



Citation for this collection:

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INTERVIEW WITH MRS. NORA THOMPSON DEAN
Dewey, Oklahoma

Interviewed by: Mr. C. A. Weslager

ND: Mrs. Dean
CW: Mr. Weslager

CW: Mrs. Dean is one of five speakers of the Delaware Indian language. She is a fullblood Delawarean. She is younger than these other speakers; and, with their passing, the language will more or less pass out of existence. She is going to read and translate two passages from the Bible.

ND: This is the Lord's Prayer, first in English and then in the Lenape Delaware Indian language.

Our Father, which art in heaven

**

Hallowed be thy name

**

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven

**

Give us this day, our daily bread

**

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors

**

** Denotes Lenape Indian Language

ND: (Cont'd)

The Lord's Prayer (Cont'd)

And lead us not into temptation

**

But deliver us from evil

**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory forever

**

This is from the 14th Chapter of St. John:

Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God,
believe also in me

**

In my father's house are many mansions

**

If it were not so, I would have told you

**

I go to prepare a place for you

**

But, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will
come again and receive you unto myself

**

ND: (Cont'd)

14th Chapter, St. John (Cont'd)

Thou must saith unto God, we know not the way

**

Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the
life. No man cometh unto the father except
through me.

**

CW: Mrs. Dean came to the University of Delaware in July, 1970, to be interviewed by A. R. Dunlap and C. W. Weslager. Although our chief interest was in names, both personal and geographical, we did ask Mrs. Dean to talk about folklore and history, when these subjects presented themselves, as in that part of the tape which now follows. The tape concludes with a sample of the interviewing conducted by Mr. Weslager.

ND: This is about the games that the Lenape children played as children. In my childhood we had two games. The one was called _____**, and they were little sticks with dots and dashes, something like the present day jack straws (?) to be dropped at a certain height. And there was a _____ instrument where you picked them up without moving the other ones. And each one of these dots and dashes counted a score. And there could be as many as two, four, or six play this one game. And my father used to make these game sticks for me. Then there was another game called _____**. It was a long stick, oh, I would say about 10 inches long attached to a buckskin string. And on the string was a loop and a rabbit tail. And this was thrown up (?), and on this loop there were notches to indicate the scorepoints. And that was also one of our games. I don't recall now how these points were counted, but all in all it was a very interesting game. Both of them were.

ND: (Cont'd)

This is a little bit of historical information that was given to me through my grandmother's people through her ancestors. When the Lenape Indians were camped along the _____ River in Indiana, they engaged in a little war with a tribe of Indians. They called them _____**. And she told me--my grandmother--told me that that was the last time the Delawares did what they called the _____**. And that was before they went out on this war party they engaged in a little war dance. And all the young men who were willing to go on this war party would have to strike the bull. And she said that was somewhere in the 1820's or 1819. And in our Lenape language we call this _____**. So that was the last time---I didn't know about it, I was told about it rather--whether the Delaware Indians ever engaged in warfare and used this striking the bull.

CW: What is that term again?

ND: _____**. That means to strike the bull, showing your willingness to go with the war party.

This is a story that my grandmother told me about the _____**. We, the Delaware Indians, called them _____**. And somewhere along the White River in Indiana they must have been with the _____**. And when they watered their horses at some stream, Delaware's were always afraid of this _____** tribe of Indians. And there was an old lady watering her horse at the water stream, and she had a bundle tied on her horse. And someone heard this bundle--there was a voice in this bundle crying like a baby. So they all heard her say, "_____**", which means, "Shut up; you will eat shortly." And when they got settled at the camp, the little baby soon began to die. Well, it must be that they thought he had this _____** in that bundle. And when they did get settled, the babies and young children were dying so much that they decided to kill the witches; anyone who was suspected of practicing witchcraft was immediately sought after and dragged up to a fire. If they didn't give up their witch bottle, they were thrown into the fire. But, if they gave up their witch bottle, then the witch bottle was thrown into the fire. But a lot of the people would rather die and be burnt down rather than give up their witch bottles. So they must have burned several of the witches. So shortly then the earthquake

ND: (Cont'd)

came. All the things (?) fell down. The earth opened up. It was a huge earthquake. Well, the people got scared. They thought God was punishing them--the Great Spirit, ** --so they decided then to have the ** there. I guess they were so constantly on the go that they just didn't have time to have the ** --that's the big house church (?). So one old man went out into the woods with his gourd; and, on his way through the woods, he met a spirit whose face was half red and half black. And the spirit told him, "This is the way you must do it now and have these church services." So the elders of the Lenape tribe say that that was the origin of the ** Church. And they had the church there for a short while; then they had to move westward on.

CW: July 4, 1970

This is C. A. Weslager, and I'm talking with Mrs. Nora Thompson Dean of Dewey, Oklahoma, a Delaware Indian, about personal names of some of her people.

Mrs. Dean, would you repeat the sentence where I ask a person, "What is your real name?"

ND: **

CW: ** (repeated). And then the sentence with the question that would ask, "What is your nickname?"

ND: **

CW: ** (partial repeat)** meaning common or common name?

ND: Yes.

CW: Now, I want to ask you about both real names and nicknames; and I want to start with the ones that you have named and I want to get you to pronounce these for me. First, Michael Jackson's name, which is translated as "Running Water." How do you pronounce that?

ND: _____ **

CW: And Thomas Doles (?). And when you named him. . . Yes?

ND: _____ **"

CW: What does that mean?

ND: "The one who Walks Before Daylight."

CW: Would you repeat it again, please?

ND: _____ **

CW: And the name that you gave Elain Joan _____?

ND: _____ **

CW: And that translates to?

ND: "The Flower that Blooms in the Evening Woman."

CW: That "____**" on the end meaning "woman"?

ND: Woman, yes.

CW: Now the name that you gave to Marian Sue Moore?

ND: _____ **

CW: And that is translated to what?

ND: "The Flower that is just Opening or Coming up Woman."

CW: Again we have that "____**" suffix meaning "woman."

ND: Yes.

CW: Now the name for Mrs. Mary Smith Witcher (??)?

ND: _____ **, "White Flower."

CW: Now, in that word, I notice--and I think we talked about this yesterday--you did not add the suffix "____**", but it is there nonetheless, isn't it? It's implicit in that word?

ND: Well, no, not really. No, you can either leave that off or on. It's correct either way.

CW: But a Delaware would know that " ** " is a woman's name?

ND: Yes.

CW: And you could have put on it if you wanted to " ** "?

ND: Yes.

CW: And that would have merely strengthened it? Why didn't you put it on?

ND: Well, because to simplify it for her.

CW: Uh huh.

ND: I thought she would be more able to say " ** " rather than " ** ."

CW: Right. And Jim Pimentor's 's name that you gave?

ND: ** .

CW: (repeat) ** ?

ND: ** .

CW: (repeat) ** . And how does that translate?

ND: "He appears ⁵at the clear sky."

CW: "He appears ⁵at the clear sky."

ND: Yes.

CW: Right. I wanted to get those recorded in your language. Now I want to talk about a few others. I realize your people feel it's better not to name a loved one who is dead so I don't know how we'll repeat these real names of your parents. Maybe we'll get Jim to repeat them. Let's start with your name in Indian.

ND: **

CW: Which translates to?

ND: "Touching Leaves Woman."

CW: "Touching Leaves Woman. And that has the ** again on it. ** (repeat) . I'm getting pretty close to it, ha, ha. Now, you had two nicknames, and I

CW: (Cont'd)

made note of these out in Oklahoma. And I'm not sure that I got them down right. Let me give them; then you tell me whether they're right or not. I have your first one when you were very small, _____**. And then I have a second one that your parents called you, _____**.

ND: Yes, _____**, my mother called me that.

CW: And that is a very o word, is it not, _____**?

ND: Uh huh, I think it stems from the word _____**, "My Daughter."

CW: Oh, _____**, "My Daughter."

ND: Yes, that is the dialect of Delaware.

CW: Now, I don't have that first nickname right, but I'll tell you what it comes from. This is when you dropped your purse.

ND: Oh, yes, they called me _____** because I mispronounced that I was so young at the time.

CW: That's the word I have down here because that sounded right. _____(repeat) _____**?

ND: _____(repeat) _____**.

CW: _____(repeat) _____**.

ND: It should have been _____**.

CW: Oh.

ND: That's the word for it.

CW: Let me understand that now. You dropped the purse. . .

ND: Uh, huh

CW: You cried for the purse in baby language, and you said _____** instead of. . .

ND: _____**.

CW: ** . So that then became a nickname for you and used during your childhood.

ND: Uh huh.

CW: Jim, come on and repeat her father's name; and I'll talk about his nickname so we get it on the tape.

Jim: ** (inaudible)

ND: ** (repeated)

CW: All right, then, she said it. ** (repeated) . What does that one mean?

ND: That means "someone who can be heard from afar."

CW: Right. And what was his nickname?

ND: ** .

CW: ** . They took one syllable of his name and changed the "t" to an "l."

ND: Yes.

CW: Right. To make a nickname. And then your mother's name, Sarah Wilson Thompson. Say it, Jim.

Jim: ** .

ND: ** (repeated) .

CW: Which translates to what?

ND: "Someone who looks like another person."

CW: And she had a nickname that was. . .

ND: **

CW: ** (Repeated) . What does that mean?

ND: "A great lady."

CW: "A great lady." Do you think that nickname came about because of her knowledge of medicine and her visions and because she was a gifted person?

ND: That was it. And she was a really good cook in the Indian cooking arts.

CW: Uh huh. And you told me also that she could lay a hand on someone and. . .

ND: Yes, and she was a healer.

CW: A healer. And this "great lady" as this word _____ ** carried that meaning in it.

ND: Yes. She was known by the tribe as _____ **.

CW: ** (repeated) . Did your father call her by that name?

ND: Yes.

CW: He called her by that name, not by her real name.

ND: No. Just _____ **.

CW: Now your half brother, James Buffalo.

ND: His name was _____ **.

CW: And how do you translate that?

ND: "The one who walks before daylight."

CW: Before daylight?

ND: Uh huh. Or dawn.

CW: And. . . Or dawn. And then his nickname?

ND: _____ **.

CW: ** . Which takes the middle syllable from _____
 ** and makes a nickname out of it.

ND: Uh huh.

CW: Then your full brother, Edward L. Thompson. Would you pronounce his name?

ND: His name was _____ **.

CW: And how do you translate that?

ND: "The leaves arise when he steps."

Jim: What about _____ ** _____? How would you say "rustling leaves"?

ND: _____ **, and that sounds more correct.

CW: _____ ** (repeated).

ND: _____ ** (") _____ is "the one." (?)

CW: _____ ** (repeated again). Those are very beautiful words.

In the name-giving ceremony, I want to get recorded the correct pronunciation of some of these words. The word for "pure fire."

ND: Oh, the. . .

CW: _____ ** _____.

ND: Oh, _____ ** _____.

CW: _____ ** (repeated).

ND: Uh huh.

CW: Which means "a pure fire."

ND: Yes, a "pure fire."

CW: Would that. . .

ND: "Holy fire."

CW: "Holy fire." Now that's one made with flint and steel?

ND: Yes.

CW: Or _____ but not with matches.

ND: No, no.

CW: Would there be a name for that, a fire made with a match as opposed to _____ ** _____?

ND: I don't think so.

CW: And this word for spiritual purity?

ND: ** .

CW: ** (repeated) .

ND: Uh huh.

CW: ** (repeated again) .

ND: Uh huh.

CW: And a pure, clean man, how do we say that?

ND: ** .

CW: ** (repeated) .

ND: Uh huh.

CW: And a pure clean man would be one that would be eligible for a vision?

ND: Oh, yes.

CW: Uh huh. And how about a pure, clean woman?

ND: ** .

CW: ** (repeated) . That's . . .

ND: **

CW: Right, that's that female suffix on the end again.

ND: Uh huh.

CW: And then somebody who did not have a vision?

ND: ** .

CW: ** (repeated) .

ND: ** "

CW: How does that translate?

ND: That means "empty."

CW: "Empty." Is it just "empty" or would it mean, "he is empty"?

ND: _____ ** _____ would mean "he is empty."

CW: _____ ** (repeated) _____.

ND: Uh huh. _____ ** _____ means "empty one."

CW: _____ ** (repeated) _____?

ND: _____ ** " _____, "the empty one."

CW: I see, _____ ** (repeated), "the empty one."

ND: Uh huh.

CW: Now the word for "cedar" again, would you repeat that?

ND: _____ ** _____.

CW: _____ ** (repeated) _____. And "tobacco"?

ND: _____ ** _____.

CW: _____ ** (repeated) _____. Now, the tobacco, when it was burned during the name-giving ceremony, the tobacco was used to drive away evil spirits, is that right?

ND: Yes, uh huh. And then, too, you gave the grandpa a smoke with the tobacco.

CW: Uh huh, kind of as an offering to the grandpa.

ND: Yes, uh huh.

CW: And how about cedar, then. What was that?

ND: That's for purification.

CW: Purification.

ND: Uh huh.

CW: Now, let's repeat the grandpa again because we didn't get that on here. The grandpa, the term for the fire.

ND: _____ ** _____. When you address the fire, that's the term you use.

CW: I think I have all that _____ (mumbling) _____. Oh, yeah, one final word. The word for a "name giver." This _____ ** _____.

ND: ** .

CW: Yes. Would you say that again.

ND: ** .

CW: ** (repeated) .

ND: ** "

CW: ** ". And that translates, and you told me this before I believe, "one who gives names over and over." "One who gives names repeatedly"?

ND: Yes, uh huh.

CW: Right. Okay, I think we have it now.

(END OF INTERVIEW)