicing hers for stir fry!)

After that wonderful meal we gathered around and learned the rules of playing Hand Games from Dell Wermy. What a fun time! The prize was a big basket of assorted fresh fruit, and the

winning team graciously shared it with everyone else. That's the Comanche way! By this time big black clouds began to roll in and caused everyone to scurry to cover everything from the rain that was on its way!

Saturday morning started out with a breakfast you wouldn't believe (in Billie's words, it was "The Works").

Next we watched as Wekeah Bradley told us about the herbs and remedies Comanches used long ago for everything from headaches to shampooing their hair. What an informational presentation. Mrs. Bradley wore her beautiful buckskin dress and was assisted by her daughter Cynthia.

Bernard Kahrahrhah showed us all the components that make up a man's regalia, and shared some history about some of the pieces. At this time some 30 members of Upward Bound students from Cameron University had joined us and asked questions about various parts of his presentation.

Kathryn Sovo, dressed in her beautiful cloth dress, next demonstrated the women's regalia. She was assisted by her kaku, Edith Gordon, who helped answer some of the questions put forth.

After lunch, Rita Poor Buffalo gave a presentation about buckskin dresses. I was sorry I missed that, but I was busy scurrying around.

Josephine Wapp next demonstrated Finger Weaving. Although this is not a traditional Comanche craft, she is a Comanche who has become an expert in the art of finger weaving and travels widely demonstrating it to others. She also had a hands on demonstration, and the ladies were anxious to try their hand at this beautiful craft. She passed out hand-outs for the ladies, which was greatly appreciated.

Lucille McClung next gave a dried corn demonstration, and the process it takes to get a fresh cob of corn to a dried state that Comanches carried to sustain themselves along the trail. She told of helping her grandparents when she was young, and others in the audience gave their experiences, too.

The next presentation was scheduled for Margaret Poahway to show us how to make fry bread — to go along with the dried corn and beef scheduled for our dinner. But as I mentioned the "wrinkles" earlier, one happened when Margaret discovered she had picked up a sack of cornmeal instead of flour! After some good humored harassing from Ron Red Elk and a quick trip by Ken Goodin to the nearest store, her presentation

went on without a hitch. We all had a chance to taste one of the few pieces she made. Billie served as the "turner" as Margaret explained the process, from mixing the flour to the finished delicious product.

We next retreated back to the outdoor kitchen where our dinner consisted of atakwas and yuhu nookopu.

Although the museum grounds provided a perfect setting for our encampment, the one thing it lacked was adequate lighting. So, for our mini pow-wow we improvised with flashlights! Kenneth Goodin provided a large one for the center (which by the way, covered a prairie dog hole!).

June Sovo, Ken Lookingglass and Mike Blackstar did an outstanding job of helping us with the pow-wow. And perhaps because of the dim lighting, many people got out in the arena for the first time that may have been too timid to do so at a regular pow-wow. But that's what this week-end was about — learning about our culture and experiencing it first hand. We ended with some '49 songs and dancing, which was a lot of fun. June was a good M.C. and singer both, causing laughs with some of the humorous lyrics to the songs. I told my young teen-age nieces that they better get out there and '49, because this might be the only time they would get the chance as long as they lived under their mother's roof! Normally '49s take place after midnight and later, and here we were '49ing at 8:30 in the evening!

After breakfast the final morning, everyone gathered to sing Comanche hymns and ended the 1999 Fall Encampment by joining hands and praying together. It was an emotional time for all of us, with our recent loss being foremost in our minds. But as Ron reminded us, we are all family, and as such we make each other stronger just by being together. And so we move on, never forgetting, but cherishing our memories.

CABLE/KREGER TEAM REPRESENT COMANCHES AT CONFERENCE

Gloria Cable (Master) and Billie Kreger (Apprentice) represented the Comanche Language Committee at the 4th Annual Indigenous Languages workshop held in Preston OK. In past years the Language Committee has attended as a group, but this year due to the Comanche Nation Fair being held on the same week-end, Billie and Gloria agreed to attend on the first afternoon and give a summary of the Lannan Master-Apprentice Team Project.

Billie gave a brief history of our organization and explained how the Master-Apprentice Program works. As she and her mother Gloria have participated in two years of the project, they were perfect representatives of our group and the project itself.

She said there were a lot of questions from members of other tribes who are wanting to revive and save their language. Also speaking were representatives from the Miami Tribe of OK, the Choctaw, Ojibway & Cree, Cherokee, Ponca and Potawatamie Tribes. Dr. Akira Yamamoto, linguist from the University of Kansas, was the featured speaker.

Their hosts weren't ready for them to leave but they had to return home to the festivities of the Comanche Nation Fair being held the next day.

NEW DICTIONARY

Work on our new dictionary is nearing completion. There are still many things that need to be done before we have a finished product, but we are hard at work. We still have word lists to go through, and then the task of entering it into the computer for the final product.

We have one supporter who has already donated several hundred dollars for the printing, and others who have pledged donations when the time is appropriate. We appreciate all those who have made the commitment to help, but we still need more help. Whatever donation, large or small, will help us make a professional looking dictionary that is put together by Comanche people, paid for by the Comanche Language Committee -- with the help of our friends and supporters.

LANNAN M-A PROJECT, YEAR THREE

Training for Year Three of the Lannan Master-Apprentice Team Project began on the evening of Friday, October 22 with a Get Acquainted session held at the Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton. Dr. Leanne Hinton, linguist from the University of California at Berkeley, and Nancy Richardson Steele of the Karuk Tribe in northern California, acted as moderators. They were assisted by Comanche tribal members during the training who had participated in Year One and/or Year Two of the M-A Team Project.

Saturday's session began in the Officer's Club at Fort Sill and ended at the Museum later that evening. Sunday's session again began in the Museum and ended just prior to noon.

The importance of immersing oneself in the Comanche language was stressed over and over again to the more than 30 people in attendance. Activities were demonstrated to show how the language could be used in every day situations.

At the end of the Sunday session, six teams had completed the mandatory training and an orientation meeting was scheduled for the following day.

The teams participating in Year Three will be Carney Saupitty Sr. and Richard Codopony Jr., master and apprentice respectively; Ray Niedo and Ed Tahhahwah; Gloria Cable and Billie Kreger; Lucille McClung and Susan Nahwooksy; Theresa Saupitty and Mycah Kopaddy; and Marie Parton and Barbara Coker.

We congratulate each team for their commitment and will keep you updated.
