

GROWING UP INDIAN: AN EMIC PERSPECTIVE

By

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A DISSERTATION

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and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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Doctor of Philosophy

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An Abstract of the Dissertation of

George Bundy Wasson, Jr. for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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Title: GROWING UP INDIAN: AN EMIC PERSPECTIVE

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My dissertation, GROWING UP INDIAN: AN EMIC PERSPECTIVE describes the historical and contemporary experiences of the Coquille Indian Tribe and their close neighbors (as manifested in my own family), in relation to their shared cultures, languages, and spiritual practices. I relate various tribal reactions to the tragedy of cultural genocide as experienced by those indigenous groups within the “Black Hole” of Southwest Oregon.

My desire is to provide an “inside” (emic) perspective on the history and cultural changes of Southwest Oregon. I explain Native responses to living primarily in a non-Indian world, after the nearly total loss of aboriginal Coquille culture and tribal identity through

decimation by disease, warfare, extermination, and cultural genocide through the educational policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Government, and over zealous Euro-Americans.

After removal from their homelands, there was little opportunity for the remaining survivors to continue living in their traditional ways. Hence the adoption of living primarily by White man's standards and practices became standard for the Indians of southwest Oregon and their descendants.

My resources have been, in part, the Southwest Oregon Research Project (SWORP) archives housed in Special Collections of the UO Knight Library, along with works of Harrington, Chase, Waterman, Frachtenberg, Jacobs, and others. Additional sources include some personal papers on the Coastal Land Claims work by my father, George B. Wasson Sr. (1916 to 1947), my childhood relationships with older relatives and tribal elders, and my own experience navigating both Native American and White worlds in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This dissertation includes both my previously published and co-authored materials, as well as previously unpublished essays.

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The memory of my father, George B. Wasson, and my mother, Bess Wasson Hockema, inspired me to go back to college and write the "true" history of the Coquille Indian Tribe. I'm honored they think I could do it. I'm humbled by the experience. I often think of Richard Chaney who readily shared esoteric cultural perspectives with me.

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I dedicate this work to my sisters and brothers, and to my nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives, and coastal tribal members who will read and hopefully benefit from my work. Thank You.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### The Academic Perspective

This dissertation is a compilation of published articles (a few are co-authored as noted), and essays (many of which were previously unpublished). The whole is constructed from several analytical perspectives, ranging from “standard” anthropological study, library and archival research, to professional conversation with other colleagues, to field research, to personal observation based on a lifetime of being a Coquelle Indian. Each of these perspectives lends something to the overall project. For instance:

a). by researching and reading the limited number of collected myths and legends from the southern coast of Oregon, I have been able to glimpse something of the “official” versions of the cultural personalities of my ancestors and relatives.

b). by studying sea coast archaeology, I have been enlightened on the dramatic and repetitive environmental changes from the most recent ice ages to the present, thereby connecting elements of the oral traditions with the geological and archaeological evidence.

c). by taking my own experiences as a Native seriously, I have been able to analyze and utilize inherited cultural attitudes, customs, and narrative texts that unite me with older generations no longer available for us to interview.

In his essay “Out of the Ordinary: Folklore and the Supernatural,” David Hufford (1995:20) comments on belief, culture, and experience: “Belief is a fundamental and profoundly powerful part of culture. Culture refers to the entire human heritage apart from biological inheritance.”

Hufford differentiates between “official” beliefs arising from socially or politically sanctioned scientific research and the “unofficial” folk beliefs which arise from not only inherited information, but also from experience-centered observations. It can therefore be deduced that . . . “the crucial elements of official culture tend to rest on experiences and interpretations that are not

possible for ordinary people” (Hufford 1995:24). The corollary for my unofficial information is: personal experience in culture provides insight not available in official sources.

Moreover, my personal experiences have provided me with a distinctive lens --granted, not entirely objective--through which to view the world of anthropological and archaeological study, the formal observations of chiefly non-Native historians, and the day-to-day assumptions and prejudices of those who now claim ownership of the land once inhabited by my tribe.

One of the more difficult aspects of defending the rationale for an “experience centered” project, essay, or dissertation such as this, hinges upon the motivation(s) of the “participant-observer” in honestly and fairly observing, analyzing, and explaining the collected information therein.

In this case, I have always been a participant; now, as an anthropologist, I am adding the observer mode by reconsidering and using the participant “data” collected over my lifetime. Of course it’s colored by my own opinions and my own particular responses to elements in my own life; it would be strange were that

not the case. However, my “recollections” are not only my own, but encompass materials, texts, attitudes, customs, etc., from my father and other Native relatives.

The empirical experience (eyewitness, personal observation of events), unmediated and unrationalized by official conventions, is not necessarily more “accurate” than any other version of the subject, but it does represent a rich source of information and perspective not normally found in official sources. Such information, analysis, and opinion must not be underestimated or ignored when trying to amass the greatest range of “valid” information about human thought, culture, or existence.

Spirituality and belief in spirits is the least understood and least considered element of traditional Native cultures, not necessarily because the observers are afraid of it, but primarily because they least understand it from a rational perspective. My own experiences allow glimpses into the traditional spirituality and beliefs of my ancestors.

The aforementioned cultural elements are not readily available to us in unmediated form, i.e., one can read about the

Coos, Coquille, or Rogue River Indians in several publications, but we can read only what the author wants to say about them, not what he/she has experienced and heard through traditional lines of transmission.

I feel especially supported by comments from David J. Hufford and Barre Toelken:

Life experience must coexist and share authority with technical expertise in order for a society to develop and maintain a rich and human view of itself and the world in which it lives. . . . We have the capacity to enrich our lives without rejecting the benefits that have come with scientific and technical progress (Hufford 1995:40).

An experience-centered discussion then, is not simply an exercise in self-indulgent validation of the participant-observer method [scholarship] . . . (Toelken 2001:198).

It seems to me that one advantage of . . . “experience-centered” scholarship . . . is that we can help to foster the idea that cultural diversity in thinking is neither a virtuous political exercise nor a threat to science but a rich and underestimated source of insight for humankind in general (Toelken 2001:207).

The inclusion of my own experience-centered data will provide a depth and richness to this dissertation that is not going to come from a stack of books or 20 years of field research among strangers by strangers.

In reviewing the kinds of stories passed on by my immediate ancestors to my family and me, I find several categories worth mentioning, myths, legends, folktales, and family memorate. Myths are stories of a sacred nature; legends are usually told in third person about other people and events; folktales include the humorous and interesting stories about early life events; memorate are stories told in the first person.

Among the myths included here are such ones as, *Owalaci* describing the creation of the world, along with other creation myths mentioned in “Oral Traditions and the Earliest Humans on the Oregon Coast” (Wasson 1999). Legends include “The Legend of Old Man Coyote and the Fish Dam” (Wasson 1991), plus “Coyote and the Strawberries” (Wasson and Toelken 1999) [other legends are briefly mentioned in that article as well]. Stories like those in section III are mostly folktales from family and tribal history; and section IV is primarily family and personal stories told in the first person. Interestingly, those strict categories work best for non-Indian academics. Indians tend to mix them all together.

It should be noted that I use two different spellings for the name of my Indian tribe: Coquelle and Coquille. “Coquille” is also used for the name of the Coquille River and the Coos County seat, Coquille, Oregon. Old time Indians always said “ko-kwel” and that pronunciation stuck for many years after White settlement of the area, even after the spelling “Coquille” was placed officially on the maps.

The original spelling, “Coquelle,” was used by tribal members and even non-Indian residents of the Coos Bay/Coquille area. However, sometime in the 1920s, a few non-Indian residents felt a need to “upgrade” the pronunciation of the name and campaigned for such, by advertising the “Kokeel Korn Karnival” (personal information from my mother, Bess Wasson Hockema). About the same time, a local businessman established his “Kokeel Auto Kourt” in town. The latter spelling, “Coquille” is still the “official” spelling of the name “Coquille Indian Tribe.” However, shortly after restoration in 1989, the tribal council agreed to revive the old pronunciation of “Ko-Kwel.” I like to use the Coquelle spelling when referring to the people, as opposed to the town or river.

### Growing up Indian

I can't recall when I first learned that I am an Indian. It seems that I always knew that. But I do recall having some doubts about what it really meant and whether I was actually an Indian, just like the "real" ones I saw in movies. Those Indians were brave and strong wearing eagle-feather war bonnets, riding fast beautiful horses, and shooting bows and arrows. They were "stoic" and spoke in broken English, saying things like, "Me want heap big gun like White man," or, "White man speak with forked tongue."

I knew my father and other relatives were Indians, but they didn't talk like that. In fact, I never heard them talk Indian at all, or at least I didn't think they did. Once I recall asking my Dad if he really was an Indian. He smiled to himself and said yes, he really was. I asked a few more questions such as, "could you track animals?" He said, yes he could. "Could you get right down on the ground and follow their trail where they had walked?" He said yes. Now I was really puzzled. I could imagine him with his nose to the ground and smelling deer scent just like a bloodhound. I looked at him in total wonder and amazement.

I wondered then if I really was an Indian too, or had I been adopted like a cousin of mine. He assured me that I was not adopted. I wanted to believe him and hoped he wasn't just being nice to me so as not to hurt my feelings. I knew I couldn't do those things. Maybe it was like some kind of instinct that just develops. I decided I'd just have to wait and see if those "natural" skills developed when I grew older.

However, my earliest recollections of my father, George B. Wasson, Sr., are from when I was about two or three years old. He seemed to be a grand and important man in a suit and tie with a briefcase, perhaps wearing an overcoat and often wearing a very dapper hat - a Fedora I believe. We lived in Salem, Oregon, but he worked in Washington, D.C. (see Fig. 1). We received numerous hand-colored picture post-cards, often of the beautiful fountains at night and the stately Capitol building or grand statues. Short letters and telegrams arrived for my mother, to just say "hello."



Figure 1. George Bundy Wasson, Sr. 1937

Once we saw him in a newsreel at a movie theater, riding in some president's inaugural parade, wearing a borrowed war bonnet and riding in a grand touring car. When he came home occasionally it was always with some "cigar-smoking-lawyer-like" men. He seemed very business-like and sincere, talking and reading legal papers with them.

Next I recall being with him in the woods when I was about five or six. He took me with him to cruise timber somewhere south of Camas Valley. As I couldn't walk at his pace, he put me down in a small opening among the old growth Douglas fir trees and instructed me to wait for him to come back. He would walk on to look at a section of timber and return to pick me up later. I stayed in the area he had pointed out to me, amusing myself with looking around and just being there. As it gradually became dark, I decided to make myself a bed. Crawling back under some huckleberry bushes in the sword ferns, I made a cozy nest and was soon fast asleep. I awoke to the startlingly loud thud of heavy footsteps jarring the ground and coming right up to my place of hiding. I didn't have any idea what was out there in the evening dusk and I

stopped breathing so as not to be discovered by whatever giant it was. Suddenly a loud voice boomed out “WOO HOO.” “Daddy,” I yelled in relief as I jumped up right at his feet and startled him in return. He must have been worried a little that maybe something had carried me off or I’d wandered away. He was so pleased that I had taken care of myself and had been “right at home” in that little opening in the dense timber. He praised me effusively and I was a little surprised at how pleased he was with me.

Since that earliest memory of being in the deep woods, I’ve never been afraid or lonely out there. It has always seemed comforting to me and I still love to snuggle down into a cozy nest to sleep in an old growth forest.

I recall another time when he pointed out a place to me where he said the Indians had gathered for a great meeting to sign a treaty. I had no idea why they would have gone so far out into the mountains to do that. It was way up Elk River in Curry County, and seemed like an impossible place to want to gather. There used to be a large wooden sign there naming the U.S. Army camp and the date

of the treaty talks. But the sign is now stolen and I don't know the year.

Also, my dad used to pick me up after school when we lived at Coquille, and take me with him to Empire when he'd go over to the Indian Hall. There were always discussions going on about something or another with the government. People always seemed so serious, often angry and sometimes plain outraged. They were usually nice to me patting me on the head saying, "Oh Georgie, someday you're going to be just like your father." I had no idea what that meant.

I recall my Dad saying that when he was a little boy, his grandmother, Gishgiu (T'cicgi'yu), took him up on the hill above South Slough (about where the wildlife sanctuary headquarters are now) and gesturing broadly with her outstretched arm told him, "All this land belongs your *hiyas papas*. Someday "Chawtch" you get it back."

His life's work was set for him. He went away in 1898 to the Carlisle Indian School and studied law, and played clarinet in the

Carlisle Indian Band with John Philip Sousa as guest conductor (see Fig. 2). His sister Daisy also attended school at Carlisle (see Fig. 3).

However, he spent the next 50 plus years trying to organize all the western Oregon Indians into a concerted effort to obtain payments for the land. He wanted to get their land back or obtain compensation for those who had their land taken with no ratified treaty or reservation. I'm sure he would like to have practiced private law and made a halfway decent income to support his wife and five children, but that was not his preordained destiny.

In 1916 he began the daunting task of trying to unite the Indians of western Oregon into a concerted effort to battle the U.S. government and obtain either the compensation due according to the ratified treaties, or obtain land payments for those whose treaties were never ratified by Congress. It was a losing battle from the beginning, but he could not stop working on it. It must have been as though his grandmother was standing alongside him urging him to "get it back."

Figure 2. The Carlisle Indian Band, circa 1900. John Philip Sousa was often a guest conductor. A picture of Col. Pratt (founder) is in upper right corner. My dad, George B. Wasson, Sr. is in the front row, clarinet, fourth from left.



Photo courtesy of  
HOWLAND FUR

UNITED STATES

# CARLISLE INDIAN BAND

UNITED STATES POSTER ARTIST MERTS



Figure 3. George and Daisy Wasson, at Carlisle Indian Training School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1898.

His job was truly impossible. There were delays in Congress, committee meetings and hearings, lawyers, senators, and representatives to consult for the best time to present, documents and testimonies to locate and gather. Some Indians were negligent in turning in their pledged support funds for the enormous effort in Washington, D.C.

Some tribal members back in Oregon became restless, claiming nothing was being done. The progress was too slow. They wanted their money now. Some small tribes even attempted to hire their own lawyers, hoping to present their own separate cases to Congress. Frustration and divisiveness among the western Oregon tribes were as detrimental to the united cause as was the sluggishness of the federal government.

To make his case, Dad interviewed the oldest Indians alive, who could tell him the history of the people, who was related, where they were born, the old customary fishing places and much more. The feds considered it all hearsay. Those old Indians couldn't even speak English. Hearsay! My dad hadn't been there when those things

happened. He just heard about them from his elders. It was all just declared hearsay, time after time in the court records.

He didn't have access to records of the Hudson's Bay expeditions to the Coos Bay area in the early 1800s. Those might have been convincing enough, but he couldn't get to them. Hence the loss of the land claims case for the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw. The affidavits of those old Indians were considered only hearsay.

But somewhere along in the 1940s a strange man named John Peabody Harrington, who worked for the Bureau of American Ethnology, visited western Oregon and interviewed a few remaining old Coquelle Indians, who now had a land claims attached to the Alsea Land Claims bill. Harrington was impressed with their information and remarked something like, "there is no doubt that these are the true descendants of the aboriginal occupants of their land" (Wasson 1916). That's all it took for the Court of Claims to be convinced, the simple words of an idiosyncratic and White linguist/ethnologist named John P. Harrington. The Coquelles were granted their land claims, but the Coos had been denied before this

strange man just happened to utter a simple opinion. We've all suffered from the hard feelings due to that lack of information, doubt, and frustration with the federal processes.

My Dad assessed timber (see Fig. 4) and minerals of Coos County. In August of 1947, I was about 12 and a half years old when he was working with a Professor Smith, a geologist from the University of Oregon. They were far out on Cape Blanco, examining mineral deposits for establishing resource values of the land claims.

I recall clearly how my sister Bette answered the phone that afternoon. She was a bit quiet at first, asked what they were talking about and then softly said something like "thank you." The county coroner had called to ask the family what we wanted done with our father's body. He had to explain to us that "Daddy" had suddenly dropped dead from a heart attack out on Cape Blanco. We were stunned! I hadn't really known loss until then, even though other close relatives had died within a few years previously. I had only begun to get to know him and he was gone. My time with him was short, but always instructive.



**Figure 4. George B. Wasson, Sr., and large Port Orford Cedar tree  
(George on right of photo with unidentified man on left)**

Growing up Indian in one part of one's consciousness, and being educated by non-Indians with predominantly Euro/American cultural perspectives, can be most confusing during childhood development.

Our young people of today and their children will one day be the only people after we elders have passed on. They need to know who they are, who their ancestors were, and learn to understand the ancient formulas for how to live and how to react to life. Just as young oysters or other shellfish "seedlings" in their early stages of maturation seek a secure place to attach themselves and grow, so do young people when developing personality in adolescence. If we don't provide that for them now, they will surely find something else to fill that cultural and spiritual void. They can easily find a gang to give them a feeling of togetherness in mutual distrust and rejection of their parents and social authority. Gruesome episodes of mass suicides by devoted cult followers, or mass shootings by distraught youth could and will happen again for those who are searching for a sense of belonging and their places in life.

We can't change the course of history, but we have imminent power to change our reactions to it. We can't undo the atrocities of the bloody "holocaust," but we can honor the memory of our ancestors and become better people today than ever before. We may never regain the daily use of our old languages, but we can learn much about our heritage by studying them.

Knowing our tribal and cultural histories, learning about our ancestral languages and spiritual practices is not enough to ensure that our tribal sovereignty and integrity remains intact. Right now, at the beginning of a new century, many American Indian tribes are enjoying the newly found freedom and independence of self-governance and self-sufficiency. Gambling casinos are too often the primary source of funding that self-sufficiency, yet the Coquelles and many other tribes are wise enough to engage in other enterprises too. But future generations (if not during the current presidential administration) will experience attacks on tribal sovereignty not experienced since removal in the 1850s and termination in the 1950s. "Corporate America" cannot and will not abide the success, power and independence of Native Americans

unless they benefit substantially in those Native enterprises. The uncertainty of working with Native American sovereign nations is too risky for most to consider, and the prejudice against Native American sovereignty is too much for them to just ignore. The attack has already begun and most Indians will be caught with their blankets and elk robes over their heads.

In 1995, I led a team in the Southwest Oregon Research Project (SWORP), designed to recapture the heritage of the Coquelles and their neighbors. In two trips sponsored by the University of Oregon, the Smithsonian, and the Coquille Indian Tribe, the SWORP team has brought back over 100,000 pages of historical documents now housed at the University of Oregon Knight Library and tribal archives in western Oregon and northwest California. The SWORP archive contains materials of obscure, lost or hidden information on our cultures, languages, history, and lifeways that have been separated from many of us. We need to renew those aspects of ourselves for the sake of the people who are to come later on.

Regaining knowledge of our traditional culture, spirituality, and history is not enough to save ourselves. Just as the “feds”

disallowed the testimonies of the oldest Indians as proof of land claims, so will it happen again. Scientific evidence and proof of who we are and where we came from is the next weapon needed to combat the impending attacks on us. Another John P. Harrington might not show up again to lend credence to our aboriginal rights and claims. The legal battling over Kennewick Man, "The Old One," is just an example of those beginnings.

If we as modern day Indians do not take full advantage of the scientific research and detailed information possible in cooperation with our anthropology, archaeology, and history colleagues, we will be shooting ourselves in the foot and succumbing to the onslaught of our sovereign enemies. We must utilize all the scientific information on our ancestors available to us, and be prepared to use that same information for our defense to combat the attempts to use our lack of that information against us.

The bones of our ancestors must never be put on display for public curiosity! But, we must at least know that those remains are indeed our ancestors, and scientific examination is how we must determine such. Just as we now rely on medical science to examine,

operate, and treat our bodies for better health reasons, so must we medically treat and examine ancestral remains without substantial desecration or mistreatment. DNA and Carbon 14 analyses are expensive but quite simple and relatively non-intrusive. It is imperative that we support and fund that vital research.

Gishgiu hoped young “Chawtch” could get the land back for her descendants and neighbors. Maybe she didn’t mean just the land. As she swept her arm broadly across the mountains up and down the coast, maybe she desired the unity of her people again. She was proud that her grandson was receiving a modern education. Surely she wanted him to learn and utilize all the education that the white schools had to offer. Today, we must follow those same admonitions and take full advantage of our current education and scientific opportunities. We must also look to our ancestors for help. If we don’t know who and what they were, we can’t prove who and what we are today.

The current tribal members of the Confederated Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw and the Coquelles are primarily descendants of the women who bravely stayed behind, married to White men

remaining in their homeland while their friends and families were removed to the Oregon Coast “Reservation.” Even though isolated and surrounded by foreigners, they kept the threads of their culture alive as best they could. Their struggle to maintain something of our memories obviously worked. We are here, and proud of who we are.

#### “Pre-NAGPRA” and the Modoc Skulls

In 1975, I was invited to participate in the *American Indian Cultural Resources Training Grant* program at the Smithsonian Institution, in the Anthropological Archives of the Museum of Natural History. It was truly an overwhelming experience for me during the first part of that first training session.

In my own naive way, I had no idea of the vast amount of information stored in those collections. I had no idea of the even more vast amount of cultural items, artifacts, ceremonial objects, and even human (Native) skeletal remains which had been collected over the past couple of centuries, and stored away for either “scientific” study, or just cultural curiosity. At last I began to get a

mental picture of the enormous material culture which had been swept away before the “dying races” of America became extinct.

It was as though the collectors felt they couldn’t do anything about the extinction of the people, but at least those unique and exotic artifacts could be preserved for posterity, and perhaps even scientific knowledge.

There was also a desperate rush by the Bureau of American Ethnology to send out trained linguists and ethnologists to capture the languages, myths, legends, and oral histories/traditions from the last of those primitive peoples while museums rushed to collect artifacts of “cultural and physical patrimony” (Cole 1985:286). Manifest Destiny was more of a scientific fact to them than merely a sociopolitical process and rationale for the U.S. policies of aggression, expansionism, and genocide practiced against the American Indians.

I virtually had no idea where to begin looking for information to read or study. It was all too much. I did look at some of the records from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. I was stunned by

the materials which explained how the students had lost their old ways and become educated and refined citizens.

“Before and After” photos of family groups of Native children showed how “decent” and “respectable” those young “savages” looked after their braids were cut. The girls were clothed in Victorian dresses while the boys were wearing military type uniforms standing tall and proud. For the “after” photos, the groups were arranged in the same place as for the “before” photo taken when they first arrived.

They looked different in the new clothes, but the one feature the “new look” couldn’t change, was the fear and hatred so clearly expressed in their eyes. I had to turn my attention to something else. It was more than I could bear to try to think about what it must have been like for my father and the others.

Eventually I delved into the ocean of notes on the Oregon Coast Indians collected by John Peabody Harrington. He collected notes on languages and ethnography of American Indians for about fifty years. He was determined to gather all he could in his lifetime, before the dying races of “Noble Savages” were actually all gone.

It's estimated that he collected between 1.5 and 2 million pages of information (personal communication by Smithsonian archivists); more than all other linguists and ethnographers combined up to now. Eventually I began to find information on my own people, the Coos-Coquelles and neighboring groups of southwest Oregon. Much of this information has never been published or shared with tribal descendants today. It was a gold mine. At last I could find some of those lost secrets which had not been passed on to the rest of us.

The peoples of southwest Oregon had experienced a terrible Holocaust in the 1850s, the likes of which would not be duplicated or surpassed until the Nazis studied the Indian extermination examples of America and applied 20th century technology for the same purpose on the Jews.

While I was at the Smithsonian, I had one of the most shocking and later most gratifying surprises of my life. Back at the University of Oregon I had known some of the students from Klamath Falls who were descendants of the Modocs who were executed by the U. S. Army after the Modoc Wars. Lynn Schonchin (a Klamath tribal

member and UO student), I think, had related how some of them had tried to persuade the Smithsonian to return the skulls of Captain Jack, Schonchin John, Scar Face Charley, and Shagnasty Jim. The skulls had been delivered to the Army Surgeon General, boiled, scraped, and bleached clean for scientific study.

Reportedly, someone at the Smithsonian (where the skulls were now being stored) had denied a request for return so they might be properly buried with the rest of the remains. Although I've never had that story verified, the written response reportedly was, "We find no evidence that the Klamaths or Modocs had any religious beliefs, which require the skulls of the deceased to be buried with the rest of the remains."

I mentioned that story to Herman Viola, Director of the Anthropological Archives, saying that I thought the Smithsonian had a responsibility to honor the wishes of the known descendants and return the skulls if they indeed possessed them. Within a few hours, I was invited to visit with a man named Larry Angel, a physical anthropologist, upstairs in the forensics lab.

After he asked me who I was, and why I knew so much about the Modoc skulls, he agreed to talk with me about them. He shared with me that many people had claimed to be the true descendants, and others had offered compromise solutions to settle the problem. One museum in the Klamath Falls area had suggested turning the skulls over to them, to be placed in a special viewing area for all to see. They even promised to put up special curtains to close off the area for the families to be alone with them for their own peace and comfort when needed. I was horrified at such suggestions.

Eventually I asked if the skulls were indeed in his possession. He told me, “yes, they are right up there behind you.” I hadn’t spotted them among the other bones he had for analysis, but there they were with large numbers stamped on the frontal bones and their names were written in India ink on the temporal plates. I could hardly speak in response. After some discussions on how the skulls came to be there, and what scientific value they had, I posed the suggestion that replicas be produced and the real ones be returned to the families for proper re-interment.

I further agreed that I would not make a public issue of the situation, if he would work with Dr. Ted Stern at the Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon, to identify the rightful descendants and follow through with the promise of repatriation. This was many years prior to the congressional enactment of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990. I kept my word and remained quiet about the issue. When I returned in 1976 for a second visit to work on the Harrington notes, I saw the replicas in the lab, exactly like the originals, so the process continued behind the scenes as it were. Recently, I was reassured by both Dr. Stern and Dr. Pat Haynal, that the return had indeed been accomplished, and that re-interment was completed in a location known only to the appropriate people.

After I spoke of this at the Environmental Law Conference at the University of Oregon in 1995, a woman from the Klamath Falls area came up to me and explained that indeed she had gone to Washington D.C. and recovered the skulls as reported. Their final disposal has been left unrevealed.

It feels good to know that a landmark event took place without causing further turmoil and endless bureaucratic disputes, which ultimately must have helped pave the way for grander schemes to mitigate other such atrocities through the repatriation of Native human remains and artifacts.

There are many Native people who are justifiably angered about such atrocities as happened to Captain Jack and his fellow leaders. It's equally horrifying to think of the 19 Tututnis who were chained together for the march from Gold Beach to Port Orford. They were all shot by vigilantes and left to rot, in retribution for the killing of some of the Geisel family, during the Rogue War in 1856 (Beckham 1971:189).

No one should overlook the pain and anguish of the holocaust of southwestern Oregon and the terrible years of concentration camps and virtual "death camp" reservations. My great grandmother ran away from Yachats and swam around the ocean bluffs to return to South Slough on Coos Bay. She lived for a while in a hollow log, before her son-in-law, George R. Wasson, discovered her presence and took her into the house.

Descendants inherit the painful memories and emotions of those hateful experiences today, we who have learned of them from family elders who found the courage and strength to talk about such things. That pain is as real to us today as the pain of any other group who has suffered repression through cultural genocide and racial extermination.

Let me point out that the injustice of cultural genocide comes not only from the physical torture, pain, suffering, and slaughter of the people (who were to be our mentors and teachers). There is also the injustice of the frustration, desperation, and lack of Indianness felt by the later generations, who have been cut off from their cultural roots, and spirituality. It is the frustrations and shame experienced by the young people in longing to know more of the history, language, and traditions which they so passionately feel but can't quite obtain.

I also believe those volatile emotions of passion and desperation, often cloud the thinking abilities of otherwise sensible and intelligent people. That's understandable, but the hurling of irrational accusations at otherwise helpful and responsible

institutions, through unruly “mob” attempts at some form of cultural retribution, serve only to further frustrate the participants, widen the gap of misunderstanding, and decrease any desires for mutual cooperation and respect on both sides. (This comment was initially directed at the demonstrators who marched on the University of Oregon’s Museum of Natural History during the Environmental Law Conference in 1995).

I therefore urge non-natives (i.e., museum directors and other government officials) who are involved in NAGPRA and other culturally sensitive issues to have understanding and patience in dealing with the frustrations of concerned Indians, both federally recognized and the disenfranchised groups alike. I strongly applaud those who already show such sensitivity and concern. I also strongly urge other Native Americans to think carefully about what their goals in this life really are.

In the doctrines of established religions, the church leaders, who accept or assume the responsibility and authority to define Sacred, define “Sacred.” In federally recognized tribes the same assumption of authority is often practiced by those elected tribal

officials who believe that they have the right and responsibility to dictate or interpret cultural and sacred values in behalf of all tribal members.

Spirituality is a personal experience and awareness. Sacredness is also determined by the individual or collective concepts of the people. Sacredness is not determined and dictated by the politically elected officials of any governing body.

I suggest that we all take a lesson from *Yeshe Norbu*, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. In spite of the intense, on-going pain and suffering He experiences through His people, He steadfastly maintains concern and compassion for not only Tibetans, but also, just as sincerely, for those aggressors who still inflict pain, suffering and cultural annihilation on them.

There are historical parallels throughout American Indian and Tibetan sufferings, and both peoples have fought back against the unbeatable oppressors, sometimes in demonstrations of irrational violence. It does seem that sometimes it just can't be held back.

Yet, I have never heard of these uncontrollable acts of aggression or violence leading to any of the participants even being considered for such a worldwide honor as He has, for his stance on non-violence. In 1989, His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Herein lie lessons to be learned, but we must each take responsibility for learning them.

### Spherical Memory of Indian Time

All my life I've heard people remark, "Indians never forget." "They're always bringing up things from the past." I used to wonder about that and as a child, I felt a little ashamed that it was probably true. Then again, I knew that much of the past should not be forgotten, but remembered carefully, and told over and over so as not to be forgotten.

Sometimes I noticed that some old people talked as though they were still living in the "olden days" and couldn't tell the difference between hundreds of years ago and now. I listened to stories of Talapus (Old Man Coyote) and grew to understand that his

magical powers (tamanawis) were something of a fantasy or at least useful imagination to make the events of his escapades work for both good and bad results.

There were other times, though, when I'd hear stories or remarks about current happenings that were tied in with older events as though they were all wrapped up in things right now. It's taken me forty or fifty years of experiences and reflections to begin to understand that for traditional minded Indians, the past is still with us; it doesn't go away, the past is what makes us who, how, and what we are today.

My first identifiable lesson on this took place at Empire one day in about 1947 when I was visiting my Aunt Daisy. She was having some kind of disagreement with people down on South Slough and was raving about their eternal stupidity or something like that. As I reflect on it now, I made the "fortunate" mistake of asking her just what she meant.

Aunt Daisy exclaimed something like, "They don't even know how to cook beans or make coffee. They just boil the coffee beans and pour off the water, and then they throw flour on each other's

faces and yell, “Look, now we’re Whitemen.” I asked a couple of other questions about who and what flour and she blurted impatiently about those soldiers camped out there, gave it to them.

I didn’t know there were any soldiers down at Charleston, but I knew that World War II had ended not too long ago and wondered whether some of them had stayed hidden down there. To say the very least, I was puzzled, half startled, and knew when not to ask Aunt Daisy for further explanations.

It wasn’t until about twenty-five years later that I read about the Jedediah Smith Expedition coming up the Oregon Coast in 1828 and camping on Battle Flat at Charleston. My great grandfather Kitzn-Jin-Jn, Galada-Lui, was head-man of the Miluks and had taken a delegation of 300 men to greet the Smith party out at Cape Arago.

The Miluk Coos had treated them well, assisting their crossing of both South Slough and Coos Bay when they headed on north. Great grandfather had also seen to providing fresh meat and prepared a lavish feast for them. His village was at Tar Heel Point a few miles away from their camp on South Slough.

As the Hudson's Bay Company's McCloud Expedition had not camped there, it was probably the Smith party who introduced the Miluks to dried beans and how to cook them. Whoever it was, by 1851 when the *Captain Lincoln* wrecked on the North Spit, and the Coos helped the White men salvage their stores from the floundering ship, they had the knowledge of boiling dried beans to get them tender enough to eat.

So it was when the soldiers gave them coffee beans, the South Slough residents promptly put them into pots of water and dumped in hot stones to cook them. To their dismay, only dark foul water resulted, which they carefully poured off and started over again. While this process was being repeated, someone opened a sack of salvaged wheat flour which was totally strange to them, and as it turned their hands and arms white, they began covering their faces, shouting and laughing, "Look, now we're just like Whitemen."

Then it came clear to me. Time did not pass away to be diminished and forgotten. The antics of those Sough Slough relatives were still alive and as vibrant in memory today as when they happened. The relatives down there were still guilty in 1947 of

the foolishness that took place there in 1851. Aunt Daisy was responding just as she had learned from her mother and grandmother. The present is only a compilation of all memory of events that ever happened.

Time is an expansion of experience. Time is spherical. Time is a record of the memory of expenditure of energy. All that has ever happened is memorized and becomes compacted around us just as sound waves emanate from a source and float out all around. Some events are so dynamic in their meaning and effect that they don't dissipate as quickly as other happenings. They might hang nearby as a cloud or fog waiting to be reactivated in the present where those memories are as current as what's happening right now. If it's worth saying once, it's worth saying over and over. It must be repeated again and again.

Time is a spherical record of the memory of the expenditure of energy. My description in chapter II of the development of the "Black Hole" argues that its current effect on today's social and cultural concerns is just as it has always been for the people of the southern Oregon Coast. Our past is our present.

## II. ESSAYS ON COASTAL CULTURE AND HISTORY

### Oral Traditions of the Earliest Humans on the Oregon Coast: A Comparison of Ethnohistorical and Archaeological Records

#### Prologue

The May sunshine warmed a group of spellbound students lounging on the freshly scythed grass on the east side of Zahnie and Dollie Crocket's ranch house at Pistol River. We had been visiting with them to learn of the olden days, when they grew up right where they were born, second generation settlers in southwestern Oregon. Dollie was born just across the river from where we were gathered that afternoon, and had never moved farther than a mile or two away. Her husband Zahnie was born and raised on Rogue River where he had known the last of the full bloods of that area. "They were the best people on the river" he'd claimed, ". . . They knew a lot we didn't understand. . . ." "Where'd the Indians come from?" Dollie suddenly asked me. Zahnie and all the students turned,

gazing intently toward me as though waiting for the final word on that age-old question. I proceeded to explain some of the theories on migration via the “Bering Land Bridge,” the Phoenicians, and the “Lost Tribe of Israel.” I also mentioned that many Native Americans had their own origin myths, stories of floods and great fires from the west, creation of the world when animals and people talked openly together. I emphasized that some tribes relate how they came out of the ground after a long sleep, how some claim to have come from the North, and how others say they were created right in their eternal homeland.

Dollie and Zahnie listened earnestly while the students remained silent and spellbound. “They might have walked across a bridge,” Dollie interjected at last, “Some folks believe in the Bible and . . . , but I don’t go for all that. I think they [the Indians] knew what they were talking about and were here all along.” Thus ensued one of the most popular discussion topics of the last five centuries, concerning the origin of the peoples in the New World, prehistory, as it’s called in the academic forum. Hence the topic of this paper on the validity of Native American oral traditions which relate their

knowledge of origins, creation of the world, and major cataclysmic events of the natural world “since the beginning of time.”

### Introduction

In this paper, I will note the more prominent theories of human immigration into the New World from Asia via the Bering Land Bridge (and through an ice-free corridor) as well as theories of a sea coast route. I'll also mention significant archaeological evidence, which has been popularly cited as proof of migrations throughout the Holocene.

However, my main objective here will be to discuss the myths and legends of the Oregon coastal tribes, which tell of their ancient knowledge of world creation, human origins, natural environmental changes, and show how they relate to those archaeological theories and evidence. I will explain the reliability of the clues in those myths and legends, which might indicate an earlier existence on the Oregon Coast than is currently evident in the archaeological record.

### Cultural Patterns on the Southern Oregon Coast

The Tututnis and Chetcos of southern Oregon settled along the coastal coves and up the streams. The term “Rancherias” (obviously of Spanish origin) was used by early explorers and settlers, referring to the village groupings of cedar plank houses (Beckham 1977). The age-old subsistence practices of the Indian people along the south coast of Oregon are similar in the utilization of both fresh and saltwater fish and shellfish (mussels, clams, etc.) and sea mammals (e.g., seals, sea lions, and whales) (Wasson 1994).

### Hunting and Fishing Practices: Salmon Fishing

In all of southern Oregon, the people hunted elk, deer and other small mammals, but the major and most significant food source was salmon for all of the groups. Fishing for salmon, was done by the building of salmon weirs and traps, and using spears and dip nets. Some of the weirs were located in tidal zones, which trapped fish in the estuaries. Along the upper stream portions, fish weirs, or “dams” were built entirely across a stream. Salmon then were either trapped, speared, or dipped by hand nets (Zenk 1990:572). But, the

most prominent method of fishing on the coast was with triangular dip nets in the surf for “herring, smelt, or other small fish” (Chase 1873:40-41).

### Variations on Roles of Men and Women

Women ran the households where they lived and worked with the young children and unmarried daughters. They gathered, preserved and stored food supplies; they collected, prepared and wove plant materials into baskets, mats, and clothing. In the main houses, women and girls prepared and served daily meals to the men and boys who lived and slept in the communal sweathouses.

The uniqueness of men’s sweat houses along the southern Northwest Coast, as male living quarters (Drucker 1965:272, 279), has been often overlooked by archaeologists as possible explanations for why there are some dwellings with substantial fire-cracked rock in the midden, but no shell or bone. Those elements would be found at the sites of women’s quarters where the cooking and eating were done.

## Discussion

One of the primary quests in New World archaeology is the search for the first “Americans.” Traditionally, the Ice-Free Corridor hypothesis has been the most widely accepted scenario for the arrival of humans in the New World (Fagan 1995; Haynes 1982). Once in the New World, humans supposedly followed the large animals (megafauna) down a corridor between the Cordilleran and Laurentide ice sheets.

Although the idea of an Ice-Free Corridor (acting as a "super highway" for the migration of humans into the New World), is an attractive scenario, some scholars argue instead, for a coastal route along the eastern Pacific shore as the original pathway (Easton 1992; Erlandson 1994; Fladmark 1979; Laughlin 1988; Mauger and Wessen 1983). Some of these authors claim on the basis of botanical and geological evidence, that interior Beringia was a sterile and inhospitable landscape (Laughlin 1988). The coast, in contrast, offered a more hospitable habitat to support hunter-gatherers migrating into Oregon. As southern Oregon was not covered by

continental glaciers, it may in fact have been a refugium in which humans could thrive.

At the height of the last glaciation, ice sheets extended south to the area of Seattle and across the northern half of Idaho. Just as the “Ice-Free Corridor” has been suggested to be a sterile and inhospitable landscape, so might have been the portion of Washington and Oregon closest to the glaciers. In the southwest quarter of Oregon, and extending into northern California, the Siskiyou (“Klamath Mountains”), the Trinity Alps, and Marble Mountains contain rare and unique plant species known to have survived the last ice ages that are not found in any other location in the world. Of the numerous rare species found in this area (e.g., Myrtlewood [*Umbellularia californica*], Brewer or “Weeping” Spruce [*Picea breweriana*, S. Watson], etc.), perhaps the most unique are a “Pleistocene” azalea (*Kalmiopsis leacheana*) and Port Orford Cedar (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*). I suggest that the survival of those rare plants in southwestern Oregon, indicates a warmer climate in that area (which provided a refugium) as compared with the remainder of Oregon and southern Washington during the last ice

age. As that warmer haven supported those now rare plants, so too might it have provided the most northerly place of suitable long-term habitation for early humans migrating from north to south along a coastal route into the “New World.”

### History vs. “Prehistory”

*“To the victor belongs the spoils,”* Napoleon.

*“Truth is an Agreement,”* G. B. Wasson.

Western thinkers, scholars, and scientists have historically operated on an assumption that the only reliable record is the written record. No history existed until the Europeans came along to write it down on paper, and orally transmitted information was considered (false) myth or hearsay at best. Folklore, myths and legends were therefore deemed completely unreliable as repositories of evidence on human origins except possibly for biblical references which of course were “divinely inspired” and directed, according to the Christians. The dominant cultures were therefore free to determine “truths” as they saw fit, and since their written records were the beginning of “reliable” historical records, oral traditions were merely *Prehistory*,

the scientific term for the era of non-written records. In America this term refers to the period of time before the coming of the Europeans to the New World. Many historians accept that only the written record contains reliable evidence of human observations and events in their life experiences. Because of personal cultural prejudices of non-Indians toward non-written history by Native people, it is usually assumed that oral traditions are primarily “make believe” and subject to change and alteration of facts at the whims of multiple storytellers. Surely, a common notion comes to mind of how the meaning of a simple statement can change completely by whispering it from one person to the next as in the early American parlor game called “Post Office.” However, the dynamic variations in some of the old stories do not invalidate the information contained therein (Toelken 1979:34-39).

Native American legends and myths of origins or catastrophic events were not frivolous pastimes for aboriginal peoples. Language (and the “spoken word”) was far too sacred and powerful for casual “frivolity” among traditional peoples.

The nature of myths and legends and the traditional method of oral transmission show how accuracy and integrity of such tales were maintained through spiritual and cultural attitudes. Recent archaeological and geological discoveries strongly support the statements and inferences obtained from close examination of the ancient oral traditions of the Oregon Coast peoples.

#### Changes in Cultures and the Coastal Environments

The changing environmental conditions across the Pleistocene-Holocene transition had direct impacts on the nature and timing of the earliest human occupation on the Oregon Coast. The first people in the Pacific Northwest were faced with an environment that was much different from today. During the height of the glaciation, the sea levels worldwide were about 400 feet lower than present. People may have lived on the coast during this Pleistocene time period, but post-glacial sea-level rise has probably destroyed much of this evidence (Erlandson and Moss 1996). Possible early occupation evidence has been discovered on the inland extremity of the Oregon Coast. A Clovis type point found near Camas Valley was

made from local chert material, which could date human occupation in that location as early as 11,000 before present (B.P.) (Wallmann 1994).

Assuming their presence on the Oregon Coast, early Holocene maritime hunter-gatherers would have been faced with a relatively rapid rise in sea levels caused by glacial melting at the end of the Pleistocene. Both marine and terrestrial biological communities were drastically affected by this rise in ocean waters. It has been hypothesized that early coastal inhabitants were being either pushed closer to the shore, or being absorbed and adapted into new cultural patterns by groups such as those Athabascans who made their way from inland toward the coast (Connolly 1986, 1991).

With the melting of glaciers, huge pluvial lakes formed in various parts of the Northwest (e.g., in the Great Basin and Montana). About 15,000 years ago, rupture of the ice dam, which formed Lake Missoula, caused one of the largest pluvial floods in geologic history (Parfit 1995). The climate then began to warm up considerably, culminating in “the post-glacial climatic optimum” between about 7,000 and 4,000 B.P. These warmer-than-present

climatic conditions would have dramatically affected people living in Oregon.

### Lack of Archaeological Evidence

In part, the relative lack of attention to Paleo-Indian maritime tradition reflects the paucity of coastal archaeological data. The rise of sea levels during the Holocene is a major problem in evaluating the coastal migration theory. The coastline changed dramatically during the Holocene, which completely destroyed some sites and buried others. Many of the earliest sites on the coast and offshore islands were undoubtedly destroyed or buried under tons of sediments (Meltzer and Dillehay 1991). Evidence does exist, however, for humans living on the present coast about 9,000 years ago (Moss and Erlandson 1998a).

Even though they agree that earlier occupations (and coastal migrations) might have been possible, Moss and Erlandson (1995:10-11) emphasize that such evidence is only circumstantial.

A major unresolved issue is whether the earliest settlers of the Pacific Coast came by land, by sea, or both. The dominant paradigm for the peopling of the Americas continues to be that big-game hunters walked into the

New World over the Bering land bridge. Recent discoveries in greater Australia and Japan have pushed back the antiquity of Pacific seafaring peoples to between 30,000 and 55,000 years, however, giving new life to the coastal migration theory . . . Erlandson (1994, pp. 268-269) noted that these discoveries may support the ability of late Pleistocene peoples to move around the North Pacific coast, but that the evidence for such a journey remains entirely circumstantial. Until coastal sites are found that predate the oldest sites of the interior, it seems unlikely that the orthodox view of an interior “ice-free corridor” route for the peopling of the Americas will be replaced . . . It seems likely that Paleo-Indian peoples were living close to if not on the coast by at least 11,000 B.P., but evidence for Paleo-Indian coastal adaptations has yet to be firmly established.

What might also be emphasized here is that archaeological evidence alone does not prove a migration theory either. It can only show possible occupation at that early date, not how or when the occupants arrived there.

### Loss of Native Information

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, European explorers sailed along the Pacific Coast of North America and established contact with the local Native inhabitants (Dodge 1969). Few descriptions and collections of their personal histories were recorded until early

in the 20th century, after fur traders, miners and settlers had trampled upon and decimated the Native peoples.

Indications of the extensive variety of lost languages, myths, tales, and cultural traditions in the Pacific Northwest (and most particularly in southwestern Oregon), can be noted in the writings of Melville Jacobs:

. . . Northwest states, before 1750, had sixty to seventy Indian languages, two to three thousand bands, hamlets, or villages, and something under, around, or over two hundred thousand people. This hunting-fishing-gathering population could once have yielded a million or more versions of myths, smaller numbers of tales, and no one can estimate how much of other oral genres. . . . Myths of most variable merit that have been collected over the region total less than a thousand, and will never exceed that number. Tales amount to a few hundred, forever so. The bleak harvest is . . . maybe one percent of what could have been obtained if the culture-bound, condescending, and racist invaders had had the slightest capacity to perceive merit in the heritages of non-Europeans.

By the time anyone with such capacity went to work, native humiliation and extinction had erased almost everything. Folklore-oriented linguists, and they were the earliest recorders of myths and tales, arrived too late after the pioneers had trampled upon and destroyed the Indians (Jacobs 1972:10)

By that time, most of the aboriginal myths and legends had been lost with the extreme decimation of the Native peoples.

However, among the meager collections of myths and stories from the people of the southern Oregon Coast, there are especially interesting ones which relate the earliest human knowledge of creation of their world and other geologic and environmental events (Hall 1984). Descriptions of floods, fires, earthquakes and tsunamis are reported in specific geographic locations.

### Oral Traditions

Chinook Jargon, legend: *"Wake tlaite wawa"*

English translation: *"Undoubtedly true talk"*

No American Natives used a written language (except for the Eastern Cherokees after Sequoia devised an alphabet for their language early in the 19th century). There was an almost universal practice of painting on walls and chipping or carving on rocks, known as pictographs and petroglyphs (popularly called "rock art"). These have been interpreted to represent stories, historic events, sign posts, instructions, indicating ideas, often by representing various hand positions and movements of a sign language (Martineau 1976).

However, this was not a written language using specific words with an alphabet. The spoken word was therefore highly important to the cultural memories of all people (Wasson 1991).

### The Nature and Value of Myths and Legends

*“The People are coming, The People are coming.”*

(Old Man Coyoté)

A comparison of details in certain legends, with information obtained from the geological and archaeological record, might serve to ascertain the earliest possible indication of human occupation along the southern Oregon Coast. Climatic geological history might be noted by the words of the Native people who obviously witnessed some dramatic earth-changing events and recorded them “for the people who were to come later.”

### Native Education and Oral Veracity

The spoken word was considered sacred. Its efficacy depended on collective memories to be complete and repetition to be accurate. Oratory was a natural part of everyday life, but it was not taken lightly. The reality of life existed in the spoken word. A person of

honor, respect, and responsibility would speak only the truth (Thompson 1916). If words were spoken four times in some tribes, they became as sacred. Therefore, language, oral communication and its accuracy, completeness and dependability required memorization through repetition. Lengthy spiritual ceremonies, songs, ancient history, other languages, customs, techniques, food and medicine plants, roots, cultural rules, obligations and taboos were all memorized.

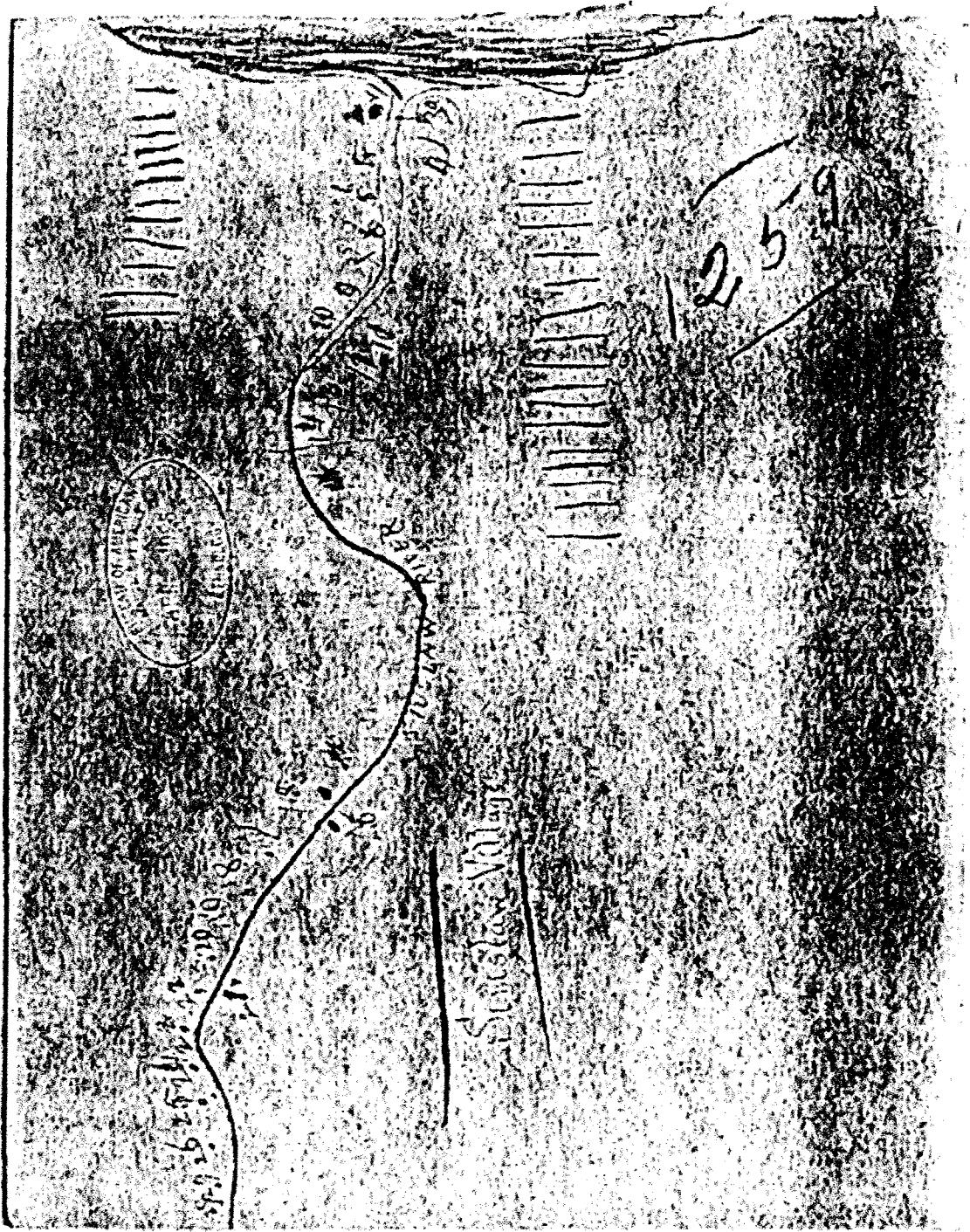
Education was by strict rote memorization. Just as we now learn in school the locations of all the states and their capital cities (even though we might never have been there), a good Native student in a coastal tribe would learn and could recite, the names of the villages up the coastal rivers of their neighboring tribes.

I once asked a Yurok friend of mine if he could name all the villages along the Klamath River from the mouth up to Weitchepoc. With an air of indignation, he at once recited a long list of names in a kind of “sing-song” form. It was obviously a sequential pattern of names in their order of location up the river.

While researching at the Anthropological Archives in the Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution, I came across the notes of an old Siuslaw informant (see Fig. 5), collected by J. O. Dorsey and reviewed by John P. Harrington. The old woman had identified about fifty villages and place names from the mouth of the Siuslaw River to its headwaters at Spencer's Butte by Eugene, possibly without having actually visited them all herself. It was obvious that either Dorsey or Harrington had not quite understood which side of the river she started on, or perhaps she had forgotten herself. I suspect the former, as the numbered sequences were crossed out for part of the list and transferred to the other side of the river on their hand-drawn map (Dorsey 1889, 1890).

Other means of learning and remembering traditional values or customs were through the complex and often humorous story lines of myths and legends as told by the elders. Young people listened carefully to the instructions and admonitions of their older relatives who recited sagas and rituals (usually in the presence of other knowledgeable raconteurs) which sometimes took up to nine days to complete.

**Figure 5. Hand-drawn map of Siuslaw Indian villages along the Siuslaw River from the coast to the headwaters at Spencer's Butte, by Eugene, Oregon. This map was drawn by an old Siuslaw woman for J. O. Dorsey. 1889.**



Accuracy in memorization was highly important to Native peoples and closely guarded (George B. Wasson, Sr. 1916). Melville Jacobs (1940:130) relates the explanations of Annie Minor Peterson on oral traditions quite well:

In the pre-Yachats period, when the Coos were still living in their native area and villages, myths and possibly also narratives were told only in the wintertime, according to Mrs. Peterson; it was expected that the child auditors, if not older people, repeat in unison each phrase or sentence verbatim after the raconteur. "They kept on telling it until the children got it right. They wanted them to have it right. They did not want them to get it mixed up and 'lie' when they told it." When folk tales were told to an audience composed only of adults, that is of persons past puberty, just one of the auditors repeated each sentence verbatim following the raconteur. But this repeating of what the other person said is only an aspect of conversational etiquette in general: the person spoken to usually if not always repeated verbatim what was said to him.

### Did People Arrive Here Before Salmon?

Some archaeologists have hypothesized that the earliest coastal inhabitants must not have eaten salmon, because there were very few salmon bones found in certain occupation sites (e.g., Tahkenitch Landing site on the central Oregon Coast (Minor and Toepel 1986)). It has been suggested that perhaps the people who first lived there

came from a big game hunting tradition and had to learn to eat seafood.

There seems to be a general acceptance among some archaeologists that all people will act universally in the same “primitive” manner as observed at any other cultural site or even as observed among present day people in an aboriginal-type setting or set of circumstances. It seems as though there might be an unspoken acceptance of a Freudian or Jungian attitude toward all peoples at any space and time to naturally act the same way anywhere. The thought would be, after cooking and eating food people would naturally throw the bones and scraps on the ground, i.e., on the midden with any other refuse. For people who have strict taboos on their social eating habits this might be so. For instance, some coastal traditions strictly forbid the discarding of certain animal bones in an “unsacred” manner.

For those people who have First Salmon ceremonies, there are general rules that the salmon bones of the ceremonial fish will be kept fully intact and returned with prayers of thanks and praise to the river up which the salmon are hoped to continue spawning. The

head of the intact skeleton is always pointed up stream as the bones are carefully returned to the water, while blessings are sought and thanks to the salmon people are sincerely offered. In some villages, the people would never think of throwing any salmon bones onto the common garbage heap or midden. Careful excavation of such a site might naturally lead an uninformed investigator to believe that salmon just weren't eaten if they did not know of the strict customs of the local inhabitants who had lived there. Salmon bones, found in other (later) sites might have been left there by people who didn't observe, or lost (forgot) such taboos.

Another option for explaining why no salmon were found in an old coastal village site could be that people were cooking and eating there before the salmon started running in that location. Perhaps the salmon were running in rivers farther to the south, and gradually moved their way north as the glaciers retreated and opened the major spawning streams in the northwest. This hypothesis is supported by Jim Lichatowich in his book, *Salmon Without Rivers*. He states, "While the rivers of Puget Sound, British Columbia, and southeast Alaska were frozen, the salmon took refuge

in watersheds to the south . . . including the Sacramento, Columbia, and Chehalis, as well as in the streams of Beringia . . .” (Lichatowich 1999:16). The next myth offers a clue to other explanations that upon arrival to the Oregon Coast, the first tribal people did not find salmon running up the main streams.

### Wapato and Skunk Cabbage

Among the legends of the early coastal tribes, perhaps Wapato and Skunk Cabbage hold the honor of being mentioned as the oldest known foods. Leslie Haskin mentions both of them in his book, *Flowers of the Pacific Coast*. At the beginning he writes:

Long before the white man visited this coast it was one of the most important plant foods of the natives, especially of the Chinooks of the Lower Columbia, and was an article of well-organized commerce between them and the surrounding tribes. The name Wappato (sic) is of Indian origin, and the plant is woven into their age-old stories as being an article of food in the mythical times “Before the salmon came to the Columbia” (Haskin 1959:3).

The Kathlamet Indians have an interesting myth concerning the skunk cabbage. In the ancient days, they say, there was no salmon. The Indians had nothing to eat save roots and leaves. Principally among these was the skunk cabbage. Finally the spring salmon came for the first time. As they passed up the river, a person stood

upon the shore and shouted: "Here come our relatives whose bodies are full of eggs! If it had not been for me all the people would have starved."

"Who speaks to us?" asked the salmon.

"Your Uncle, Skunk Cabbage," was the reply.

Then the salmon went ashore to see him, and as a reward for having fed the people he was given an elk-skin blanket and a war-club, and was set in the rich, soft soil near the river. There he stands to this day, wrapped in his elk-skin blanket and holding aloft his war-club (Haskin 1959:7).

### Discussion

If one takes seriously the meaning or origin of an idea behind such legends, it would cause one to think that possibly the Indians were reporting that they arrived on the scene much earlier than has been indicated in the archaeological record.

During the late Pleistocene the ice sheets covered most of the land area in the upper Columbia River drainage. Ice and snow froze the rivers and streams solid so that no anadromous fish could migrate up them to spawn. However, Jim Lichatowitch suspects that salmon were in the lower Columbia and survived the great Missoula Flood by retreating up smaller side streams. With the warming of the climate and melting of the ice (beginning about 15,000 years

ago), streams once again flowed free and salmon could migrate in them (Lichatowich 1999:18-19).

An obvious inference from this story could be that the people who originally told it were present and living in the area before or at the time of the recovery of the salmon runs, perhaps 12,000 to 15,000 years ago.

### Origin Myths and Legends of Floods and Earthquakes

#### “How the World Was Created”

(A story from the people at the mouth of Rogue River).

In the beginning there was no land. There was nothing but the sky, some fog, and water. The water was still; there were no breakers. A sweathouse stood on the water, and in it there lived two men--Owalaci and his Companion. Owalaci's Companion had tobacco. He usually stayed outside watching, while Owalaci remained in the sweathouse.

One day it seemed to the watcher as if daylight were coming. He went inside and told Owalaci that he saw something strange coming. Soon there appeared something that looked like land, and on it two trees were growing. The man kept on looking and was soon able to distinguish that the object was white land.

Then the ocean began to move, bringing the land nearer. The distant side of the land was dark. The land kept on moving until it struck the sweathouse where it stopped. The land was white like snow. There was no grass on it. As the men watched the land began to

expand like the waves of the ocean. Then the fog lifted and the Companion could look far away.

When the Companion came into the sweathouse, Owalaci asked: 'Is the land solid?' 'Not quite,' the Companion replied. Then Owalaci took some tobacco and began to smoke. He blew the smoke on the land and the land became motionless.

Only two trees were growing at that time, redwood to the south and ash to the north. Five times Owalaci smoked while discussing with his Companion various means of creating the world and the people. Then night came. After that daylight appeared again. Four days Owalaci worked. The trees began to bud and fell like drops of water upon the ground. Grass came up and leaves appeared on the trees. Owalaci walked around the piece of land that had stopped near his sweathouse and commanded the ocean to withdraw and to be calm.

Owalaci made five cakes of mud. He threw three cakes of mud into the water and the land rose under the water until his Companion shouted: 'It looks as if breakers are coming!' Owalaci was glad because he knew now that the land was coming up from the bottom of the ocean. After the sixth wave receded, Owalaci scattered tobacco all over. Sand appeared. Thus the land and the world were created. When Owalaci stepped on the new land it became hard.

Looking at the sand, Owalaci saw a man's tracks. They came across the land and disappeared into the water. Owalaci wondered what this could mean and was very worried. Five times he ordered the water to rise up and overflow the new land which he had created out of the cakes of mud, but each time when he looked at the sand he saw human footprints. At last Owalaci became discouraged and said: "This is going to make trouble in the future!" And since then there has always been trouble in the world (Beckham 1977:2-4).

This creation myth is one of the most difficult to interpret into meaningful connections with geologic history. Perhaps the translation into English from the original Athabascan has distorted or trivialized some of the most relevant details of the story. However, the existing elements of the story indicate a possible ancient relationship with the geographical location of the mouth of Rogue River on the southern Oregon Coast. A potential interpretation might be as follows: The sequence of events describes a possible sea voyage by (two or more?) people drifting toward a land of snow and/or ice. The land was periodically inundated by flood waters. Mudflats or estuaries were first encountered. Solid ground was soon located. These events took place in an area just north of the redwood vegetation zone. All of those conditions existed on the southern Oregon Coast prior to 15,000 years ago. The story also indicates that other humans (or hominids) were in the land before the narrator of the story.

“Creation of the World”

(A story from the people at Coos Bay)

The earth is flat and floating on water which is underneath and on all sides. Every so often the earth

rocks up and down and tips a little, and this is the cause of the tides. When the creator made the earth, the water came all over the earth at every high tide. To make land appear the Creator obtained 'Blue earth' and laid down a layer of it (Harrington 1943).

Some old people believe it came from the blue clay at a place now called "Cook's Chasm" just north of the Sea Lion Caves.

But it was not enough because the water still covered it all over. The Creator placed a second layer of 'blue earth' down, so that the water went over most of it though it was no longer completely covered. When he put down a third layer, it was all right; it worked well. Still each time the earth tipped, the water ran too far inland. Then the people placed strips of basketry along the whole length of the ocean shore. The water ran through the basketry and back out and it came no farther inland than where the basketry was placed. The basketry is now the sand along the beaches. The blue earth can still be seen under the ocean water. The people did not say what made the land tip (Harrington 1943).

That highly important role of basketry (the use of basketry to stop shoreline erosion) in the successful creation of the world implies that basketry is older than humans, who were obviously created later (see also, "Arrow Young Men" in Frachtenberg 1913:5-12). These stories also indicate that the people who told them believed themselves to have existed in that geographical area since the beginning of the "creation" of the world as they knew it.

### Myths and Human Actions

Various myths relate how incorrect human actions in relation to food (e.g., salmon) can result in catastrophes. One such story tells of some boys placing a salmon in bed with their sleeping companion, hoping he might think it was his wife and have sex with it. This of course was inappropriate. The next year, when the spring salmon returned, there was a rush of water coming behind them carrying a baby in its cradle. When the people rushed out to see it, they were nearly all drowned by the tsunami (Jacobs 1939:52).

Possible indications of the earliest human occupation on the Oregon Coast might be inferred from the flood myths. Some tell that the water came up rather fast and the people had to hurry to escape from it in their canoes.

Many tell that the water stayed up high over night and receded slowly. One unpublished story from up Rogue River relates how the water rose slowly enough for the observer to run to the river to check it out and determine that it was actually rising. A story from Coos Bay is similar, telling which mountain tops were protruding above the surface, and where the people tied their

canoes to keep from drifting away. As the water receded in the darkness, some people were sleeping and as their canoes were tied with short ropes, they tipped over and were drowned. Others cut themselves loose and just drifted away (Frachtenberg 1913:45).

The most striking element of these two stories is that the water rose slowly enough (much more slowly than an ocean inundation from a tsunami and much, much faster than a post-glacial sea level rise) for the people to notice and take action to escape in their canoes. As I read the description of the Missoula Flood waters rising in the valleys about two or three feet per minute (Parfit 1995), it reminded me of the water rising up Rogue River and Coos Bay as described in the myths.

In the Willamette Valley, the water reached all the way to Eugene, and the base of Spencer's Butte. In that case, it must have gone right on around the low places and reached the present towns of Creswell and Cottage Grove, where it would have spilled on down the Umpqua, and possibly backed up toward Roseburg. Even if the Missoula Flood waters did not go over to Rogue River, it seems that a similar event occurred there also from similar ice dams high in the

Cascades. Quite possibly, it was happening at the same geologic time period as the Missoula Flood.

Owalaci said that the floodwaters came up five times and covered the new land before the waves and erosion were brought under control by spreading split baskets on the shores. The recording of such flood descriptions in the local oral tradition might indicate that people were on hand and observing those events at least 15,000 years B.P.

More recently than the Missoula Floods was the eruption of Mount Mazama some 7,000 years ago. In comparison with the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in 1980, Mt. Mazama was many times larger and must have sent enormous mud-flows rushing down the Rogue and Umpqua rivers. Some myths were poorly translated and therefore have not been readily connected with depicting mud-flows from Mt. Mazama. However, the next myth does relate to the blocking out of the sun's rays on the southern Oregon Coast, perhaps by the enormous plume of ash and smoke from the blast of the volcano.

One of the most puzzling stories tells of the sun changing its directions.

### The Long Night

Once in the summer it got evening and day never came. And they all awoke as if it had been day time. However, it continued to be dark like that. They did not know it when evening came. Now they would get sleepy and go to bed again. And when evening (would come), they would chop wood by (the reflection of) a light. Hunger almost killed all of them. They could not hunt anywhere, and they could not spear fish, (on account of) the darkness.

For ten days (it was) very dark. It seemed as if the sun had gone south; that was the reason they could not see it. (To their) surprise, they again saw the sun come out right there. The sun rose from the south. Now the sun had returned. Right above them the sun stopped, just as during mid-day.

(For) one (whole) day the sun was caused to be there. She did not go anywhere, and evening did not come. Then she took a start. Very slowly she traveled, and disappeared again where she always goes out of sight. The next day she came out from the east, the sun. She always comes out from there. So afterwards everybody was glad. All kinds of food living in the water came ashore. So they picked up the food and divided it around. Now they were thinking thus: "Some one must have given us this food" (Frachtenberg 1913:135).

There seems to be no readily identifiable connection with early geologic historical events and the changing of directions of the sun. I could allow this particular story to wait until a later time

when someone discovers that indeed, the earth actually changed directions for a short time, but it must have been long before humans were around.

However, there was a major environmental catastrophe in the Cascade Mountain Range about 7,000 years ago that has already given positive time identification to the existence of people in south central Oregon at that time.

The eruption of Mount Mazama occurred in the late summer or early fall and sent an enormous plume of ash and smoke so many miles up into the atmosphere that the sun would have been totally blocked out for many days.

Even though the ash fallout probably did not cover the coast, due to the prevailing southwesterly winds at that time of year, the sunlight could not penetrate the dense cloud. It would not have been visible west of the mountains until the southern extension dissipated sufficiently to allow it to be seen in the south. Perhaps the dense cloud extended so far out over the Pacific Ocean that not even a sunset would have been seen from the southern Oregon

Coast for several days (personal comment by Bill Orr, retired, University of Oregon volcanologist).

Why the legend says the sun stood still overhead seems beyond deciphering at this time. We do know that the explosion of Mount Mazama was one of the largest such volcanic events discernible in the geologic record (larger than the explosion of Krakatau or Krakatoa, in 1883) and would have plunged much of the world into a virtual winter. No other explanation for the origin of that legend seems more plausible to me.

### Summary and Conclusions on Early Coastal Inhabitation

As for early migration routes into the New World, I would further suggest that a coastal route would be most likely for early immigration (even during the late Pleistocene) because of the ready abundance of food on tidal flats and fish in relatively shallow coastal waters. Low tide (falling 15 to 20 feet twice a day) on the shores of "Beringia" would likely provide the greatest extent of exposed tidal flats on the North American continent. Movement over long distances would have been much easier for people to

accomplish in rapid traveling water-craft, rather than moving slowly on foot after the megafauna (bison, camels, mastodons and mammoths) in the inhospitably frozen tundra of the “Ice-Free Corridor.”

Native oral traditions, myths and legends, often contain explicit details of natural, geologic, and meteorological events, which could only have been described by people who personally observed and experienced them. Often, due to the geographic locations noted in the stories, the geological date can be established as reliably as any archaeological evidence with lithic points and charcoal remains.

### Final Discussion

*“The People are coming, The People are coming!”*

This was one of the most common traditional attitudes of the persons or characters contained in the stories and the tellers of those stories. It seemed to be common knowledge that more people were coming later on. Perhaps that attitude and understanding was a carry-over from very early migration experiences when people

were aware of leaving their family and friends behind, while traveling ahead to “scout out” new areas, and perhaps prepare a place for those who promised to follow later.

Perhaps there were inhabitants of the New World long before the first migrations came from Asia. The oldest creation myths mention that when the world was created and the shorelines were stabilized, footprints were soon found on the sand before people had even been created here. In fact, it was from the scattered body parts of one of the medicine persons (who made the tracks and was promptly dismembered for being on that beach), that coastal people were created (Frachtenberg 1913:9-10).

Whatever the explanation, Native people along the coast have always understood that someone (perhaps Old Man Coyoté) arrived in their homelands first, and that more people were to come later. Their stories (while few in number and poorly understood), offer unique insights into the questions of origins, antiquity of coastal occupation, and routes of arrival into the New World (if indeed the people came here from somewhere else). Native American myths and legends deserve close attention to answer questions about the

past (so frequently called *prehistory*), which might be answered by no other means (if indeed the answers must be known).

(Previously published, see Wasson 1999).

Chinook Jargon: The *Lingua Franca*  
of the Pacific Northwest.

Chinook Jargon is the centuries-old trade language, the *lingua franca* of the Indians of the Pacific Northwest. Many people (including linguists, historians, and other self-appointed scholars) have asked is it old or new? Numerous ones have collected word lists and compiled dictionaries of Jargon, and some have attempted to establish the origin of the language. Because of its widespread use among trappers, missionaries, settlers, and Indians, it has been assumed by some that the trade language arose out of the need for Indians and Whites to converse with each other through a simplified version of traditional languages.

Others have shown proof that the Natives of the Pacific Northwest were interacting long before the coming of the Whites, and for their own purposes of trade, were using "Jargon."

In *Chinook Rudiments*, Rev. J. M. Le Jeune said:

Chinook, for a century the international language of the Pacific Coast, from Northern California to Alaska, from the Pacific Ocean to the Rocky Mountains, gradually took shape between 1790 and 1810, becoming the necessary means of intercourse between natives of twenty-seven different tribes speaking as many different languages, as well as between natives, Whites and Orientals (LeJeune 1924:1).

Le Jeune evidently based his assumptions on the preface of *Chinook Dictionary*, in which Dr. George Gibbs stated:

The origin of this Jargon, a conventional Language, similar to the Lingua Franca of the Mediterranean, the Negro-English-Dutch of Surinam, the Pigeon-English of China and several other mixed tongues, dates back to the fur droguers (sic) of the last century. Those mariners, whose enterprise in the fifteen years preceding 1800 explored the intricacies of the north-west coast of America, picked up at their general rendezvous, Nootka Sound, various native words useful in barter, and thence transplanted them, with additions from the English, to the shores of Oregon.

Even before their day, the coasting trade and warlike expeditions of the northern tribes, themselves a seafaring race, had opened up a partial understanding of each other's speech, for when, in 1792, Vancouver's officers visited Gray's Harbour, they found that the

natives, though speaking a different language, understood many words of the Nootka (LeJeune 1924:3).

The earliest American accounts of encountering the trade language are by Lewis and Clark in 1806. Gibbs continues:

On the arrival of Lewis and Clarke at the mouth of the Columbia, in 1806, the new language, from the sentences given by them had evidently attained some form. It was with the arrival of Astor's party, however, that the Jargon received its principal impulse. Many more words of English were then brought in, and for the first time, the French, or rather the Canadian and Missouri parties of the French, was introduced. . . . A considerable number was taken from the Chehalis, who immediately bordered that tribe [Chinook] on the north, each owning a portion of Shoal-water Bay (LeJeune 1924:3).

Gibbs assumed that Chinook Jargon further developed because of the Indians' need to communicate with White traders and settlers:

Grammatical forms were reduced to their simplest expressions and variations in mood and tense conveyed only by adverbs or by the context. The language continued to receive additions, and assumed a more distinct and settled meaning under the North-west and Hudson Bay Companies, who succeeded Astor's party, as well as through the American settlers in Oregon (LeJeune 1924:3).

Next he assumes that once the "new trade language" proved useful around the mouth of the Columbia, it then spread to other tribes nearby:

Its advantage was soon perceived by the Indians, and the Jargon became to some extent, a means of communication between natives of different speech, as well as between them and the Whites. It was even used as such between Americans and Canadians. It was at first most in vogue upon the Lower Columbia and the Willamette, whence it spread to Puget Sound, and with the extension of trade, found its way up the coast, as well as the Columbia and Fraser rivers . . . (LeJeune 1924:3-4).

Gibbs claimed that Jargon had no form or structure, but admits that its flexibility is of great importance to those who speak it regularly.

*Its prevalence and easy acquisition, while of vast convenience to traders and settlers, now tended greatly to hinder the acquirement of the original Indian languages. . . . Notwithstanding its apparent poverty in number of words and the absence of grammatical forms, it possesses much more flexibility and power of expression than might be imagined, and really serves almost every purpose of ordinary intercourse (LeJeune 1924:4).*

There seems to have been a fluctuation in the number of words used at any specific geographic or cultural area. Gibbs stated:

The number of words constituting the Jargon proper has been variously stated. Many formerly employed have become in great measure obsolete, while others have been locally introduced. Thus, at the Dalles of the Columbia, various terms are common which would not be intelligible at Astoria or Puget Sound (LeJeune 1924:4).

Various other Jargon dictionary authors have stated their opinions on the origin of Chinook Jargon also. While attempting to describe the unique nature of the language and its widespread use in the Pacific Northwest, W. S. Phillips, “El Comancho,” (1913), assumes his own authority on the topic (due to his “nearly 30 years” of speaking Jargon) and denounces other opinions on Jargon origin:

Chinook [jargon], is a reflection of limited conditions under which a primitive people lived. Further, these people were brought into contact with the highly superior races of white people, each with a fixed language of his own and with certain ideals and surroundings of his own . . . the necessity arose for a common language which was the spontaneous growth, now called the ‘Chinook’ jargon. . . Contrary to common belief, the Chinook jargon is not a product of the Hudson Bay Company, but is a spontaneous growth that started first among the old fur traders of Nootka when the Spanish first made a fur port of Nootka, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, many years before the Hudson Bay Company existed. The jargon grew slowly until the Hudson Bay Company began to use it as a trade medium . . . (W. S. Phillips 1913:2-3).

It appears however, that “El Comancho’s” opinion is heavily influenced by national pride, and he refuses to allow credit for such a unique language to go to the British and therefore assigns credit to the Americans.

It apparently didn't occur to him that the Natives themselves could be responsible for developing their own trade language:

This company enlarged it and used it but it was the Astor fur people at Astoria who finally developed it into the present excellent terse medium of transferring intelligence . . . (W. S. Phillips 1913:3).

Phillips gives a generally accurate description of Jargon, but his opinion of it's purpose, perhaps highlights his own ethnocentricity by the way in which he thanks the Indians for using Jargon.

The Chinook jargon is not a language in the ordinary accepted sense, but is a verbal symbolism created by a spontaneous combination of words from widely different languages, made by necessity and common usage into a trade jargon which is at once graphic, expressive, and exceedingly elastic (W. S. Phillips 1913:3).

He dedicates his dictionary, *The Chinook Book*, to the Seattle Press Club et al. “. . . and to all the ‘HYAS AHNCUTTIE TILACUMS’ (Ancient People) of the Pacific Coast who have used this queer speech in pioneer work for the American people” (Phillips 1913:5).

The antiquity of Chinook Jargon is as well established as the long existence of the Northwest tribes. In his introduction to

*Chinook: A History and Dictionary*, Edward H. Thomas (1970:vii)

wrote:

It is now more than a hundred years since the first attempt was made to compile a dictionary of the Chinook Jargon, the early trade language of the Pacific Northwest. This Jargon was in use among the natives of the region when the first explorers and maritime traders arrived.

Captain John Meares used a Jargon word when he related in his Journal, in 1788, that the exclamation of Nootkan Chief Callicum on tasting blood, was cloosh. Cloosh is equivalent to the Jargon word Kloshe, meaning "good."

John Rodgers Jewitt, in his account of his captivity among the Nootkans, 1803-05, as personal slave of Chief Maquinna, gave what purported to be a Nootkan vocabulary of some eighty words. In it are ten, which are found in the Chinook Jargon.

Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were spoken to in the Jargon by Chinook Chief Concomly, when they were camped on the north side of the Columbia in the fall of 1805.

These three widely separated circumstances furnish the first records of the existence of the as-yet-unsuspected Jargon. The flexibility of Chinook Jargon, and its usefulness to a wide diversity of cultural and social groups, indicates the nature and expressive personality of Jargon.

Around 1875, fully one hundred thousand persons spoke the Jargon. Among all the generations since 1811, or thereabouts, it has been used by upwards of a quarter

million persons, to many of whom it was an everyday necessity. The Jargon was so widely used because-though short on beauty and refinement of detail, it was able to communicate successfully between persons of different tribes, nationalities, and races. It was practical and unpretentious. It absorbed what was useful and discarded the useless (Thomas 1970:ix).

Most of the language is composed of Native contributions to the Jargon plus selected words of the Whites. Because of the necessity for trade communications with the Whites, words from French and English were eventually adopted into regular Jargon usage. Four families of tribes account for most of the dialect words in the Jargon, notably the Chinooks, the Salish, the Nootka, and the Kwakiutl. The Chinook family (from whom the jargon derives its name), divided into many tribes with somewhat differing dialects, lived in the valley of the Columbia River from the Pacific Ocean up to the country of the Klickitats, while the others are located up along the Northwest Coast (see map, Suttles 1990:11). These tribes contributed the largest number of words to the Jargon.

The words adopted from the several languages were, naturally enough, those most easily uttered by all the Indians, except of course, that objects new to the natives found their names in French

or English, and such modifications were made in pronunciation as suited tongues accustomed to different sounds. Thus the gutturals of the Indians were softened, or dropped, and the ‘f’ and ‘r’ of the English or French, to the Indians unpronounceable, were modified into ‘p’ and ‘l’. Many writers have agonized over the spelling and pronunciation of Chinook Jargon words.

Spelling was of a particular concern to the early authors of Chinook dictionaries, such as Gibbs. Because of the flexible nature of Jargon, Natives in different localities had different pronunciations, which was one of the most unique and useful characteristics of the language flexibility. Missionary Myron Eells (1893) mentions that spelling (as a result of variations in pronunciation) is a curiosity in the way some words are spelled, and simply shows what educated men will do in this line when they have no standard authority. Very seldom is any word, even the simplest and easy one, spelled in the same way, if it is found in several dictionaries, while some of them are spelled in very many different ways.

For example, the word for “Bird,” “Fowl,” or “winged insect,” according to Thomas is kalak’ala. Other ways of spelling kalakala:

culacula, kallakala, kalahkalah, kilakila, kulakula, kullukala, cullaculla, cullerculler, cullacullah, kullakullie, kullukulli, kulakulla.

An examination of many dictionaries will show, among other words: -konas, spelled ten different ways; -ahnkuttie and keekwulee, each in twelve; -klootchman and kliminawhit, each in fifteen; -klatawa, seeowist and memaloose, each in sixteen; -tahtlum, kloshe, and killapi each in eighteen.

Even words that are derived from English have different spelling:

-Gleace from grease becomes gleese, gleece, glis, and klis;  
 -Bed is also spelled pet; -moon is also mun; -nose is also nos;  
 -Stone is also ston; -pepah (paper) is also papeh, paper, paypa, papah, pepah, pepa and peppah. Shot, skin, man and a few others have for almost a wonder found no other way of being spelled.

#### The Onomatopoeia of an Elastic and Poetic Language.

Another common characteristic-that of onomatopoeia gives Jargon a poetic quality. Many of the words resemble in sounds, the objects they represent. For example, a wagon in

Chinook is *chick-chick*; a clock is *ding-ding*; a crow is *kaw-kaw*; a duck, *quack-quack*; a laugh, *tee-hee*; the heart is *tum-tum* and a talk or a speech or sermon, *wah-wah*.” It is not true of course, that most words are of this nature, but there are indeed many such examples. There was a general transition of words and pronunciation from their original sources.

As the French-Canadian and English and American traders invaded Indian country, the natives were introduced to an impressive number of new objects, which required names; and new sounds, which they attempted to imitate. However, their imitation often fell far short of the original - which bothered the users of the Jargon not at all (Thomas 1970:x).

Jargon words, which came from French, often retained little or no resemblance to the original word. An interesting example is the French word for mother-*mere*-which like other French words clung to its article *la* (the), when taken over by the Indians. In the Jargon, *la mere* lost the *r* sound because of the difficulty they had pronouncing it; so, we find the word mother written *lamai*, *lummeih*, *lummie*, etc. The same thing is true for the masculine form *le*, (the), e.g., *le pan* (bread), *le sak* (sack or bag), or *le seezo* (scissors).

Occasionally a word in Jargon developed from more than one language. The English word “grog” means a drink made of rum and water. The Chinook Jargon word is “*lumpechuck*.” Broken down into its origins, *lum* came from rum; *pe* (and) from *puis* (“then” in French, but “and” in the Jargon); and *chuck* (water) from the Nootkan *chawk*. Such is the derivation of *Lumpechuck*, that famous concoction of rum and water, better known in the Queen’s Navy as “grog” or “*diluted spirits*.”

Some of the more famous words left over today from Chinook Jargon are words such as: *tyee* (chief) from the Nootkan; *Siwash* (Indian) from the French word *sauvage*; *skookum* (big, strong, good) from the Salish word of the same meaning. Others include: *sitkum*, *cultus*, *mowitch*, *kotsuk*, *lapush*, *salt-chuck*, *sixes*, *moo-lak*, *siskiyou*, etc., many of which are common place names in the Pacific Northwest today.

### Discussion

To me it seems likely that Chinook Jargon began as long ago as the Northwest Coast tribes needed communication among themselves

for trading. The extent of the Jargon use area reached from Alaska to Northern California and up the Columbia River as far as Montana.

Two examples of Jargon from the areas are:

1. The use of the term *chee chako* (newcomer), is used even today in Alaska.
2. An old village headman signed his Chinook Jargon name, *Halo Gleese*, (No Fat or Thin Man) on the Port Orford Treaty of 1851.

James G. Swan reported in *The Northwest Coast* (1857:308-309)

that:

Indians are very quick to detect any difference in the intonation or method of pronunciation of the whites, and sometimes think we speak different languages. An Indian asked me one day (while pointing to a cow) what was the name we called that animal. I told him cow. He said that he had just asked another white man, and he called it a caow.

It appears that sometimes Jargon words must have been learned by some non-Indians, from other non-Indians, who had different pronunciation than the original, then remolded again by the third speaker. For instance, Swan reports a variation of the word *camas* as being spelled, *lackamas*, *lackamus* (Swan 1857:90-308).

After hearing the pronunciation of, *caow* for cow, one can imagine that a Frenchman, upon hearing a southerner say *kiamous for camas*, simply added the usual French article *la*, resulting in *lakiamus*, or *luckiamus*, and leading the Indians to believe that's the way the White men say it in that part of the Willamette Valley. That name can be found on maps, just southwest of Portland. In his book, *Oregon Geographic Names*, Lewis A. McArthur states:

The name Luckiamute is an old one, and has nothing to do with a deaf mute who is said to have operated a ferry on the stream [Luckiamute River]. . . . This is an Indian tribal name, the meaning of which is unknown (McArthur 1982:461).

If McArthur was more familiar with Chinook Jargon, and had read Swan, he might have discovered this same clue of a convoluted derivation also.

Another example of misunderstanding Chinook Jargon word usage was identified by my own father, and is documented in his papers on Oregon Indian land claims (Wasson 1916).

There was no such language as the Molalla language, there were no Molel Indians. Molallas in the Chinook language means 'berries'--Huckle berries or Sabbath berries. . . . [Some writers use "Olallie" as a generic term for berries.] . . . These Indians were known as Molallas or Huckle Berry Indians by the tribe of Indians who

spoke the Chinook Jargon language. These same bands of Indians were known among their own people, the Klamath, as Chuck-Sum-Kanay, or Sabbath Berry bands, the people who lived where the Sabbath Berries grow.

It seems that in 1856, when General Joel Palmer rounded up Indians in the Willamette Valley, the “Huckle Berry” band of Klamaths were camping in the valley picking berries, and were taken away with the Calapooias to Grand Ronde, where they were just called “Mollalas,” (or Huckle Berries) as usual.

#### Russian Word(s) in Jargon?

I think perhaps there were other languages introduced into common Northwest usage, which have gone undetected by Chinook Jargon dictionary compilers and translators. Recently, as I was reading through a word list compiled by Frederick J. Long (1909), I ran across a word that completely surprised me.

It's well known that Russians ventured into the Pacific Northwest trading, hunting, and establishing settlements. But for some reason, no one has mentioned Russian language influences in Chinook Jargon, which surely had to happen with so much contact

and intercourse, both economic and social. Since my Aunt Pauline, “Sosipatra Suvaroff,” was half-Russian and half-Aleut, I guess one could say the contact and intercourse was indeed most intimately social.

As I scanned the word list I noticed a word definition of, “a fence; a corral; enclosure.” To my surprise, I saw the Jargon word was Kul-lagh’ (Long 1909:33). It sounded so very familiar, but, not as an English or French word. By reversing ‘k’ to ‘g’ it became startlingly clear that the origin must have been the Russian word *gulag*, which means camp, prison, or enclosure (see also “corral,” Long 1909:10; “fence,” Long 1909:13).

#### An Ultimate Example of Jargon Flexibility

Finally, the flexibility of Jargon is evident in its adoption of new concepts. When White men first introduced forks as eating utensils to the Northwest Indians, it was observed that they were always in the company of a knife (*opitsah*). Therefore, a fork was called, *opitsah six*, “Friend of the Knife”, (knife = *opitsah*, and friend = *six*).

When the Indians encountered the concept of “sweetheart,” they had no word for it. There were plenty of words for females, e.g., wife, mother, sister, daughter, grandmother, mother-in-law, etc., but no word for the fiancée or lover. So, as it was noted that this “sweetheart” always accompanied the man, just as the fork with the knife, they conveniently adopted the same concept as “friend of the knife,” and a “sweetheart” also became known as *opitsah six*.

And so, in honor of all you lovers out there, I want to say,  
*“Wake kopet kumtux, kull woot’lats halo tumtum, kwonesum  
mamook halo kliminiwhit tikegh, kopa mesika opitsah six.*

Translated it says: “Never forget, a hard (or stiff) penis doesn’t think. Always make no false love with your sweetheart.”

Mahsie Tlahoya!

The Coquelle Indians and the Cultural  
“Black Hole” of the Southern Oregon Coast

Prologue

*The Coquelle people have lived so many generations in their homeland environment and traditional hunting-gathering territories, the years have become too many to count.*

*As is true with other southern Oregon coastal people, the oldest stories of the Coquelle (the original name) tell about the creation of the world and its rearrangement to suit the needs of the People who were to come later.*

*Mythical beings such as Talapus (Old Man Coyote) told how the land was built from blue clay scooped from under the water and how that land was protected from wave action by lining the shores with woven mats and basketry.*

*The old stories relate first-hand accounts of the great floods and fires that repeatedly swept over the land from the west, often changing the geography significantly while scattering people and other animals far and wide  
(Wasson 1991).*

## Introduction

Because of the short time span from the beginning of everyday White contact among the Native peoples of the southern Oregon Coast, until the demise of their cultural, spiritual, and physical integrity, very little knowledge through scientific research was collected and preserved for posterity. In 1931 T. T. Waterman wrote: "A number of ethnologists worked in this region [Southern Oregon Coast], prior to the writer's advent . . . but relatively little concerning these groups has found its way into print" (Waterman 1931:6).

Due to the thorough destruction of the villages, the people and their life-ways, only bits and pieces of their culture and languages survived after what might be understood as the "Oregon Holocaust." From this perspective, I have adopted the concept of a cultural or ethnological "BLACK HOLE" as a descriptive term for Southwestern Oregon, where the surviving descendants have retained only a few relics of their indigenous culture (see Barnett 1954).

My approach to rediscovering and understanding the cultural contents of that “Black Hole” is to examine those characteristics of neighboring tribes for whom there is fairly adequate information and draw parallel inferences about the lost information.

The Coquelles are a group from that "Black Hole," and I propose to look at the “bits and pieces” of surviving knowledge about them in an effort to reconstruct (as adequately as feasible) their lost and forgotten cultural heritage.

### Coquelle Cultural Geography

For purposes of sociocultural identification, Coquelle Indian tribal members are directly descended from people of the following geographical locations: villages at South Slough and Coos Bay, villages along the Coquille River, and coastal villages as far south as the Sixes River. Due to inter-tribal marriages, many members are also related to Umpqua, Coos, Siuslaw, Tututni, Shasta Costa, Chetco, Tolowa, or other American Indian tribes. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the common spelling was Coquelle (Zenk 1990: 579), pronounced Ko-Kwel' as in tribal use today.

When land claims hearings were conducted in the 1930s and 1940s, the Coos (including many Coquelles), Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw appealed as a confederated group. The Court of Claims denied their appeal due to “lack of evidence.” The land claims for the "Coos" had been based on the testimonies of the oldest Indians alive at that time. My father, George Bundy Wasson, Sr. thought there could be no better evidence of aboriginal sovereignty and territorial occupation than the words of the old people themselves. The federal government declared their testimony to be merely hearsay.

However, after collecting ethnographic information from the old Indians of that area, John P. Harrington stated that the Coquelles were undoubtedly the true descendants of the aboriginal occupants of their land, hence the land claims settlement for the Coquelles. This decision caused a split between the Coos and Coquelles, which ultimately resulted in separate federally recognized tribes.

For land claims payment purposes, the Coquelle tribal area was defined in the 1940s as bounded along the Oregon Coast from

approximately Floras Creek on the south to a point of rocks by Whiskey Run Creek north of the mouth of the Coquille River. From each of these coastal points, the north and south boundaries extended easterly to join the north and south ends of an eastern boundary line which ran along the crest of the Coast Range of mountains.

This territory encompasses all of the land, soil, plant, and animal types available in western Oregon. There are high prairies and coastal mountain meadows containing lush grasses for sustaining large populations of Roosevelt elk and black-tailed deer. Valleys were loaded with roots and bulbs for annual harvests, while the rivers and streams extending to the ocean produced abundant fish, eels, shellfish and sea mammals. Their forests provided the rare Port Orford Cedar for carving canoes and Western Red Cedar for plank houses. It also yielded the widest variety of basketry materials available anywhere along the west coast.

The antiquity of occupation in the Coquille territory, has been established by archaeological investigations, and amateur discoveries at Camas Valley, on the Upper Coquille River drainage.

The discovery of a Clovis-type point in Camas Valley (Wallmann 1994; Erlandson and Moss 1996), made from chert indigenous to that specific area, dates human occupation of the Upper Coquelle territory to as much as 11,500 years before present (B.P.).

Archaeological research on the Southern Oregon Coast has revealed occupation dates as early as 8,200 years B.P. at the "Indian Sands" site in Curry County, just south of the Coquelles (Erlandson and Moss 1996; Moss and Erlandson 1998a). At the Standley site in Camas Valley, obsidian hydration evidence indicates that occupation may have begun between 4,500 and 5,000 years ago. Additionally, fragments of clay figurines discovered there, have been known to date between 1,100-400 years ago (Connolly 1991:1).

### Early White Contact

In 1792, Captain George Vancouver, while exploring along the Northwest Coast, anchored his ship somewhere between Cape Blanco and Port Orford. According to Beckham (1977:102):

The fine handwriting of Dr. Archibald Menzies, now hidden away in a large journal in the British Museum in

London, tells about one of those encounters [between early sailors and Indians] . . . In the spring of 1792, Captain George Vancouver brought his expedition to Cape Blanco on the southern Oregon coast. Menzies, the surgeon and botanist, became very interested in the Indians who paddled out in their canoes. He wrote:

“they were of a middling size with mild pleasing features & nowise sullen or distrustful in their behaviour, they were of a copper colour but cleanly, as we observed no vestige of greasy paint or ochre about their faces or among their hair.”

Twenty-five years later, the fur trader Peter Corney sailed along this same section of the coast. Observing many villages along the shore, he sailed in close and also met some of the Tututunne Indians. He noted:

About noon, several canoes came off within hail of the ship; we waved to them to come closer, which they did, displaying green boughs and bunches of white feathers; they stopped paddling, and one man, whom we took to be the chief, stood up, and made a long speech, which we did not understand. We then waved a white flag, and they immediately pulled for the ship singing all the way. . . . They also brought some berries, fish, and handsome baskets for sale. These men were tall and well formed, their garment made of dressed deerskins, with a small round hat, in the shape of a basin, that fitted close round the head; none of the women made their appearance (Beckham 1977:103).

Early in the nineteenth century, white explorers, trappers, and missionaries came to the Pacific Northwest, and especially to the

places now called Oregon. By the mid-1800s, most of the West Coast was well populated with white miners and settlers. However, that central portion of the Oregon Coast that was nearly inaccessible by overland routes because of the rugged Coast Range Mountains, and also relatively obscure from the ocean, was not much affected by the white influx until the 1850s.

Diseases of European origin (gonorrhoea, syphilis, measles, and smallpox) had drastically reduced the populations along the Northwest Coast since the late 1700s and early 1800s (Drucker 1965). Between 1829 and 1832, "the fevers" had swept along the Columbia River, up the Willamette Valley, and on over to the Rogue River Valley, and had jumped across to the Sacramento Valley, killing up to 90% of the village inhabitants in some places (Beckham 1971). Archaeological and ethnohistorical information indicate that the people of the Southern Oregon Coast were not spared from those devastations, and an equally high percentage of their populations were wiped out in the same manner about the same time. It is interesting to note that an early explorer traveling up the Coquille River reported seeing hundreds of Indians working on the

fish weirs (Chase 1873; Tveskov 2000), while a few years later, the same area was described as having only a few workers in those locations.

Historian Orvil Dodge provided a sample of early attitudes toward the local Indians in his 1898 book, *Pioneer History of Coos & Curry Counties, Oregon*.

No wonder this favoured spot, where food and even luxuries abounded so plentiful, was inhabited with a class of swarthy, indolent Indians who had but little ambition or energy. They were square built and of medium height and those in the northern part of the county, who inhabited Coos bay and its tributaries and the various branches of the Coquille river, were naturally peaceable and friendly to the pioneers, in fact they never became hostile, and it is a fact that is not questioned, that in the early settlement north of Port Orford there were no massacres so common in the early settlements of the great West, and there were no more tragedies than is common among the Anglo-Saxon or white citizens of this country (Dodge 1969:7).

In fact, the Native people were quite industrious, as indicated by Chase in his observation of hundreds of Indians working on the fish weirs along the Coquille River. Dodge also ignored well-documented evidence for massacres perpetrated by Whites against the Coquelles and their neighbors. The final impact came forcefully

and swiftly, leaving many tribes and villages totally obliterated. The survivors were herded off to temporary concentration camps or dumped onto the reservations of other inland tribes, except for the families of the Indian women who were fortunately married to White men.

#### “A Most Horrid Massacre”

Early on the morning of January 28, 1854, the Nasomah village of the Lower Coquille was brutally attacked and destroyed by a mob of 40 miners from the nearby diggings at Randolph. Two of the main instigators were named Packwood and Soapy. A week later, special agent Smith wrote the following report:

A most horrid massacre, or rather an out-and-out barbarous mass murder, was perpetrated upon a portion of the Nasomah Band residing at the mouth of the Coquille River on the morning of January 28th by a party of 40 miners. The reason assigned by the miners, by their own statements, seem trivial. However, on the afternoon preceding the murders, the miners requested the chief to come in for a talk. This he refused to do.

The report went on to say that a meeting was held and a courier was dispatched to obtain the assistance of 20 more miners from nearby Randolph. Smith further reported:

At dawn the following day, led by one Abbott, the ferry party and the 20 miners, about 40 in all, formed three detachments, marched upon the Indian ranches and 'consummated a most inhuman slaughter,' which the attackers termed a fight. The Indians were aroused from sleep to meet their deaths with but a feeble show of resistance; shot down as they were attempting to escape from their houses. Fifteen men and one Squaw were killed, two Squaws badly wounded. On the part of the white men, not even the slightest wound was received. The houses of the Indians, with but one exception, were fired and destroyed. Thus was committed a massacre too inhuman to be readily believed (Peterson and Powers 1952:89).

Within less than two years, the people were gone, except for those few women who had taken White men for their husbands. The effect on the culture of the Coquelles and their close neighbors was devastating. Yet, through all the years of languishing in seemingly total deprivation, bits and pieces of tradition and cultural spirit remained alive among the tribal survivors, or were placed on record for scientific posterity. A few anthropologists and historians recognized this unprecedented obliteration, and worked with tribal

elders to save or write something of the cultures, however small a segment it was.

### Languages and Culture

The dominant language of the lower Coquelles (along the coast from South Slough on Coos Bay and upriver to the present town of Coquille) was definitely Miluk, originally identified as a division of Kusan. The Upper Coquelles spoke an Athabascan dialect. However, because of intertribal marriage practices, as well as social and commercial interchange, most tribal members also spoke the languages of their relatives and neighbors (Hall 1984:20, 140-141).

Among the Coquelles, village and family life was patrilocal (upon marriage, women moved to the homes of their husbands.) It was therefore incumbent upon the women to know or learn the “new” language of their husband’s village if it was different from that of their father’s. It also seems probable that each young girl had already learned the several languages, which her mother spoke, assuming that women in general, had to learn more than one language. Indications of this hypothesis regarding the special

multilinguality of women can be noted in the number of multilingual female informants for the several linguists and ethnographers who collected language information from the Coos/Coquelle area. Susan Adulsah Wasson and her mother, Gishgiu, each spoke several languages and dialects fluently (personal communication from George B. Wasson, Sr. and Daisy Wasson Coddington).

Along with Miluk and Athabascan languages, Chinook Jargon, the *lingua franca* of the Pacific Northwest, was used regularly by the Coquelles and their southern neighbors as far south as the Tolowas and Yuroks in northern California.

Shamanism (doctoring) was practiced by both men and women, yet, all people were free to seek personal spiritual power from fasting, praying, and vision quest.

Social and political leadership among villages and extended-family bands was acknowledged through group deference to dominant wealthy headmen or shamans with especially prominent healing powers. Slavery was not unknown to the Coquelles, but was

less common among them than the more northern tribes of the Northwest Coast.

Thus, Coquelle culture included elements from the Northwest Coast (e.g., wealth accumulation and a form of potlatch, or “give-away”). Their dance forms, ceremonial clothing, and spirituality (including reverence for flicker feathers and redheaded woodpecker scalps) were related to their southern neighbors-- the Tututnis, Chetcos, Tolowas, and Yuroks.

### White Cedar Canoes

Coquelle canoes were basically of shovel-nose design, preferably carved from Port Orford Cedar. Special canoes with high prows were designed for ocean going:

The Coos canoe was made preferably of white cedar, but sometimes of red cedar. There was a Coos Indian canoe that a few years ago broke away and got crushed in a log jam. But there is still one Coos canoe in existence, made by a man some 40 years ago for fishing on a small lake near his home, but made in true Coos style, though with modern tools. The maker has died but his son is there and uses the canoe (G. B. Wasson, Sr. cited in Harrington 1943:24:857).

George Wasson knows exactly how a Coos canoe is made. It has high bow and stern, and beveled gunwales, and no seats, only sometimes they tied a board across.

The Indians sat in their canoes and old canoe Indians were bowlegged as one who rides horseback all the time (Harrington 1943:24:857).

Legends tell that one such canoe carried a whole village of people across the Pacific Ocean to escape inevitable annihilation by a revengeful village from the southern Tututunne. Many years later, people were found in Japan who could still speak the “Coquelle” Miluk language (Hall 1984:35).

#### Basketry: Materials and Production

The manufacture of baskets, nets, twine and other woven materials was among the traditional industries of all Oregon coastal peoples (see Fig. 6). The Coquelle Indians and their close neighbors lived in the center of the most abundant resources for those weaving materials. Due to the untimely decimation of the people and their traditional cultural practices, the knowledge of the art and craft of gathering, preparation and weaving has been almost lost.



Figure 6. Susan Adulsah (with a basket).

However, a few weavers in southern Oregon and northern California have carefully maintained traditional knowledge and practices as learned from the old people. They have kept alive those nearly forgotten secrets and skills which once made Coquelle ancestors some of the most proficient and prolific of west coast basket makers.

In 1817, Peter Corney specifically commented on the baskets of the southern coastal people, regarding them as “handsome” (Beckham 1977:103).

It’s also interesting to note that although only men were in the canoes to greet the sailors, Corney’s description of the hats they were wearing sounds exactly like the basket hats worn only by women in present day customs of the Yuroks. Such hats are reported as being customary for the Coos and Coquelles, as well.

The importance of basketry and woven materials (e.g., twine, rope, mats, and “wicker work”) in the cultures of the coastal people is strongly indicated by mention of them in the coastal creation myths. For instance, mats and baskets were used by two mythical beings in creating the world. Baskets were split open, and laid out

flat, to protect the newly forming land mass from erosion by ocean wave action (Frachtenberg 1913:5; Jacobs 1940:239-240). That highly important role implies that basketry is older than humans, who were obviously created later.

On the Coquille River, at the "Osprey Site" near Bullards State Park, open-work woven structures of both willow and split cedar, (which are presumed to be "fish traps") have been discovered buried in the mud and silt along with numerous fish weir stakes. These have been radiocarbon dated to between 600 and 1,100 years old (Byram and Erlandson 1996; Moss and Erlandson 1998b). Several years earlier, a traditionally woven basket was also recovered from the silt just upriver at the "Philpott Site," but treatment with linseed oil has destroyed the integrity of the original materials, and rendered it undateable by the radiocarbon method.

### Annual Burning Practices

Certain basketry materials such as bear grass and hazel required burning off a year prior to collecting and preparing for weaving. Each fall, people would go to the mountains and set fires in the

areas where the best "grass" and "sticks" were growing. When they returned the following summer, the bear grass would have grown into fresh clumps ready for harvesting. However, the hazel needed to grow for another season after burning and was harvested the following spring when the sap started flowing again (Thompson 1916:31).

This same burning technique was applied in other locations to control certain weeds and to produce new shoots, which enhanced various berry production. Peter Boag (1992) writes about the Willamette Valley being seasonally burned by the Kalapuyas for the collection of tarweed seeds (*lemolo sapolil*, "wild grain" in Chinook Jargon). By this practice, the valley was virtually developed into a garden like park-land.

Burning along the Oregon Coast was such a regular and obvious practice that early sailors often referred to the area as "fire land." Smoke shrouded the coastal mountains and fires could be seen burning the entire length of the coast. This regular burning, which prevented the growth of brush and cleared out the understory of the old growth forests, also produced extensive grassy

prairies on the ridges and southwestern slopes of the coastal mountains. On these ridges, people dug their deep pits, staggered in series along a ridge-line where the immense elk herds could be driven and some would inevitably fall in.

### Elk Dogs from K'ammahss-Dunn Rancheria

The following story, was related to John P. Harrington by Coquel Thompson, sometime in the early 1940s. The location of the village mentioned here is at Bullard's Beach State Park (35-CS-3) on the Coquille River, just north of the town of Bandon, Oregon.

My father bought 2 Indian male elk-dogs from K'ammahss-dunn rancheria at the mouth of the Coquille River. The Indians there raised these pure-breed of dogs known as "elk dogs." These dogs grabbed the elks by the hind legs and every time the elk started to run the dog would hold his hind legs . . . they told the dog to go after the elks: "dushleet-ch'uh" or "dushle-cheh'." Then you would hear the dog bark when he arrived where the elks were. You could tell the arrival by the kind of bark.

The elk kept wheeling around with the dog biting high on his thighs and my father thus overtook the elk -- 8 shot arrows into him. As soon as the elk fell, the dogs bit him in the throat and killed him.

My father paid Indian money (dentalia) the length of my arm worth maybe \$100.00 for those 2 dogs. They were young, my father would not buy old ones. They were big dogs, with black and white color in spots. Those

dogs were just like people, knew their names, they would sit down.

Once Thompson was offering meat to one of those dogs sitting in the Indian house door (two or three feet high) “and one of those dogs snapped at it and bit the tip of my left-hand forefinger off, and the Indians talked of killing the dog, but another Indian said the dog did not hurt the dog.” The dogs were big. They never bothered with deers, only with elks. They never barked---except when they reached an elk.

Two men would go out elk hunting and the two dogs would keep behind the two men. Only when the men saw an elk track, did one of the Indians say to the dogs “Duss-leechuh!” The dogs would pick up the scent of the track and would come upon the elks sleeping or feeding. Sometimes near sometimes far—the men would climb a little hill to better hear, and when they heard the right bark the men went running to the spot.

Those dogs would sit down in the Indian house just like persons and when the Indians ate they would throw bones to the dogs who were expert at catching them in their mouths.

The dogs slept just outside the cook house door, which door was 2 feet high. Each night the Indian men would leave for sleeping in the sweathouse and those 2 dogs would without being told, go to lie, climbing up a little notched ladder beside the cook house door, ready to jump at any intruder, in a place provided for them, some 3 feet high.

[Thompson] would call elk, Dahsht choh-lee' ch'ah' or literally, “elk dog.” One of the dogs was named K'uhlyo alias “K'uhl yoh ch'oh,” and the other was named Wun uh sht' gee,” meaning White neck. And he looked at you when you mentioned one name, and when you call his name he come (Harrington 1943:26:351).

### Salmon: A Sacred Food from the Ocean

Surely there never existed a more spiritual and ritualized relationship between humans and fish than has flourished among the cultural groups of the Northwest Coast and their beloved salmon. So special was salmon to the Coquelles, as with other coastal people, that a highly sacred ceremony was performed upon the arrival of the first salmon. There was an obvious intent to pay honor and tribute to the salmon for returning again to the streams where the people could obtain them for food. A common and primary element of those rituals required that the bones of the honored fish be maintained intact. The flesh was cooked and shared with many people and eaten ritually with great reverence. The whole skeleton was then placed in the water, usually with the head pointed upstream to insure that the salmon would continue to multiply and return the next season.

Salmon fishing was done primarily in the streams, where weirs or “fish dams” were constructed to either catch them in basket-like traps or contain them in areas where they could be readily speared or dipped out by hand nets.

### The Legend of Old Man Coyote and the Fish Dam

One of the most intriguing stories of “Old Man Coyote,” was collected by John P. Harrington, from an Upper Coquille informant, Coquel Thompson. It told of a notable “fish dam” on the Coquille River and how the place came to be called “Thet-Suh-wuh-let-Sludunn” (a place where two large round stones are located on either side of the water). This place, where there was a riffle, lies on the Upper Coquille River somewhere around Myrtle Point at a broad stretch of gravel bar. There, the Upper Coquelles built a fish weir and a salmon trap in July or August, to catch the salmon that came in September. This was a notable dam made of willow stakes driven straight down into the gravel bottom, whose immensity spanned the full width of the river. The construction of this dam was obviously a great undertaking and required an extensive communal effort to cut, sharpen, and pound the great stakes into place and weave smaller branches between them to form the secure barricade fence.

Such an enormous salmon weir always seemed to be of special importance to all the people along that river. Each coastal stream with a salmon run, had reason to have such a structure, and those

people who were dedicated and accomplished enough to build one that reached from shore to shore had reason to be proud. The larger the dam, the more prestige it bestowed on the builders.

No one seems to know where Coyote was coming from on the occasion recounted in this story, or just why, but he was poling his way upstream in his canoe--along with his current wife, the former Mrs. Fish Duck--when his progress was halted by the enormous salmon weir. Coyote tried to push his way through, but the structure was too sturdy. Of course, true to form, he became angry and vowed to smash through. So he went back down stream and loaded two large round boulders into the bow of his canoe and placed his wife at the stern. Even though he was pushing against the current, Coyote was determined to break through the barricade, but his first attempts were too feeble and he failed. Finally in a fit of rage, he poled as fast and hard as he could and broke through. But just as he got to the up stream side, his pole slipped, he lost his balance, and the current threw his canoe back against the weir, flipped it up on end, catapulted the boulders out onto either shore, and dumped Coyote and his wife into the water. Using *Tamanawis*, the magical

powers of his mind, Coyote brought the canoe up from under the swift current and quietly took his wife back downstream. That's why the place was called "Thet" (stones) "suh-wuh-let" (spherical) "sluh-dunn" (on opposite sides of the water-place) (Wasson 1991:86).

### Treaties and Land Claims

Coquille headmen signed the treaty of 1855 with the U. S. Government (the unratified Port Orford treaty of 1851 also identified several signatories as Coquille Indians), which would have ceded tribal land to the United States in return for a reservation and various tribal rights. Although the treaty was never ratified by Congress, the survivors of the Rogue River Wars of 1856 (and of earlier village massacres by White miners and U.S. Army retaliations) were marched overland or shipped up the coast by steamers to concentration camps at Reedsport and Yachats. Some were moved later to the Siletz Reservation, while many others died or ran away.

In 1916 George Bundy Wasson began investigating Indian land claims based primarily on broken or unratified treaties and "began

a 30-year campaign for claims settlements in western Oregon” (Beckham 1990:186). For eleven years he lobbied Congress and finally won permission to go to court in 1929. Stephen Dow Beckham portrays “Bundy’s” quest to right the wrongs against the Tribes as follows:

The concern about injustice, legal rights, and land claims was voiced most clearly by the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw. These three tribes--operating as one unit since their treaty agreement with Joel Palmer in 1855--pioneered in using the "system." Their efforts, which set a pattern for other Indian groups throughout the Pacific Northwest, began in 1916. In the summer of that year, George Bundy Wasson, a graduate of Chemawa and Carlisle, went to Washington D.C. to investigate the Indian land claim. Wasson had grown up on his mother's allotment on South Slough on Coos Bay. That trip began eleven lonely and frustrating years of lobbying by these Indians. Like other American Indians, they were prohibited by law from suing the United States government. To bring a suit for their land claims, the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw had to gain a special act of Congress. Not until 1929 did Congress pass the measure which permitted them to go to court.

Case K-345, the lawsuit of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw for settlement for land claims, took nine years to get a judgment in the Court of Claims. During all of the time between 1917 and 1938 these Indians had to pay for their own legal expenses. . . Each family that could gave \$5.00 a month to help pay for George Wasson's trips to Washington D.C., and to pay for the work of the attorneys (Beckham 1977:37).

In 1931, George Bundy Wasson called upon the most knowledgeable members of the Coos and Coquelle tribes to provide evidence for aboriginal land claims. Historian Stephen Dow Beckham reports participation in those hearings as follows:

In 1931 Court-appointed clerks took Indian testimony in North Bend, Oregon. Seventeen members of the tribes spoke, several of them in their native languages. The aged James Buchanan was one who remembered much of what had happened. . . . In 1875 he had spoken at the Yachats Conference and protested against the closing of the Alsea reservation. Now in 1931 he spoke again for his people and their land claim. Lottie Evanoff named the villages and fishing places. George, Maggie Sacchi, Annie Peterson, Laura Metcalf, Frances Elliot, and Mrs. William Waters spoke (Beckham 1977:180-181).

The federal Court of Claims decided favorably for the land claims of the Coquelles (and other coastal groups) on April 2, 1945. The United States Supreme Court overruled an appeal by the Justice Department on November 25, 1946. The case was finally closed in 1950, awarding \$1.20 per acre for 722,530 acres. Coquelle descendants were awarded an inheritance of \$3,128,000.00, and after numerous federal deductions, the remainder equaled approximately \$2,000.00 per person. Unfortunately, final settlement

was made in “per-capita” payments, in which the total was divided equally among the eligible tribal enrollees.

Perhaps the tribal members were glad to at last get something for all they had lost by not having a treaty and giving up all of their land. It seems as though they believed that the end of their status as a legitimate Indian tribe was at hand. It surely seemed impossible to fight the federal government’s efforts to destroy their “Indianness” and render them *personae non grata*, as had already been done to the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw.

### Termination, Restoration, and Political Turmoil

The Coos and Coquelles were among those terminated and among those whose cultural losses became most evident after federal restoration was accomplished. Along with restoration as federally recognized tribes, there came a whole new set of problems to compound the cultural turmoil. Restoration required the establishment of a tribal council and adoption of a tribal constitution (upon approval of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and

Department of Interior) as well as accepting federal dollars in the form of new tribes funding.

On August 13, 1945, along with 42 other Western Oregon Indian Tribes, the Coquelles were effectively terminated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower's signature of Public Law 588, making termination effective on August 13, 1956. Termination was not a satisfactory solution to problems of American Indians and did not fulfill the obligations of the federal government to Indian people.

Tribal members continued to communicate through a home-printed "news letter." Meanwhile, tribal leaders, led by Wilfred Wasson, worked with Native American Program Oregon Legal Services (NAPOLS) attorneys, Rod Clark and Michael Mason, to reverse termination as had happened for other Indian tribes.

The Coquille Indian Tribe was finally restored to federal recognition by an Act of Congress on June 28, 1989, by passing the "Coquille Indian Restoration Act" (103 Stat. 91).

### Contemporary Views of Coquille and Oregon History

The “History” taught in Oregon schools is only the “official” version of Oregon history. That is only one “truth.” There are other truths. For instance, it is true that the settlers didn’t have to fight off the Kalapuyas, Mollalas, Luckiamutes or any others of the beautiful Willamette Valley to obtain control and possession of that splendid park land. The Natives of this verdant valley practiced controlled burning to inhibit certain vegetation and encourage growth of other food producing plants and grasses which provided forage for the abundant deer and elk herds.

Early American settlers did not have to fight for the Willamette Valley. Those Native peoples had been so severely decimated by the “fevers” of 1829-1832 that their villages had become virtual “ghost towns” with scattered survivors stunned into permanent shock, as though a massive Viet Nam War had just mowed them down. And to the good fortune of those settlers, the remaining Indians had been gathered up by the missionary Jason Lee and his helpers in what Stephen Dow Beckham (personal communication 1974) referred to as “a virtual Indian death camp,”

even though the residents were there as recipients of Christian charity.

It was quite different on the coast in subsequent years, when the southern Oregon Indians were herded to the concentration camp at Yachats. There was no Christian charity, only the government agents. Yachats was nothing more than an extermination camp, and many of those people were the survivors of village massacres, just like the villagers who were slaughtered in My Lai during the Viet Nam War.

Merely 260 people were accounted for, by the signatures on the 1855 treaties, in southwestern Oregon. The other 2,000 were just dumped in with them, and the provisions guaranteed them by the treaties seldom arrived (or were too few to effectively divide among all who were starving). Fifty percent of them died in the first decade (Beckham 1977:162) from starvation or even drowning on the ocean rocks while attempting to obtain mussels for food.

Most of those concentration camp secrets have never been told publicly, but several accounts of the wretched social and cultural clashes have been documented by some of the more assiduous

ethnologists. With the loss of family and group integrity necessary for appropriate spiritual and social guidance, decadence and moral decay claimed many victims. This was especially the plight of the younger women who learned from experiences with the soldiers, and miners, the basic skills of survival by doling out sexual favors.

One ghastly account tells of a jealous woman punishing an outsider (a woman from another tribal area) who was an "unpurchased wife" of her husband. "To be respectable a woman had to be purchased in marriage" (Miller and Seaburg 1990:585). She was pounced upon, beaten, and dragged to the fire where her undergarments were ripped off and she was sexually humiliated. In a second and similar incident, the offending woman was ultimately chastised with a burning fire-brand (Jacobs 1939:116,117).

Another seldom-told story is about a young Miluk woman brutally murdered by a drunken miner who was attempting to rape her. She managed to escape temporarily and ran down the beach to hide, but he caught up with her and was infuriated with her attempts to thwart his desires. He found her desperately stuffing sand into her vagina, so he killed her (Hall 1984:105).

### Acculturation as Federal Policy

Since the coming of the White men, many generations of Indian children have been taken from their home environment, as part of an insidious U.S. Government program to kill the Indian and educate the man. In the process of doing so, Colonel Richard Henry Pratt announced his plans after the Indian Wars to establish a school for civilizing young Indians (as much as could be expected) and replace their “savage” ways with the “superior” life-style of the White man. Pratt was deeply engrossed in religious symbology and advocated “total immersion” (in White culture) for young Indians: “In Indian civilization I am a Baptist because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked” (Pratt 1964:335). This became the impetus for establishing the military-style Indian school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

In 1898, my father was one of those earliest enrollees at Carlisle, and it changed his life forever. His first choice for a course of study was Law, which was acceptable to the school officials, but they made certain that he became proficient in a trade also, because

it was well understood that Indians could never be successful at professions, which required a college degree. As was the case for all students there and at other Indian schools, he was required to choose a trade to learn so that he might have a realistic chance at success later on. He ended up becoming a tailor, and quite a good one. His practice of law, however, was more beneficial to all the Indians back home, but it never brought any income from his constituents other than meager amounts to cover his living and travel expenses between Coos Bay and Washington, D.C.

In 1853, my grandfather, George R. Wasson, built the first log cabin in Empire on Coos Bay. By 1856, nearly all of the older Indians had been either killed off or taken away to reservations. My father was born in 1880, the first generation after the coming of the White man. His mother didn't want to hold him back by hindering him socially with the use of her Native languages, so she insisted that he learn English and become educated in the best possible schools. Carlisle was free to Indians, so that's where he went. He had also attended school at Chemawa. He was doomed to spend the rest of his adult life between the two worlds of Indian and White men,

battling to explain each to the other, and never having an opportunity to just be himself in either place.

That was a common story for many capable and intelligent young Indians just after the turn of the century. The land, hunting and fishing rights, culture, and traditions, were all considered gone with the unratified treaties of 1855. Language was of little use, except for talking with old people or occasionally to keep nosy Whites from understanding personal conversations. However, for most young people, the stigma of being Indians (or half-breeds), was a major obstacle to overcome, and talking “Indian” was not one of the better qualities to show off in public.

Speaking in Native languages was discouraged and punishable in the government schools, as the primary intent of education was to make better people out of the “savages.” Naturally, many young Indians all over the country grew up with little or no use of their Native languages. Along with that loss of language was the deplorable prohibition and loss of cultural and spiritual traditions and tribal identity. Equally deplorable, was the anxiety and frustration experienced by those young Indians, who knew major

concepts of their ancestral culture, knew the difference as compared to the dominant culture (which spoke English), and yet were not given the freedom, and pleasure of expressing themselves in the languages so vital to their ancestral heritage.

It was rare for some families to maintain a steadfast interest and determined effort to keep ideas and traditions alive, if not always in practice, then often just in family memories. So it was with my Dad and my family. We cared about history and traditions and never hesitated to let it be known we were Indians. Without our language though, it was often difficult to defend our cultural heritage and pride against the derision of others, who mocked Indians in general.

Among my siblings, it was my brother Wilfred and I who continued on to college and who shared in exchanging information on our tribe's culture and history. There were many times, however, that I realized how limited my knowledge was compared to the vast amount of culture that was lost or systematically destroyed and obliterated. The ultimate product was a truly devastating "cultural black hole." There was also the fact that we had not grown up on a

reservation like “real Indians” and we weren’t even able to prove our tribal background. At that time, we weren’t from a federally recognized tribe.

At college, I became really embarrassed when I couldn’t bring myself to confess that I didn’t even know the names and locations of the major popular tribes in the United States. I didn’t know the histories of U.S./Indian relationships. I didn’t know the full histories of our treaty, our language, or culture. As I met more Indians, I felt more inadequate.

I finally completed an undergraduate degree, and immediately entered into a master’s program in counseling. At the same time, I was offered (and accepted) a position as an Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Oregon.

Because I proudly claimed my “Indianness,” it seemed I was expected by other administrators to be able to answer any questions concerning all Indians, and to relate in a “culturally correct manner” to any other Indian on campus, whatever tribe they came from, and whatever problem they had for the University to solve.

I was expected to know how to deal with other Indians and their problems equally well.

I could understand my own problem of not knowing my own tribe's culture and history, but not knowing much about other Indians as well compounded the situation enormously. One solution was to read and study all I could about all Indians in America. That was a monumental task, which would lead me into years of study and research. It seemed to take more years and skills than I ever hoped to have. It sometimes seemed hopeless.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, there was a major surge in the search for self-awareness for concerned Indians all across the country. However, there was no grand plan, no road maps or formulae for young Indians to follow in finding themselves in the big picture of the American Indian cultural-historical milieu. Each tribe or nation was in a different situation, in a different boat (or canoe as it were) adrift without adequate knowledge of navigation or with no obvious means of propulsion.

It seemed as though the ancient Flood Myth of the Coos Bay area was being lived out again, wherein the people who had rushed

to their canoes in advance of the rising waters were set adrift, except for those who had prepared by stashing long ropes in their canoes. They could tie-up to the tops of the tall Douglas fir trees protruding from the mountaintops, and gradually let themselves back down as the water receded. While those with shorter ropes either capsized or were forced to cut loose, others with no ropes at all were swept far away into another land.

Perhaps that old story equates to the people today who maintained cultural integrity through the years of acculturation, and those who ignored their cultural background and drifted into the mainstream or “melting pot” of the dominant societies. Of course, it must be remembered that some tribal people were removed from their home areas, relocated into urban settings and offered education and retraining opportunities at government expense. They were not forewarned that they would be left in those urban areas with their newly acculturated skills and training to fend for themselves. Not all Indians experienced such a desperate loss of self-identity, but such was the case for nearly all of those tribal

members and descendants from the federally terminated tribes of the 1950s, especially in southwest Oregon.

### Conclusions

Many tragic tales could be told about the conflicts and atrocities suffered by Oregon Indians, such as the horrible slaughter or outright mass murder at the Nasomah Village instigated by Packwood and his sidekick Soapy. The effect on the tribes of southern Oregon was an American holocaust just as suffered by the Jews during World War II in Germany. Just as the holocaust in Germany must be taught and remembered, so must the holocaust in Oregon be taught in our schools so Oregonians and other Americans will know our collective history. That knowledge might better insure that such a holocaust never happens again.

Indications of the extensive variety of lost languages, myths, tales and cultural traditions in the Pacific Northwest (and most particularly in southwestern Oregon), can be noted in the comments of Melville Jacobs (1972:11), which bear repeating:

Northwest states, before 1750, had sixty to seventy Indian languages, two to three thousand bands, hamlets, or villages, and something under, around, or over two hundred thousand people. This hunting-fishing-gathering population could once have yielded a million or more versions of myths, smaller numbers of tales, and no one can estimate how much of other oral genres. . . . Myths of most variable merit that have been collected over the region total less than a thousand and will never exceed that number. Tales amount to a few hundred, forever so. The bleak harvest is . . . maybe one percent of what could have been obtained if the culture-bound, condescending, and racist invaders had had the slightest capacity to perceive merit in the heritages of non-Europeans. By the time anyone with such capacity went to work, native humiliation and extinction had erased almost everything. Folklore-oriented linguists, . . . arrived too late after the pioneers had trampled upon and destroyed the Indians.

By that time, most of the aboriginal myths and legends had been lost with the extreme decimation of the Native peoples. However, among the meager collections of myths and stories from the people of the Southern Oregon Coast, there are especially interesting ones which relate the earliest human knowledge of creation of their world and other geologic and environmental events. Descriptions of floods, fires, earthquakes and tsunamis are reported in specific geographic locations.

Even after the massacres, disease epidemics, removal, and reservations, federal policies of acculturation thoroughly decimated the cultural integrity of small Oregon tribes, including the Coquelles. The struggle for self-awareness and self-sufficiency has produced extensive social and political schisms among Coquelle tribal members and between the Tribe and outside public agencies. Many young tribal members are desperate to understand the overall processes of cultural change and acculturation of the older generations.

In pondering the analogy of the cultural “black hole” of the Southern Oregon Coast, it should be noted that black holes of outer space are thought to absorb and condense all available matter within reach, but then are no longer visible or identifiable to the outside observer. Only research from an insider perspective will reveal the lost information so vital to the “reculturation” of the Coquelles and their neighbors.

Miluk Tales of Jedediah Smith at Coos Bay

This collection of tales relating the visit of the Jedediah Smith expedition to South Slough on Coos Bay in 1828 contains my own first rendition of that event as I recalled hearing it from my father, George B. Wasson, Sr., and my older brother, Wilfred C. Wasson.

After having written my own story, Version #1 (Wasson 1991), I found hidden among my father's personal papers, several other versions [Versions #2, #3, and #5] which he collected from old time Indians in the Sough Slough area. Version #4, was collected by Harrington from an interview with my father.

Unfortunately many pages of my father's notes have been lost, stolen, and/or burned by vandals. Consequently there remain only fragments of some versions [Versions #2 and #3 are partly burned].

Version #1. "Strange People With Hairy Faces" (Wasson 1991).

Early in the nineteenth century, white explorers, trappers, and missionaries began to come to the Pacific Northwest. An expedition of one early explorer, Jedediah Smith, was attacked in 1828 by angry Lower Umpqua Indians. That attack was provoked by an incident at Coos Bay before he met the Umpquas, and the story is still a part of Coquelle oral tradition.

In the summer of 1828, when the Jedediah Smith expedition made its historic trek up the coast of Oregon, word of its strange light-skinned people with hair on their faces and large four-legged animals that were neither deer nor elk spread rapidly up the coast. Those animals, it was said, also had curved flat blades of Chicamin--Iron, in Chinook Jargon-- fastened to the bottoms of their single rounded hooves to make them tougher and to help them endure the rough terrain. The hairy-faced men also carried "rock-throwing sticks," which they didn't have to swing, but merely pointed at a target, causing fire and smoke to explode as the stick threw a metal stone harder, faster, and farther than any of the Indians had imagined possible.

News of the slow and laborious progress of this awesome caravan had been carried up the coast to every village headman. One group, the Nasomahs, had sent word up to their Miluk relatives on the South Slough of Coos Bay. Those living at the mouth of the Coquille River were relatively few in number, and as the expedition finally approached the main village, most of the people had gone across the river to the north-side village.

Smith must have posed a formidable specter to the last of the fleeing villagers, for they paddled furiously to the other shore, smashed their highly prized "*thlahkhoosa*" (canoes) to pieces and hid among the trees to watch in awe as the white men tore up the Indians' plank houses to make a raft on which to cross the tidewater.

What Smith and his men did next must have truly puzzled the Indians. Instead of following the well-established trail that led directly to South Slough, Smith took his weary group through the sand hills along the coast and led them into the worst terrain they had yet encountered in their long journey. At this, the Nasomah people rushed to tell Kitzenjinjn Galah-dah Luee, the prominent Miluk headman at South Slough, who was so

tall and robust his name meant “elk skin robe would not meet all the way around the middle.”

When told of the strangers in their midst, Kitzenjinjn responded with great military pomp and diplomacy, taking 300 armed men dressed in their finest skins and feathers out onto the coastal headlands near Cape Arago and ceremoniously welcomed the astonished whites. The Indians escorted Smith and his men, along with their several hundred head of horses and mules, to South Slough, where they were duly ferried across to the village site and guided to a suitable place of encampment nearby.

Recently, family relatives have told me that Smith camped on the west side of South Slough at “Battle Flat,” a part of Charleston.

During the next few days, Smith and his party rested and enjoyed the abundant hospitality of the local people. The Indians provided much food and extensive trading took place. Also, they were introduced to the white method of boiling and eating dried beans — food that both fascinated and puzzled them and was to lead to a humorous situation years later, when they tried to prepare and eat coffee beans in the same way.

However, during this otherwise amiable interlude, some difficulties were to arise. For one thing, Smith was greatly annoyed by some of the more curious and meddlesome tribesmen, who shot arrows into some of his pack animals, wounding and killing a few. One other incident that seemed unimportant at the time was to have a disastrous result.

It seems that a man from the Lower Umpqua River who was visiting at Coos Bay could not contain his curiosity about the strange habits of the White men. As was the common practice among European descendants, a cook in the Smith party had hung an elk carcass in a tree to “ripen” until it was suitable for consumption. The

Umpqua visitor, however, apparently felt that the meat was turning to a state that decent palates would not find edible and stuck his knife into the flesh to determine its degree of putrefaction.

Unfortunately, the Indian was discovered by the cook, who thought he was trying to steal the meat and rushed at him with his butcher knife, cutting off an ear and part of his nose. Thus marked, the Indian was disgraced beyond social acceptability, for to his people the severing of an ear or -worse yet—a nose, was punishment meted out only to a runaway slave or for adultery (Jacobs 1939:71).

When the Lower Umpqua man rushed to Kitzenjinjn demanding that the Indians attack the White men in retaliation for his humiliation, his complaint was rejected. The wise headman responded that the man had trespassed on the territory and possessions of those who were guests of the local people, and that those guests had “diplomatic immunity” in their own camp. The Umpqua visitor, he said, would have to suffer the consequences of his bold intrusion.

This response made the wounded man furious and he stormed away from Coos Bay, raving about the hairy-faced intruders and vowing that he would have revenge. When he reached his own people, he related his tale of mistreatment, which seemed to offer proof that the Smith party was not to be trusted and deserved punishment. Thus, the mood was set among the Lower Umpquas for the arrival of Jedediah Smith and his expedition.

History clearly details the events that followed and ended with nearly total destruction of those explorers (see Beckham 1971:28; Douthit 1986:46,66,68-70,72,78,117,118).

Version #2. (a fragment)

Washington D.C. January 7, 1918.

The Coos Bay Indians first came in contact with the White people in the year of 1828, when a party of the American Fur and Trading Company passed through their territory en route from California to Vancouver. This party of fur traders camped on the west side of South Slough, in Coos vicinity. An old Indian came into their camp and was admiring an elk that was hanging in camp. The old Indian was saying to himself in his own language "these must be powerful people; I would like to look at the man that carried that fat elk into camp and hung it upon that tree."

Just then the cook came up, and seeing the old fellow near the camp, stepped up and gave the old Indian a shove that set him over backwards. The old man was very indignant and after addressing the White man severely, went in his canoe to the village of the head chief of the Coos Bay tribe. [He] asked that a party of braves be called together and an attack be made on the camp of the White men; murder them all and throw their bodies into the ocean from the top of the bluff at Coos Head.

The chief whose name was Galadelua, [Kitzenjinjn] called a council of his headmen and after listening carefully to the statement of the old Indian, the old man was reprimanded and was reminded that he had broken a breach of etiquette. It had long been the custom of the Coos Indians, when entering the camp of strangers, to seat themselves in a conspicuous place at a safe distance from camp, thus denoting their peaceful intentions. [end of notes] (Wasson 1916).

Version #3. (source unknown)

It was on the fourth of July, 1828, that a company of trappers and fur-traders came upon the shores of the Pacific Ocean in northern California. They had crossed the Trinity Mountains from the Sacramento Valley and some of the men gazed on the waters of Pacific for the first time.

Their leader seemed to be in a hurry, for it was only a few days later they were working their way up the Oregon Coast, which is northern Curry Coast, and on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of July they crossed the Coquille River, and encamped at what is now known as Whiskey Runn (sic). Breaking camp early on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July they made the Sunset Bay by mid afternoon where they were met by the Chief of the Coos Bay tribe with an escort of more than 300 warriors.

Mr. Jedediah Smith, being familiar with the Chinook Jargon was able to converse with these Indians. The chief informed Mr. Smith that he was within 10 days march from . . . [missing pages] -presence- How careless he thought the younger generation was to allow strangers to establish themselves in their country without being noticed. The chief should be there. So according to the customs of many years, the old Indian landed his canoe and seated himself on a conspicuous sand dune and waited to be invited into the strangers' camp - for it was long the custom of the Coos Indians never to enter a strangers' camp uninvited.

After waiting some time and not being invited in the old fellow became tired and according to custom, he should have moved on. But, after considering that these were strange people from afar and not being used to their customs, it might be proper to enter their camp and make him self known. So the old fellow cautiously approached the tents. Seeing a large elk hanging in a tree the Indian stopped to admire the . . . [end of fragment, remainder charred] (Wasson 1916).

Version #4. (an interview with George B. Wasson, Sr.  
by John P. Harrington)

I know from old Indians the history of Jedediah Smith, the first whites, who came up the coast of Oregon. My father told me about it. The Indians kept the trails open for him, if they had not, it would take 2 years to go just a few miles because of the heavy underbrush. When a redwood fell on the trail, they set fire and burned a path through it.

Jedediah Smith came and put [up] his tents [at South Slough], and an old Indian went over there and saw an elk hanging up and stuck his knife into him to see what condition the meat was, not to steal the meat, when Mr. Turner the cook came out and kicked the old man out of the camp. The old man went to the Coos chief but they told him he had no business in the camp without being invited.

Then Smith moved his camp, he was on his way north, he put Indian canoes under logs and the horses kept falling in the river. He went up to Umpqua country and the old man Indian followed him and he told the Umpqua Indians how he had been treated. They also said he was at fault. But just then some Indian boys came into the camp with their legs bleeding from where the cook had whipt (sic) them with a horse whip. Then they all got their bows and arrows and massacred all the Smith party, except Turner who dove in the river and got away. Smith was out scouting at the time of the attack and lost no time in leaving the country, one man with him. Thus 3 survived (Harrington 1943: reel 24, frame 858).

Version #5. (told to George B. Wasson, Sr. by a Coos Bay woman)

More than a hundred years ago, an old decrepit Indian of the Coos Bay tribe was paddling down South Slough when he noticed some white tents pitched in the little cove [currently] just south of the west end of the South Slough bridge. The old fellow was very curious to know what manner of people were camped in such odd looking teepees. He landed his canoe on the sand beach and ambled up to a sand dune, seated himself in a conspicuous place and waited to be invited into camp.

Not being invited in and getting tired of waiting, the old man concluded that these were strange people and not used to the customs of the Coos Bay Indians. He thought it might be proper if he ventured in closer.

On approaching the camp he observed a large elk hanging in a tree. He stopped to admire the elk and took out his elk horn knife and opened the flank of the elk to note the condition. The old fellow mumbled to himself, "These must be powerful people to carry in a whole elk and hang it in a tree."

Just about that time someone seized him by the nape of the neck and kicked him out of camp. The old man was very indignant, and proceeded at once to Tarheel Point [contemporary name] where the Chief had his headquarters, and requested a hearing. So all the headmen of all the bands bordering on Coos Bay were called together and listened to the old man's story.

After careful deliberation, the Chief and the headmen informed the old man that he had committed a breach of etiquette by entering the strangers' camp uninvited. Therefore, they could not grant his request to murder these people and throw them in the ocean off from Coos Head. The old Indian was notified that the Coos Bay tribes were trading with these people and had promised to furnish them with canoes to carry their

goods across South Slough and help them on their way through the country.

The old Indian was not satisfied. He induced some of the younger and more venturesome members of the tribe to shoot arrows into the strangers' horses in an endeavor to provoke a war. However, the Indians were so numerous that the strangers dared not resent these attacks.

The Indians gathered their canoes just south of [present] Empire. The strange people cut poles and attempted to build pontoons with the canoes for the purpose of ferrying the horses across the bay. But when the attempt was made to board the horses on the pontoons, the canoes would roll out from under the poles. The Indians got a big kick out of this and said these strange people did not have much sense, so the Indians took the horses separately and swam them across the bay behind the canoes that ferried the goods across the bay. A guide was furnished the strangers and they departed for the Umpqua.

The old Indian, not being satisfied, followed them up through the sand hills and made his way to the Umpqua. The Umpqua Chief gave the old man a hearing and was just about to turn him down as did the chief and head men of the Coos Bay tribe, when a half dozen little boys ranging between six and ten years, came running into camp with their legs bleeding. They were curious about the pots and kettles and were looking around the camp when the same cook that bounced the old man out, lashed the boys with a black snake whip until their legs bled.

The old Indian pointed to the bleeding legs of the boys and said, "see what they did, they are bad people and ought to be killed." The Indians grabbed their war clubs and attacked the party of strangers and massacred them all except two, who jumped into the river and managed to make their escape. The Indians held their

possessions and horses until someone from the Hudson's Bay Company came down and claimed them.

NOTE:

This story was told by an old woman of the Coos Bay tribe who could not read or speak a word of English, and had not heard of Jedediah Smith or the North American Fur Trading Company. It was about the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, in 1828, that Smith's party reached Sunset Bay, where they were met by about one hundred Coos Bay Indians who talked to them in the Chinook language [Chinook Jargon], and told them that they were within ten days march from the McLoughlin camp, from the Columbia River. These were the first Indians Smith had met with whom he could carry on a conversation.

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George B. Wasson [senior]

### Final Comments

There is another obscure detail of historical relationships between the Hudson's Bay Company, the Oregon Indians, and the Euro-Americans, which seldom is discussed or noted. The rivalry between the British Hudson's Bay Company, and the Americans took on some vicious proportions as the Americans moved west and competed for the land and its resources. The Native tribes were often told by Hudson's Bay Company personnel, that the Americans were "bad"

and the British were “good.” James G. Swan commented on that bitterness as follows:

I have remarked on the hostile feeling evinced toward Americans by the former employees of the Hudson Bay Company, and here was a circumstance to corroborate my assertion. Captain Scarborough was known to keep quite a sum of money in his house at all times. He charged an old Indian servant-woman, who lived with him, in case of his death, on no account to tell a Boston man (American) where his money was, but to deliver it either to the Hudson bay Company’s agent at Chenook or some of their people up the river, alleging that the Bostons were very bad people, but the King George people were honest and good (Swan 1857:302).

It seems probable that the Umpquas were already ill disposed toward the American expedition of Jedediah Smith and were easily aroused to attack his party.

### “Chetleshin” History

A personal account of the discovery, repeated destruction, and amateur excavations of the old Native village, Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn, at the mouth of Pistol River (see also Moss and Wasson 1998).

by George B. Wasson, Jr.

The early morning coastal dew dampened our quilts and blankets as we stirred awake with the first light of dawn on a lovely September morning at Pistol River. Ron Crook and I had slept overnight at the

old village site to protect our excavations and precious artifacts from being destroyed or looted by the over zealous hordes of “pot-hunters” who descended on “Chetleshin” each weekend.

The gentle roar of the summer surf from just a few hundred yards away had been a soothing sedative to our tired bodies and minds. Our dreams were often extensions of daily musing on what life must have been for the Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn-Dunne, before the terrible onslaught of the White gold miners and settlers. What was it like the day the village was attacked and burned? We never could talk out our imaginations of the gruesome scenarios, which flooded our compassion and left us bewildered at such ruthless destruction of innocent Native people and their ancient life-ways.

Little did we know that others before us had camped and tried to sleep at that burned village site. Coquelle Thompson reported to John P. Harrington the disturbing night he and others experienced there, stating: “Once [he and some other Indians] . . . camped at that standing rock, and sleeping we heard dead people talk” (curiously, he added,) “lots of gold there under that Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn” (Harrington 1943).

It sometimes became pure madness as some argued with the University of Oregon archaeologists that the people of Oregon had a right to dig up the old Indian villages for the arrow-heads and other artifacts to be found there. It all belonged to the people, not just the professional archaeologists who took everything for themselves and just hoarded it away in some drawer or on a dusty shelf for no one to see. "Come on folks," the woman yelled to those curious ones who gawked from the highway above, "this is for everybody, dig any place you want. They can't stop us." She waved her garden shovel and shook it in the face of archaeologist Dave Cole as she encouraged the others to crash in on the excavations underway.

Not all of the local residents agreed with our excavations however. One mother adamantly refused to allow her sons to help or even go near the work site. She declared that the old house-pits were full of disease which we could all contract and start an epidemic in the Pistol River community. She was right about the epidemic, but it was a disease caused by greed for Indian artifacts, much more insidious than diphtheria or smallpox.

### Highway 101 Relocation

In 1960, some of us in Pistol River first learned the exact location of the village called “Chetlessington” or “Chetleshin” by the local pioneer descendants. Little had ever been mentioned of it, except to note that so-and-so’s ancestors fought the Indians there during the Rogue River Wars in 1856.

Ron Crook first was informed of the exact site location when Art Walker, a pioneer descendant, told him that the new highway access was going to go right through the village site. Many people seemed interested in watching, to see what “treasures” might be turned up by the bulldozers as work would begin. Others of us were stunned to think of the destruction of an important village site and loss of the potential knowledge contained in it. At first, not many people showed much interest other than to stop and look occasionally.

We had always known that the “old” village site (35-CU-62, also know as the Meyer’s Creek site) was just down the bluff from Raymond’s Lodge, located alongside “old” Highway 101, about half a mile north of 35-CU-61, Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn. Mrs. Raymond

had a small collection of “arrowheads” which had been picked up there over the years.

As we worked on the excavations, we each kept a casual eye on the other earth-moving activities of Peter Kiewit & Sons Construction Company, which was building that section of the new Highway 101. As there was no indication that the construction would touch very close to the “old” village, we paid little attention until one Monday morning, I discovered that a bulldozer had been taken down through the site, pushing the old midden right down to the beach level. I was totally aghast. My brother Wilfred and I began to search through the rubble, finding broken and scattered human bones.

Saddened and heart-broken, I was crouched on the edge of the ruins when a company pick-up truck stopped on the roadway above. A man leaned out and yelled to me, “find anything interesting?” My response was only that some damned fool took a cat through there and destroyed one of the oldest village sites on the coast. He grimaced at me and drove off without another word. I was later informed by one of the construction foremen the man I spoke

harshly to was the company superintendent, Guy Scott. He had taken his wife out there on Sunday, started up a big D-8 Caterpillar tractor and dozed off the old shell midden so she could see whether there was anything inside it.

### Necessity Produces New Preservation Techniques

We began to dig under the expert direction of my older brother, Wilfred Wasson. He had a master's degree in Anthropology and we followed his direction implicitly. There came several problems for us with little or no experience in preserving bone artifacts and eventually, burial remains of the people themselves.

New ideas and techniques for preservation were tried. Spraying the bone and antler artifacts with "Plasolux" a plastic spray, was very expensive and not very efficient. Then Wilfred came up with a brilliant solution. He mixed Elmer's Glue and Ivory Liquid dish detergent, diluted with water to stabilize the bone and antler. The detergent saturated the material, carrying the glue into the artifacts. It worked beautifully for us. We even carved pedestals of soil under the skeletal remains to maintain their fetal or flexed

position, and lifted them out of their burial places intact.

### What to do With the Removed Skeletons

Our only option for a storage area was in a set of abandoned garages now in disuse at the old Raymond's Lodge. We all anticipated that someday soon the skeletons would be transferred to the University of Oregon. No one seemed to fear that any would be removed or misplaced. We each assumed that all of the burials would go to the State Museum at the University of Oregon for examination and study. That was certainly better than allowing them to be bulldozed away by the new Highway 101 project.

### Pistol River History in a Nut Shell

Local attitudes around Pistol River ranged from curiosity to contempt for the village site and its violent history. Ron and Bill are descendants of Theron Crook, one of the vigilante group who rushed up the coast to fight the Indians, but instead were pinned down in a makeshift breastwork of driftwood on the south spit, until the regular army arrived from Crescent City to rescue them.

Theron Crook was locally hailed as a crack shot for having killed an Indian with one shot at very long range. He spotted the “chief” (shaman?) atop a small knoll, which jutted up above the river on the north bank, upstream from the beach about a quarter of a mile. Sneaking along the south bank, he had come within a long distance range of a few hundred yards where with one shot, he killed the man instantly. The spot became known as Crook Knob, and can be identified as the steep point rising precipitously above the old Pistol River Grade School.

Some local residents were as fascinated with local Indian history and lore as any American. They wanted to know more about their lifestyles, and find more of their arrowheads, stone mauls, pestles and mortars. Yet it seemed the tragedy of the Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn-Dunne was too far in the past for most to think about, or that it was a simply and inevitable result of “war and peace”.

Again, Harrington elicited more curious anecdotes from his informants while searching for the accurate pronunciation and translation of the name. An informant identified merely as “Johnny” quipped:

The fellow that led the Indians at the battle at Pistol River, was a half-breed Frenchman named "I'nis." A lot of the Indians in that battle were drunk from the whiskey they got in burning the stores down at Gold Beach (Harrington 1943).

### Military Accounts of the Battle of Pistol River

This is not the first time written history notes the presence of a "half-breed" Indian named "Enos" leading or instigating resistance among the tribes of the southern Oregon Coast. Beckham (1971:173) mentions Enos as:

A Canadian Indian who was guiding the Murdered miners" [probably a misprint, intended to read "the murder of the miners"] . . . in January 1856, about forty miles up Rogue River from the mouth. . .

In February, the people of Gold Beach who survived the initial attack and burning of their town, were still confined to the "Miner's Fort" on the north bank of the mouth of Rogue River.

Beckham (1971:176) reported that:

Enos, proudly mounted on a white stallion, rode back and forth on the hills to the east of the fort, haranguing his warriors to storm the position. In spite of his encouragement the Indians remained mostly out of range and limited their offensive to showering the

enclosure with volleys of arrows, killing livestock, and burning the rest of the settlements.

By March 15th, General Wool had dispatched a company of regular soldiers from Crescent City [now California] to march north and rescue the inhabitants of the fort. Along their way they were greeted by the burned cabin remains and bodies of several settlers who had received their just rewards for their inhuman treatment of the Native people:

At the Chetco River the soldiers found the ruins of the cabin built by the 'exterminator' Miller. His bloody treachery had not been forgotten. [Early one morning while the inhabitants were yet asleep, Miller had blocked the doors to the Chetco plank houses with driftwood, set them afire, and shot those who attempted to escape through the burning roof.] . . . Arrogant and careless, the volunteers from Crescent City rushed ahead of the regular troops so that they might be the first to come to the relief of the people at Fort Miner. Their leader was George H. Abbot, the murderer of the Coquelles in 1854. On March 18 his force walked into an ambush in the sand dunes on the southern shore of Pistol River. Had these men traveled with the main body of troops, bloodshed might have been averted, but being anxious to "punish" the Rogues, they stumbled into a day-long battle. The volunteers were caught in the open and only avoided a complete rout by hiding in the driftwood until the regular troops came to their rescue. They lost one man in the conflict (Beckham 1971:179).

### Where Are The Descendents Of Chet-Less-Chun-Dunn?

Many people treasured the stories of the last Natives who managed to escape from the concentration type reservation camps and returned to hide out in the their ancestral homelands. Many people had hurried through the hills and turned south to join their neighbors in northern California. One village at Smith River had been coerced by the military into giving up or killing the Pistol River Indians who sought asylum and their protection. The Smith River Tolowas had to give in to the White demands and executed them (Chase 1873:53-54). Only women who hid away or married into White families survived.

Ben Gardner grew up on a ranch just up the mountain from the upriver village, known as "Twin Rocks," on Pistol River. He tells of his grandmother befriending the Indian women who lived at that old village site. It seems that the neighboring mountain settlers didn't want to turn them in to be taken away to the "reservation." They remained quite unnoticed by the outside world.

### A Descendent Identifies Herself as a Pistol River Indian

Another old-timer, Ed Lawrence, whose parents had been one of the first families to arrive just after the Battle of Pistol River, tells of another type of relationship with the local Indians. He once told me that “Brownie,” his wife’s brother, was seldom mentioned in the Brown family, as he had “taken up and run off with those Indian women from upriver” and was a disgrace to them all.

I often thought about him with those “upriver Indian women” and wondered how and where they lived. It wasn’t until many years later that I heard of the “upriver women friends” of Ben Gardner’s grandmother, and that I met an elderly woman in Crescent City at the celebration of a new museum and library. When she learned I was a Coos and Coquelle Indian who had grown up in Pistol River, she asked to speak to me privately. Rather secretly she told me that her name was Brown, and that her ancestors came from the Pistol River Tribe (the Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn-Dunne). Time was hurried at that moment and we couldn’t talk at length so we agreed to get in contact with each other again. I have not yet done so and hope that she is still around to take up where we left off. I do hope so.

### Finding Accurate Names and Meanings

Pistol River colloquial terms refer to the main village in various spellings and pronunciations, e.g., “Chetleshin,” “Chet-Less-en-Ton,” “Chetle-Lessington.” It seemed nearly impossible to ever find the true name until at last I became introduced to the massive collections of John Peabody Harrington’s unpublished field-notes in the National Anthropological Archives of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

I was one of the first researchers to peruse the hidden “cryptics” of his collection, and was surprised and delighted to discover that one of his most reliable informants, from southwest Oregon was a distant relative of mine, Coquille “Kokel” Thompson. As a boy, he had grown up on the upper Coquille River and had been educated in the traditional Native manner of learning the villages and place-names along all of the neighboring rivers, streams, and coastline.

Thompson spoke a related Athabascan language and gave direct translations with each village name he recited. Therefore, we now have the accurate name of “Ch’et-Less-Ch’unn-Dunn.” The

translation was a little difficult for Thompson and his friend Lucy, as the language was not identical to their own. However they agreed that the name referred to a “standing up rock.” Thompson later added “right by a creek there.” Looking at the map one sees that indeed a creek flowed into the Pistol River just opposite of the Big Rock standing at the mouth (see Erlandson et al. 2000). Dunn, means, “place” or “there.”

As I pondered the full meaning and discussed it with Loren Bommelyn, a speaker of Tolowa (an Athabascan language identical to that of Pistol River) he responded that in his language it sounded like, “place of a big rock standing up by roiling water.” Loren had never heard of Coquelle Thompson, nor the Harrington notes. But his aural understanding of the sounds fit perfectly to the big rock (“Eagle Rock”) across from a little creek, where the mouth of Pistol River churned around it and emptied into the Pacific Ocean, about 100 years ago.

#### Unknown Caller Wants to Rebury Indians at Pistol River

In 1994, a pioneer descendant and local cemetery director of Pistol

River, received a phone call from an unidentified woman who requested that the “Indians’ bones” which were dug up at Pistol River be re-interred in the Pistol River cemetery. She had asked something like, “What are you going to do with all of these bones?”

Virginia Fendrick was startled that someone should suggest such a thing, and flatly refused to even consider her request, saying it was for Pistol River pioneer families and local residents only. She later realized that the “bones” were probably part of those lost or misplaced after her cousins Ron and Bill Crook had excavated at the “Chetleshin” village. She hadn’t even bothered to ask the name and phone number of the unknown caller.

### How Did the Burials Come to be as They Were?

It was most puzzling to find people buried in strange positions, all scrunched up like babies in their earthly wombs. Some graves were located within the walls and partly under the clay floors of the old houses. Some were outside the house walls, and one was partly in and out of a house. How could this happen; could this be some unknown internal house interment practice? Many assume just that.

In his 1971 book, *Requiem for a People*, Stephen D. Beckham mentioned the experiences of a woman adventurer in 1853. Ida Pfeifer an, “inquisitive round-the-world-traveler,” had stopped off in some of the coastal villages, perhaps Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn, and managed to spend the night sleeping in the women’s quarters. Beckham (1971:12) remarks about Ms. Ida Pfeifer’s uncomfortable sleeping arrangements:

This visitor’s rest might have been even more fitful had she known that she was probably sleeping only a few feet above the ancestors of the women with whom she spent the night. The Rogues customarily buried their dead within the village, and as years passed, new houses were frequently constructed over former cemeteries.

### It Ain’t Necessarily So

We, who excavated the house pits, and burials, continue to be puzzled over the locations, and positions of the human remains (see Erlandson et al. 1997). Some were inside, partly above the clay floors, and some outside the house walls. All of the house pit excavations produced burned timbers, but not one burial showed any sign of being burned. Who buried them?

One important aspect of all the burials was that the heads

were all pointing in a northwesterly direction. This would surely indicate the burials were placed by the Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn-Dunne themselves. If so, why were the burials here so different from those of their neighbors and close relatives in the village at the mouth of the Chetco River? It has been well established that the language of the Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn-Dunne was the same as that of the Chetcos and Tolowas. Old "Lucy" told Harrington:

Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn-Dunne [means the people, and] the rock standing up on the Pistol River beach and from that standing rock all Pistol River as a river is named. That is the divide between Rogue River and Chetco. The name refers to that rock (Harrington 1943).

Twenty years after Ida Pfeifer stayed overnight, A. W. Chase (1873), working for the Bureau of American Ethnology, described in detail the burial methods of the Chetco people. All were laid out flat with head and foot-stones and broad hewn cedar boards above and below the remains. This style of burial practice is nearly identical to that of the Smith River Tolowas and their Yurok neighbors just to the south (personal observations).

It could seem to some investigators that the burials, found in the northern part of the excavated village site, must have

constituted a cemetery. Perhaps so, by default, as there were a number of individuals buried there, with their heads all pointing to the northwest. But that is not consistent with the cemeteries elsewhere in that cultural region.

Several speculations might explain the mystery for now, and not one is more reliably authentic than another. However, given the population decimation by disease among other coastal communities in the early 1800s, e.g., the Fort Ross outbreak 1837-1838, and possibly earlier such outbreaks due to late 18th and early 19th century contacts, e.g., Vancouver at Port Orford, 1792, and Corney at Port Orford 1817 (Beckham 1971:24; Erlandson et al. 1997:235), disease epidemics could have spread quickly along the southern Oregon Coast, with no notice by the outside world, and no record of such in the oral traditions. Only the curious burials in the village sites tell a story.

When one imagines the possible explanations it seems only reasonable to expect that these people would “normally” practice their customary burials in their customary cemeteries. Those were always located somewhere near their houses, but not inside where

people were living. Then why this strange burial arrangement?

We know that there were two parts to Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn, one part on either side of the creek, which bisected it, flowing onto the beach from the east. Most of the burials were uncovered on the north side, which was nearly completely excavated before highway construction destroyed it. The south side was only partly excavated, and part of it remains intact now. Erlandson et al. (1997) dated one of these houses to approximately AD 1680, but the precise age of the burials - although clearly younger than the house - remains unknown. Were we able to accurately date the burials, Ron Crook and I believe that the following evidence would result.

There were likely repeated outbreaks of disease, which killed a number of people at Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn. In some of the earliest, the victims could have been buried in the customary manner, perhaps in the traditional village cemetery. Probably, their houses were burned, as was the custom of many in southern Oregon. The Indian Agent at the Siletz "reservation" had difficulty preventing the burning of the new government-built houses each time the head of a family died there:

This practice of immediately burning the house or hut after a death has occurred therein evidently has its rise in some rude idea of sanitary measures. Mr. Simpson, the Indian agent at the Siletz Reservation, informed me in 1868 that he had the greatest difficulty in preventing the really substantial log houses erected under his supervision by the Indians from being burnt whenever a death occurred in them (Chase 1873:38).

However, as the epidemics continued, it must have become more difficult for the surviving villagers to follow their burial customs. Possibly the depressions where the now burned houses once stood, became a substitute grave-site, requiring less digging for interment. One burial of a juvenile on the north side, was not in a house-pit, but was less than six inches under the surface. In the 1960s, a woman from Pistol River thrust her spade into the ground and took off the top of the skull in her first small shovel full of soil.

It just doesn't seem reasonable that the Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunne buried their deceased inside their homes where they continued living. The burials were not completely below the hard packed clay floors. The burial that was partly inside and outside of a house must have been placed there after the house was destroyed. The flexed positions for all of them would have required less digging for the survivors, perhaps weakened by illness themselves. Yet, the

northwest cranial alignment implies that the people themselves did the burying, following a prescribed custom albeit limited in their usual practices.

What then of the main cemetery? Where would that have been located? A major southeastern slice of the southern portion of the village remains intact. Ron Crook was just beginning a fresh excavation in that area, and just beginning to find some exquisite artifacts such as elk horn purses, (possibly funerary items) when Eugene Heflin informed him that the slope for the new highway was completed and would not affect any more of that location. Ron ceased digging, looking at the remaining flat ground to the east of him, glad that it was going to remain untouched.

Later, we both stared knowingly. Experience and intuition told us that was the perfect traditional place for their cemetery. It hadn't been found elsewhere and that spot hadn't been touched. It must be right there.

There is another remote possibility for another answer. Sometime in the 1970s or early 1980s, a local BLM archaeologist mentioned to me that he had dug a test hole on top of "Eagle Rock"

out in front of the village site that rises abruptly from the beach. It is flat on top with about a half acre of rich loam soil, in places about two or three feet deep. He claimed that his cursory excavation had uncovered a “fire-charred funerary pit.” I was somewhat astounded, as I’d never heard of such practices along the southern Oregon Coast. Perhaps it was so. Only future and more “expert” scientific analysis than we have offered as amateur yet concerned researchers might provide more convincing information. Perhaps we don’t need to know. Perhaps the Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn-Dunne, have given all they can or are willing to give to the “people, who were to come later.” We now must give them back to Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn.

### Now Where Did They Go?

As questions continued to plague all, who looked at fragmented reports on the Pistol River excavations (see Heflin 1966, 1981), it seemed that perhaps some of us had misunderstood what had happened to all those remains. Maybe they were turned over to the museum after all. Alas, not so, only a few of those burials have been identified. Somewhere out there, perhaps hidden in the back of

someone's garage, are several complete sets of skeletal remains waiting to be found and returned to their rightful resting place.

Curiously, horse remains were found buried in one of the house pits. Ron Crook and I learned that a local rancher, "Babe" Henry who once owned that piece of land, plowed up part of the rich soil (probably in the 1930s) in the village site to plant a garden. We believe that section was completely moved away by the new highway access road through the middle of the village. Apparently one of his horses died nearby and a house depression was more convenient for a grave than digging a new hole to bury a horse. Hence the probable reason for horse bones in the middle of the village.

#### Another Chapter for Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn Today

The northwest wind blows steadily nearly all summer on the southern Oregon Coast. Pistol River is one of those special places where it can be counted on to blow incessantly, so much so that recognition of the strong winds have gone far beyond what anyone of the original inhabitants might have imagined in their dreams.

Early explorers, settlers, miners, and military personnel have written pathetic notes about their troubles and pains caused by the insufferable northwest summer wind. A common complaint noted in personal letters and diaries, told of the pain of enduring the “face ache” or “ague.” Curiously, there are no stories or tales of the indigenous people experiencing problems with the wind. In some legends, as with the Nehalem, South Wind (a winter-time wind) was of a trickster nature and by extending part of his sexual anatomy, caused the development of the Nehalem sand spit which extends across the mouth of the river from the south shore.

However, today there is a completely new set of newcomers to the southern Oregon Coast. With the consistency of the strong northwest winds, have come the adrenaline-pumping, thrill-seeking wind-sailors from around the world. Pistol River (Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn) has become world famous as the place where the summer winds blow steadily and the ocean waves are big enough, to challenge the world’s best wind sailors.

As I stood on the bluff above the old village site and watched the multitude of colorful sails skimming and leaping the waves

beyond the big rock, I couldn't help wondering what the "old ones" were thinking. How could it be that life has changed so dramatically? The Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunne surely had no idea that such exotic beings would one day sport about in front of their beloved village "where the water roils at the base of the big rock." How would they have interpreted such strange behavior?

I suspect, however, none of those newcomers who arrive each summer from as far away as New Zealand, Brazil, Italy, and England to compete in ocean wave acrobatics, have the slightest idea of the beautiful and tragic past that yet hovers around the ancient village site of Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn.

The river no longer roils at the base of that rock, as the introduction of European beach grass encouraged the development of "stationary" sand dunes extending south, a mile or more from Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn. The mouth now opens straight out to sea, after years of migrating farther south, and washing away the sand dunes, which contained numerous old shell middens (see Erlandson et al. 2000). Surely that dramatic change would have signaled other equally dire changes impending for their beloved homeland. We too

should wonder. In the late 1990s, the mouth of Pistol River began a migration back north, and has removed more than a mile of the dunes with heavy beach grass. Perhaps Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunn will again have water roiling at the rock.

Elma Ismert (now deceased) an older relative of the Crook brothers, wrote this poem sometime after assisting with the amateur excavations in the 1960s and presented it to Ron Crook who provided me a copy, specifically for this publication.

Findings at Chetl-Essentan Village

All along old Curry's shores,  
 In the sand dunes, on the moors,  
 There we found reminders  
 of the days of long ago.

In old shell mounds deep and wide,  
 by the seething ocean's side,  
 we went digging for the artifacts  
 we knew we'd find below.

As we dug and searched the sand,  
 Near the ocean's glistening strand,  
 we found ornaments and arrow points  
 and implements of bone.

Arrow points so finely notched,  
 (They discarded those they botched)  
 Charms and needles, pins and rings,  
 and tools made of stone.

Ancient ivory carved so fine,  
Beauty in its every line.  
He who did this knew the joy  
of skillful work well done.

We who find these things admire  
Him, who sat beside his fire,  
Chipping points and carving ivory  
beneath the western sun.

Thus we dug right carefully,  
bit by bit, so patiently,  
So we'd not disturb the occupants,  
if sepulchres were found.

Oh! We found them very soon,  
At those diggings on the dune,  
Where they were placed so surely  
in their happy hunting ground.

Yes, we bared them carefully,  
Moved them oh! So tenderly,  
For the occupants of these rude graves  
were humans just as we.

They had followed tribal rule,  
Taught them in Nature's school,  
Made obeisance to the Father,  
lived the good life proud and free.

These bones once moved smoothly in  
Long, strong muscles, glowing skin.

Yes, these bones were people then,  
Women, children, brave strong men,  
And they went about food gathering  
and building of a home.

Chetl-Essentan is no more,  
Blackened-burned-every door.  
There's nothing now but these  
remains to tell the tale.

But the arrow point (for war)  
and the ornaments (far more!),  
Tell of real people  
Who have passed beyond the veil.

Elma Metzgus Ismert

### The True Story of Battle Rock

(This essay was written in response to a request by the chairman of the Oregon Historical Markers Committee, to provide the Native version of the "Battle of Battle Rock" incident at Port Orford in 1851).

It is not surprising that some of the current local residents of Port Orford, along with some descendants of Captain William Tichenor, are objecting to any alteration of the story as has been published and popularized by the non-Native dominant society.

For more than 100 years, the Native Americans of southern Oregon have endured the disgrace and embarrassment of having gross misinformation printed and flaunted as the "true" history by the white aggressors. Those were the miners, trappers, explorers,

and colonists who slaughtered, raped, and brutally exterminated most of the Native inhabitants before the Indian agents could remove the survivors to the relative safety of the concentration camps and later to reservations (see Wasson 1994). Unfortunately, some of the same vigilantes, army volunteers, and self-styled Indian hunters were the very guards and attendants who were hired to oversee the Native survivors at the camps and reservations to which the people were removed up the Oregon Coast.

For more than 100 years, the written histories of southern Oregon have been a composite of misunderstandings, outright lies, half truths, and blatant omissions of factual information, by the many and varied historians who have rushed to write their own versions (for personal gain, notoriety, or perhaps just vicariously) of the exotic, dramatic, tragic, and bizarre episodes of human conflict in the “black hole” of the southern Oregon Coast.

The outcry against the so-called “histories” should have started more than 100 years ago when they were written. They altered the facts from the beginning. Sadly, such alteration continues in the 1990s. In fact, there were several non-Indians, such

as Indian Agent S. M. Smith, who attempted to bring out the truth to the public and federal officials. But each of them was soundly criticized and their lives threatened to the point of their removal from office. Some had to flee the country for personal safety (see O'Donnell 1991:165).

Those misleading and false narratives now deserve to be corrected by the new generations of Oregon Native and non-Native researchers who are ferreting out the gruesome and enlightening details of history which have been hidden, lost, or covered-up for far too long. It's now time for the Native peoples to tell their own stories.

There could be understandable embarrassment among the Tichenor descendants today, were these other facts of history to come to light at last, specifically focused on William Tichenor. However, none of the here-to-fore suppressed information makes any claims directly against the Captain himself. The reputation of Captain William Tichenor rests on the history of his legal entanglements with the federal government and his subsequent incarceration at Alcatraz. That history speaks for itself.

J. M. Kirkpatrick, the self-acclaimed leader of the landing party, was obviously intent on getting his version of the “Battle of Battle Rock” into print as quickly as possible. There is a tendency among western, literary thinkers to place truth and high value only on information, printed in “black on white.” Having the long-range tenure of being the only printed and widely published version of the Battle Rock story, Kirkpatrick accomplished what he intended. However, there has persisted in southern Oregon among numerous local Native (and some non-Natives also) descendants the knowledge that the published version was not all truth.

It should be noted that Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Anson Dart, was informed in June 1851, soon after the alleged event, of an “Indian massacre of an entire white settlement” at Port Orford. He soon went there, talked with a group of those Natives who were involved, and received their personal version of the events. First, Dart learned that the massacre of white settlers by Indians was wholly false. He next learned that Kirkpatrick’s story (blasting the gathering of Indians for self-protection) was also false.

Even before sailing from Portland to Port Orford on the Sea Gull with Captain Tichenor, Kirkpatrick anticipated fighting with the Indians. He purchased a U.S. rifle to compliment “a six shooting rifle, three old flint lock muskets, one old sword, one fine shooting revolver 38 caliber, one pair of derringers, five pounds of rifle powder, and ten pounds of bar lead.” Upon arriving at Port Orford, Kirkpatrick talked Captain Tichenor out of his ship’s cannon. He planned to place the cannon in a strategic location, where he could fire most effectively in the faces of the Indians, who would gather on the narrow approach to the rock where the landing party would be camped. Captain Tichenor had the cannon hauled ashore and left it with Kirkpatrick.

After he left, we lost no time in making our camp on what was to be called Battle Rock as long as Oregon has a history. We hauled the old cannon to the top of the rock and placed it so as to command the narrow ridge where the Indians would have to crowd together before they could get to the top of the rock where we were camped (Dodge 1969:35).

Nobody questions whether a cannon was placed on the rock, or whether it was loaded and aimed onto the approach of the rock,

prior to any signs of aggression by the Indians, and subsequently discharged into a tightly collected group of them.

Where Kirkpatrick's story first falls apart is in his claim that the Indians charged the rock en masse, as though they were a group of Scots Rebels charging the English lines. That action would have been totally uncharacteristic of the local Natives for several reasons.

First, group hand-to-hand-combat was not a form of warfare practiced in southwest Oregon, or by related groups in northern California. The more common approach to battle was to first run and draw the enemy onto a more advantageous battleground (see Gualtieri 1996:17-23, 31-39).

Second, the Natives knew what guns and cannons were, and they knew the group of whites had at least one cannon from Tichenor on the rock.

Third, there are various accounts of a non-local Native (some say a Russian) involved in leading the local Natives' gatherings on shore after the initial blast from the heavily loaded cannon (Dodge 1969:38). That "outsider" would surely have known the destructive potential of such a weapon and would not have advocated an all-out

assault as Kirkpatrick claims the Indians made, and which forced him to discharge the cannon in “self-defense.”

Among several generations of Native descendants in southern Oregon, there is similar version of the Battle Rock event of 1851, which has been told regularly to keep the true story alive. Some of the details are a little obscure, but the main point again is that the published version as told by Kirkpatrick’s landing party is false.

In the 1940s, linguist/ethnologist John P. Harrington from the Bureau of American Ethnology collected and recorded comments from southern Oregon Native descendants. One informant he named as “Johnny” (John Waters?) stated, “The fellow who led the Indians at Battle Rock was Russian. The story was all lies as told by Kirkpatrick.” (Harrington 1943:Reel #26, frame 383). Lucy Thompson and Wolverton Orten made similar comments (Harrington 1943:Reel #26, frame 385).

Through my own family, I learned of the misinformation recorded in the history books and displayed on the highway marker at Port Orford. My father, George B. Wasson, and his sister, Daisy Wasson Coddington, related the information as passed on to them from

their mother, Susan Adulsah Wasson, and her mother, Gishgiu, of Miluk Coos and Upper Coquelle ancestry respectively. In the early 1900s, Dad also heard from the oldest Native survivors of the Rogue Wars, their version of the Battle Rock story.

My Scottish grandfather, George R. Wasson, was in the upper Rogue River country at the time of the Battle Rock incident in 1851. He moved to Coos Bay in 1853, and was a common visitor to the Port Orford, Gold Beach (then Ellensburg), and Rogue River areas through the end of the Rogue River War in 1856. He knew many of those early settlers and military men personally. Many of them told concurring stories about the true events at Battle Rock, which primarily agree with the version related by Anson Dart.

They all said that the landing party from Captain Tichenor's ship insisted on having the cannon with them when they moved their belongings "ashore" onto the rock. They also emphasized that Kirkpatrick's landing party was anticipating a battle with the local Indians and intended to get the first strike with their cannon. In preparation for their devastating blow, they loaded the cannon with chopped-up bar lead and plenty of horse-shoe nails, plus any other

small pieces of scrap metal they could find, heavily primed it and used someone's old flannel shirt for wadding. They placed the cannon up on the rock, aiming it down the narrow slope where its blast would most effectively rake the group of Indians to be gathered there and on the narrow bench leading to it.

The Whites then requested the Indians to come forward on the approach to the rock for a "parlay." It seems the Natives were all expecting gifts. Dart claims they were instructed to gather there to receive pay for their work in unloading the ship. When gathered in the right formation, the whites fired their cannon into the faces of the Indians, with the makeshift "shrapnel" ripping and tearing them apart. I recall clearly the disgust and horror with which my father, Aunt Daisy, and others told of the lies and false information as reported by the landing party at Port Orford in 1851. At last, I am grateful to have a viable opportunity to pass on their true version of that story, which, they all feared would never find the proper venue for its revelation.

The name "Battle Rock" now seems a misnomer. Perhaps it should be more correctly called "Massacre Rock." Better still, why

not use its neutral Native name, “Ma’-na’-xhay-Thet,” which means, “ply canoe back and forth-rock” when gathering mussels there, (Harrington 1943:Reel 26, frames 384-385).

Port Orford was called “Soldgis sxa Dunn”(a combination of Chinook Jargon and Athabascan); “Soldgis (soldiers), sxa (stay), Dunn (place) or “the soldiers’ fort.” (Harrington 1943: Reel 26, frames, 380-385).

### III. WASSON FAMILY HISTORY AND STORIES

#### An Historical Overview by George B. Wasson, Sr.

After the death of my mother in 1995, I removed boxes and trunks of old papers and memorabilia from a storage area in her ranch home at Pistol River. Stored in one of the trunks were the remains of my father's papers she and I had salvaged in 1950, after an intruder had ransacked our house in Coquille, opened that trunk, piled and burned much of its contents.

It has been difficult to sort out and match pages to obtain complete documents on various topics and issues. However, an occasional essay or letter remains intact and tells a brief story of its own. I was amazed to learn how my father had written on the same topics which interest me today, and told a story much as I am doing now.

The following is two of those, in its complete form, just as he wrote them in 1916:

## BIRTH AND ANCESTRY

Born at Coos Bay within the original Coos Indian country, April 29, 1880.

Father's name: George Robinson Wasson, a Canadian who came to Coos Bay in 1853.

Mother's name: Susan Adolsa [sic] a full blood Coos Indian of the Millukes [sic]. Her mother's name was Ghetche Ghaewe ["Gishgiu" or t'cicgi'yu, according to Jacobs]. Mother lived her whole live time at Coos bay and died in 1917. Mother was married in 1863 and bore ten children, all of whom were reared at Coos Bay. Grandmother lived as a member of mother's family until her death in 1894. Mother and Grandmother spoke the Coos language at home. I learned to understand the Coos Language but the children were not encouraged to speak it.

My grandmother was the "bahsic" of the Coos tribe or what the Whiteman would call the historian or the legend keeper of the tribe. In my childhood, I have listened by the hour to her as she narrated the history of the Coos Indians, which was interpreted by my mother.

She was especially fond of talking to the younger members of the tribe about the losses that her people had suffered and the injustice inflicted upon them by the whites when the Coos Indians were driven away from their homes and their lands taken away from them.

In talking to us children she frequently urged that when the time came it would be my duty to work for the restoration of the Indians' property. I was the fourth son and according to the legends of the Coos Indians, I was the member of the family supposed to have the best qualifications for the work she wanted me to do.

## THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN

Four score and eleven years ago there was born in this state a new civilization; Speaking on language, serving one flag and teaching the citizenship of one nation. When the Vanguard of this civilization first entered this country, they found living here a peace loving people. Without considering any rights the people (living and occupying this country from time immemorial) had to the lands, the Congress of the United States passed the Donation Land Claim Act which gave to the settler, title to the Indians' land. The Indians not only surrendered this title in peace, but he helped the bona fide settler in the selection thereof.

In 1848 gold was discovered in California; the hardest boiled element of the American emigrant that ever sailed the high seas or forked a bronko (sic) on the plains, rushed into California.

In the year 1852 gold was discovered on the beaches of Southern Oregon and this hard boiled prospector followed the strike. When the gold played out on the beaches of Whiskey Run new diggings was discovered in the Waldo hills and around Yreka.

These hardboiled prospectors took unlawful possession of the Indians lands, ravished their women, and when the Indians resented these unlawful and immoral acts the miners adopted a policy of extermination.

When the Indians did organize to protect their homes and families, the United States Government moved in their overwhelming army and whipped these Indians into submission. [The government then] marched them at the point of a bayonet onto reservations created by executive order, where treaties were negotiated for the purpose of giving the taking of the lands, a legal aspect (Wasson 1916).

### A Scout to Rogue River in 1856

My Aunt Daisy often told me of my grandfather's (George R. Wasson's) attempts to mediate the conflicts in southern Oregon during the Rogue River War of 1856 (see Fig. 7). He was greatly disturbed by the atrocities of the infamous volunteers who primarily fought for extermination of the local Native peoples by continually harassing and taunting them into battles. At the same time, grandfather was concerned about the welfare of the White settlers who were being attacked by the local tribes, as part of the White encroachment upon Native territory.

When the war moved from upriver down to the coast, the town of Ellensburg (now known as Gold Beach) was attacked and burned. But, as most people there had been alerted by the first attack at Bagnell's Ferry (upriver a few miles), they had hurriedly retreated to the newly erected Miner's Fort just north of the mouth of Rogue River.

My grandfather had first arrived in Jacksonville, Oregon, in late 1850 or early 1851(see Fig. 7). He had engaged in various mining ventures around southern Oregon and knew the area well.



Figure 7. George R. Wasson, Frontiersman, 1856.

Having heard rumors of the gold-bearing black sands (and the fertile bay area lands), he ventured over the Coast Range, from Camas Valley, down Coos River to Coos Bay in the spring of 1853, where he built the first log house in Empire (now part of Coos Bay).

Grandfather and his fellow explorers were the first Whitemen to travel down the Coos River (which they did by raft) from its headwater to the mouth at the bay. It's always been a humorous anecdote in our family to tell how they were fooled by the change of tide, just as the small rafting party arrived at the confluence of Coos River and Catching Inlet. Not realizing the tide had begun to come back in, the raft began to increase in speed as the flow pushed them back up the inlet, thinking they were still headed toward the mouth of the bay. Gradually they became aware of their mistake in judgment as the inlet narrowed and they had to stop and wait for the next ebb tide to continue their journey to the mouth.

After finishing his log house at Empire, grandfather explored the southern coast from Coos Bay down to northern California. His mining experiences also prompted him to delve into related entrepreneurial ventures and he built the first water-powered

sawmill (with an undershot water wheel) at the present site of the Faye Ranch just north of Bullard's Beach State Park. That sawmill replaced the labor intensive whipsaw pits and provided most of the lumber for the miners at Whiskey Run and other nearby mining sites.

However, in the spring of 1856, George R. Wasson was at Port Orford when word of the attack on Ellensburg arrived by one of the escapees from the first attack on the whites at Bagnell's Ferry, also the site of the main upriver village of the Tututunnes.

Aunt Daisy showed me the article, "A Scout to Rogue River in 1856," written by Jeremiah Huntley of Gold Beach and published in the *Centennial History of Oregon 1811-1912*, edited by Joseph Gaston (1912). Just before her death, Aunt Daisy handed me her personal copy of that history book, asking me to share that story and tell of the heroic deeds of my grandfather. Huntley's story, of which my family was so proud, is presented below, interspersed with my own comments and recollections.

The following article, entitled, "A Scout to Rogue River in 1856," was written by Jeremiah Huntley of Gold Beach.

The first news of the Indian outbreak at the mouth of Rogue River was brought to Port Orford by Charley Foster, whose company of home guards, of volunteers, were attacked and routed by the Indians at their camp on the north bank of Rogue River at a point since known as Bagnell's Ferry, on the early morning of February 23, 1856.

Several men of the company were killed and wounded at the first volley; the others fled to the timber and brush nearby and hid the best they could. A few were discovered by the Indians during the day and killed.

Foster succeeded in eluding the Indians and when it became dark started for Port Orford, thirty miles distant, where he arrived the second day, almost famished and gave the alarm. Foster did not know the fate of the people at the mouth of the river but reported that he believed that all the whites in that vicinity had been killed.

From his hiding place in the jungle he saw many strange Indians passing during the day, from which he judged that the hostiles from up the river had come down and, joining with the coast Indians, had killed all the whites they could find.

At that period Port Orford was a thriving little town of about two hundred people, mostly miners and packers, though a few families had recently been added to the town. The Indians in that vicinity were not very numerous or warlike, and the few who lived thereabouts gave the people no concern.

Several days passed after Foster's arrival, but nothing more was heard from Rogue River, so one Jerroe, a storekeeper, in company with four or five others, whose names have been forgotten, manned a whaleboat, loaded it with provisions, guns and

ammunition, and pulled out for Rogue River to assist the people there, should they find any alive.

It was known that a small fort or earthwork had been partially built a short time previous about one mile north of the mouth of the river by some miners who feared an outbreak, and thither the men in a boat directed their course. The boat was spied and hailed by the people in the fort, and in an attempt to make a landing all the occupants of the boat, save one, were drowned in the surf.

The little fort was besieged by hundreds of Indians who kept at a safe distance, however, as the occupants had good rifles and knew how to use them. With plenty of provisions, a good log fort carefully constructed with loopholes and protected by a wide ditch on the outside, the miners had no fears of their ability to repel any assaults of the Indians. But they needed every man present, so had not tried to send for assistance.

Several days passed, and as no word was received from Rogue River or the occupants of the whaleboat, W. S. Winsor and George Wasson, two miners, but experienced Indian fighters, volunteered to go to Rogue River and locate the white people, if any were alive, or learn their fate (Gaston 1912:1026).

My family has never been pleased with Huntley's "literary license" in referring to George R. Wasson as an "experienced Indian fighter." It is possible that Grandfather found himself in dire situations during his travels around northern California and southern Oregon and had to fight some Indians out of self-defense, but no stories like that have been passed on in family oral history. His record of striving to protect Native groups from abuse and

slaughter by such vigilantes as the "Exterminators" of Jacksonville (Beckham 1971:78, 115-116, 122) Oregon, and the "Fire eaters" from Crescent City, California (Beckham 1971:172), speaks loudly for itself.

Winsor and Wasson secured the best horses they could find, and at dark on the evening of March 3, 1856, were ready to undertake the perilous journey. Armed with good rifles and revolvers, and with four days' rations tied on their saddles, the two men shook hands with the friends who had assembled at the only store in town to see them off, mounted, and soon disappeared in the darkness down the beach. Both had traveled that trail many times, and as the night was not very dark they made good time.

No one resided on or near the trail, so it was pretty certain that the only human beings they were apt to encounter would be Indians. As the scouts hurried along that lonely trail they were frequently startled by wild animals scampering off through the forest, through brush and over logs, making considerable noise.

The clink of the shoes on their horses against the many stones in the trail made more noise than was pleasant to hear, as such noise might be heard by some lurking warrior picketing the trail. But such noises could not be avoided, and our scouts went forward as fast as it was prudent in the darkness.

The scouts approached Mussel Creek, fifteen miles south of Port Orford, about eleven o'clock, where they knew that several Indian families lived close to the trail. In fact all Indian huts were located on the side of the trails in early days (Gaston 1912:1026).

In 1856, the trail along the coast made a circuitous detour around Humbug Mountain and rocks known as “The Sisters,” just south of there. Present day U.S. Highway 101 has considerably shortened the distance from Port Orford to Mussel Creek, now the location of Prehistoric Gardens and Arizona Beach, (named after “Arizona Inn”, a stagecoach stop located there in the late 1800s). Nonetheless, as I have driven Highway 101 hundreds of times over the years, I have visualized the journey of my grandfather and endeavored to place myself in the same “mental/emotional mind set” he must have experienced on that trip back in 1856.

Several fires were burning in the village and Indians were seen moving about, all of which indicated to the scouts that something unusual was doing, as it was well known that all Indians usually retired early in the evening.

On nearing the village the scouts paused to determine what was best to do to pass the camp in safety. A rocky beach to the right and an impenetrable jungle to their left, above the village, made it almost impossible to pass the village without riding through it.

Wasson suggested that Winsor hold his horse while he advanced on foot to reconnoiter, but the latter objected to such a move, saying: 'George, there is no use of monkeying round that camp, for we must either ride through or go back; and as we have no time to lose, let's get a move on. What do you say?' The only reply Wasson made was, “Go ahead.”

Wasson was one of those fearless, cautious mountaineers of the early days who never hesitated to do things when brought face to face with danger. In fact, he was chosen by Winsor as one, upon whom he could rely on the perilous journey.

The scouts dismounted, tightened their saddles, mounted again and, with drawn revolvers, moved forward, forged the creek and, putting spurs to their horses, quickly passed through the village, uttering war whoops, and reached the timber on the hillside before the astonished Indians knew what had happened. As the scouts passed through the village they did not see many Indians, and those whom they saw had no arms and wore no war paint.

When clear of the village the scouts increased their pace, satisfied that they had left no hostile Indians behind them--a fact which might prove of inestimable value should they suddenly encounter a war party and be compelled to retreat (Gaston 1912:1027).

The next Indian village was located at Euchre Creek, about five miles below the village they had just passed, and as the tide was nearly high they must cross that creek at the village. The scouts feared that some of the "hostiles" from Rogue River might be encountered, but they were determined to get through if possible.

The village was built on sand, which enabled the scouts to approach it without making the usual noise on horseback. When within a short distance of the huts the scouts paused to 'size up the outfit,' as Wasson put it. There was little life or bustle in the village save the beating of a drum in a hut near the trail, and as few Indians were astir, the scouts breathed easier (Gaston 1912:1027).

In the late 1950s, Fred Starkweather leveled the top of the large midden located at that “Yuquachee” village at the mouth of Euchre Creek, and built a house there. It’s still occupied today.

But the scouts did not hesitate long and, putting spurs to their horses and bending low in their saddles, quickly passed through the village, forded the creek just beyond and disappeared in the darkness down the beach.

If they were seen by the Indians the latter made no outcry or gave them a parting shot. Afterward the scouts learned that there was a band of about one hundred warriors from the camp at Rogue River asleep as they passed through the village.

Below the village the trail led along the beach and, though the tide was in and the beach heavy, the scouts made good time till they left the beach. They were now approaching the danger zone and must advance with greater caution than they had thought necessary during their ride.

They turned into the timber and brush to the left and climbed the mountain, searching for a place where they could get a view of the country beyond, to pass the coming day in security. Fortunately they found some grassy glades near the open ground and here they unsaddled, picketed their horses and prepared to pass the day (Gaston 1912:1027).

The trail left the beach at present day Nesika Beach (“Our” Beach in Chinook Jargon). I have often wondered, just where the “two scouts” found their hiding place with a view as described by Jeremiah Huntley. One day while exploring in that area, I drove up

to a hilltop where a Coos/Curry electric sub-station is now located. Lo and behold, there was the view site for both upriver and toward the mouth of Rogue River, looking east and southwest around the northern end of the “bald, flat-topped mountain” Huntley had described.

The long, weary ride had sharpened the appetite of the scouts and they did ample justice to their lunch, after which they enjoyed their first smoke since leaving Port Orford.

A faint glimmer in the east proclaimed the approach of another day and, to the delight of the weary men, not a cloud was visible, though it was yet the rainy season. When it was light enough to see, the scouts sought an open space at the edge of the timber and fortunately were enabled to get a good view of the country to the south. And when it grew lighter the keen eyes of scouts saw the outlines of the little fort on the bluff near the ocean, about five miles distant.

The old flag was floating over the fort, which was proof positive to the scouts that the miners were there in force, defiant and full of fight. The mountain on which the scouts were standing sloped gently to the south to a small valley, through which coursed a creek which emptied into Rogue River, about five miles beyond (Gaston 1912:1027).

Edson Creek flows east through that small valley and empties into the Rogue River near present-day “Rogue River Park,” where a trailer park and store are now located. That long “bald, flat-topped mountain” is the northern part of Wedderburn Ranch.

Beyond the valley, about three miles distant, a bald, flat mountain rose about six hundred feet. To the right the mountain sloped off to the westward, forming a high bluff on the shore of the ocean. The trail to Rogue River was plainly visible where it crossed the hill on the west.

Soon after sunrise several straggling bands of Indians, warriors no doubt, came in view from the east, presumably the river, going towards the fort, some riding, but mostly men on foot, and disappeared over the mountain in the direction of the fort.

The scouts estimated the war party, for such it evidently was, to be fully three hundred. No doubt there was a force equally as large occupying the country between the fort and the river, but that part of the field was shut out of view by intervening mountains.

The distance was too great to hear the report of firearms or see the smoke of battle, if one was in progress. Several small bands of Indians, mostly squaws, passed up and down the little valley during the day but at nightfall returned towards the river, which indicated that the main camp of the hostiles was on the river to their left.

The day passed slowly to the scouts, who were anxious to get to the fort and learn the extent of the massacre of the whites. About sundown the warriors, who went over in the morning, or about the same number, returned and disappeared over the mountain, whence they came in the morning.

During the day the scouts took careful note of the country beyond and picked out their route to the fort. They believed that the fort was not closely picketed by the Indians during the night and that the quickest and perhaps the safest move on their part was to ride directly to the fort, keeping a close lookout, of course, for Indians.

As the shades of evening fell over hill and valley the scouts saddled their horses and rode down to the

little valley below, then to the trail, along which they advanced with more caution till the little fort was visible on the bluff near the ocean beach. As they were apt to encounter the Indian pickets, if any were on duty on the hillside, the scouts dismounted and, leading their horses, moved forward with caution.

They frequently paused and anxiously peered into the darkness to catch the least sound of an enemy, if present, but no sound except the occasional bark of a dog in the fort broke the awful stillness.

After a long halt the scouts believed that no pickets were on guard on that part of the field at least, so they tied their horses in a thicket near by, crawled to a friendly knoll about three hundred yards from the little fort and, in a low tone at first, hailed the people in the fort.

Receiving no answer, they hailed again in a louder voice, which was soon after answered by some one in the fort. After hurriedly telling the people in the fort who they were, the scouts were directed to come forward slowly.

The scouts were now in extreme peril, for should there be lurking pickets in that vicinity to fire upon them, the people in the fort might think it a night attack and fire a volley in the face of the scouts.

The scouts, sensible of their peril, lost no time in reaching the fort, where they were met with many guns pointed at them as they crossed the plank laid across the ditch to admit them. The scouts were greeted with many handshakes and were glad that their perilous journey was at an end. Accompanied by men from the fort, they returned and led their horses into the fort (Gaston 1912:1027-1028).

Present day aerial photos clearly show the outline of that “ditch” (moat) as the rich nutrients turned up from below still nourish the spring growth into a deep dark green.

The scouts found about eighty people, mustering about seventy guns. They had plenty of ammunition and provisions, were full of fight and did not appear to be greatly disturbed by their surroundings. The hostile Indians appeared upon the hillside above the fort the next day but kept at a safe distance.

In about a week after the scouts reached the little fort, the siege was raised by the arrival of several companies of regular soldiers from the south. The Indians then withdrew up the river and the war was practically ended.

James Brooking and James McVay, of Smith River, California, E. H. Meservy of Agness, and W. S. Winsor of Gold Beach, Oregon, are the only occupants of that little fort known to be alive. And men of their mettle made the Oregon country (Jeremiah Huntley, cited in Gaston 1912:1026-1028).

Even though Huntley’s story is filled with racist remarks and prejudiced terms in reference to the Indians, it is enlightening and valuable in showing the general attitudes of the White American settlers and explorers of that day. I have purposely retained all those comments and terms such as “hostiles” and term “squaw” (as abominable as it is today) because it was the way people spoke then with little thought of their derogatory implications.

It is gratifying to note, however, that the State of Oregon recently adopted a law (SB 488 May 25, 2001) forbidding the use of the term “squaw” on all state owned property, deleting it from place names and signs for geographic locations in Oregon.

Huntley’s ultimate comment “And men of their mettle made the Oregon country,” is an obvious example of the “Manifest Destiny” attitude of most White settlers of 1856. Little did he suspect that the descendants of many Native men and women would have a major positive impact on the development of more appropriate industries, and recovery of the damaged environment of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, after more than a century of raping the land by White entrepreneurs of his century. They too have “made the Oregon country.”

### Rogue River Red with Blood

After the heroic journey of Grandfather and Captain Windsor, the two men stayed at the Miners’ Fort until regular army troops arrived from California. After the troops arrived at the mouth of Rogue River, and gave protection to the people holed up in the Miners’

Fort, stragglers of a civilian group known as the “fire eaters,” from Crescent City, California, followed the army troops into the area, after being rescued by them down the coast at Pistol River.

Upon learning of the Tututunne attack on Ellensburg, a party of 34 armed civilians led by vigilante George H. Abbott, a comrade of Packwood in the slaughter at Nasomah village in 1853, had raced northward along the coast in advance of Army troops, intent on assisting the survivors of Ellensburg in the Miners’ Fort.

The local Chet-Less-Chunn-Dunne met the party with armed resistance near their village at the mouth of Pistol River, and held them at bay behind driftwood for several days until the regular troops appeared. The conflict led to the tracking and killing of those Natives who participated in the battle.

Following the arrival of the regular troops from California, talks and peace negotiations were arranged whereby the upriver Native peoples were to come down to the coast and meet with the Whites. Upon receiving word of these peace talks, canoe loads of people started down-river.

Most of the same disgruntled vigilantes who were disgraced at Pistol River heard of this plan also, and reconfirmed their resolve to carry out their work toward extermination. They scurried up to the mouth of Lobster Creek, which flowed into Rogue River between two large flat-topped rocks, upriver a few miles from Bagnell's Ferry. Their intent was to ambush the canoes full of Tututunnes as they came by, unaware of the danger.

Grandfather got word of this murderous plan and rushed on horseback to stop them. But, alas, he could not arrive in time to prevent the slaughter. He knew it had taken place already when he got to just above Bagnell's Ferry. The river was running red with the blood of the ambushed Tututunnes and he could only pause in tears as he realized the horror of the dastardly massacre inflicted upon those innocent people.

### The Tragic Saga of Longhorn Swan

In the late 1880s, summer and fall on the southern Oregon Coast were warm and pleasant for several consecutive years. The

occasional summer rain had nourished the berries along the hillsides and grass in the creek bottoms had grown belly high on the cattle and horses. Life seemed good and harvests were bountiful for the new pioneer/settlers around Coos Bay and along the rest of the southern coast.

George R. Wasson had built a fine house up South Slough for his Coos wife, Susan Adulsah and their children. It was a grand two-story home, with an attic and windows high above to view out around the country and especially down the slough. In later years, that grand home was fondly known by our family as “the red house.”

My father and his sisters often told of the fine times they had there as children. Grandfather would hire musicians to come and play for a dance, which would begin in the evening just after dark, pause at midnight for supper, and resume with the finer lighter dances until dawn. The older daughters, along with their brothers, were allowed to stay up to dance and join in the festivities while the younger children were scuttled off to bed down in the haymow.

Scary and intriguing stories were told and retold by the Wasson children of their early life in that remote and beautiful area.

Once, while the young ones were snuggled up with quilts in the hay, they were awakened suddenly by a loud crashing thud on the roof above. Something large had leaped up onto the barn roof and was obviously curious about the occupants inside the barn loft. They all seemed to know almost instinctively that it was a cougar or “mountain lion,” as they heard the soft padding sound of its foot steps, walking back and forth on the shake roof close above them. Daylight couldn’t come soon enough for those young ones after such a sleepless night.

On one of those long summers and late falls, Grandfather had been logging up the slough with his prize team of oxen. He had recognized the great value of Port Orford (“white”) Cedar, the favorite wood of the Indians along the southern Oregon Coast. He was the first person to commercially log that timber and his ox team was his greatest asset in that pioneering venture (see Fig. 8).

Figure 8. Grandpa Wasson logging with bull teams (oxen).



Understandably, his greatest pride was vested in his lead ox, “Longhorn Swan.” He was a magnificent animal, strong, healthy, steady, and reliable in response to every voice command of his master. The whole family loved Longhorn Swan and treated him with the utmost respect.

It was beautiful warm late summer weather that year, and it seemed that winter had maybe forgotten to come around. But the change was inevitable as the fall rains were due anytime and things would then change dramatically. Grandfather had his oxen pastured up the “Winchester” or west fork of South Slough when the rains first started. A warm south wind had begun to blow the day before, and it seemed that a sprinkle or two was soon to begin, but the wind didn’t slacken any and by morning it had become of full “sou’wester,” blowing down trees and torrents of rain gushing horizontally from the sky. It didn’t let up and on the second and third days of heavy rain, it was obvious that the bottom lands would soon be flooded by the constant deluge.

Grandfather had not thought much about the welfare of his oxen as they could always fend for themselves. Under the leadership

of Longhorn Swan, they would come into the barn for protection from the elements when it became more than was comfortable for them. By the third day, he became a bit curious about just how they were faring in the storm, so he donned his sou'wester rain hat and wool coat to go see for himself.

He had left the house early in the morning and didn't think he'd be gone too long, so by evening Grandma (Susan Adulsah) became curious and somewhat concerned about his welfare. Darkness descended on the big house in the small valley and still no Grandfather returning home for supper. Grandma had cooked a big meal and was keeping it warm on the kitchen wood range, which filled the house with warm and steamy aromas.

All the children were gathered at the front parlor window, peering through the steamy panes, out into the rainy darkness, seeking some sign of their father. It seemed like an eternity to the eager young ones, when one of them exclaimed that he could see a faint glimmer of light, a fire gleaming through the trees far up the slough. Sure enough, the light was a fire from a torch their father had fashioned from a solid pitchy spruce knot. He had chopped the

end into a feathery fray, set it afire and it burned furiously giving light to make his way home again. He came into the house and sat heavily by the warm kitchen stove, gradually removing his rain-soaked clothing. His demeanor was sullen, and the whole family knew he had a story of tragedy to share with them. All were quiet with apprehension as he explained that their beloved Longhorn Swan had become mired in the mud far up the slough, just about the head of tidewater in Winchester Creek. He had been mired there for more than a day and his struggles to get free had worn him completely out. His master recognized the imminent danger to his great friend as the heavy rains had begun to raise the creek level and an extra high tide was expected that evening.

George's skills at erecting derricks, slings, booms, and general seaman's knowledge of ropes had been acquired at a young age, growing up in the "Maritimes" of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. He knew well the fury of a winter storm there, commonly known as a "nor'easter," and so the companion winter storm of southern Oregon were similarly known as a "sou'wester," both receiving colloquial names from their direction of origin.

But this storm had come as a bit of a surprise in the strength of its fury and torrential rains. The water was rising quickly, and Grandfather had no time to lose. He chopped trees, or long poles, and fashioned an A-frame over the creek, above Longhorn Swan, attempting to hoist him out to solid ground. But alas, the water was already too high, the lead ox was too weakened to help himself anymore, and the high tide rose relentlessly above his head, slowly covering his long magnificent horns and drowning him while Grandfather looked on helplessly. It was a sad household that night, and for many days to come. The pride of the family, a great friend to them all was gone and could never be replaced by another.

The next morning, the rain had ceased and Grandfather went back out to survey the scene of tragedy. He soon returned home with an expression of surprise and intrigue as he announced his surprise upon examining the carcass of Longhorn Swan. It seems a big black bear had wandered down there and started feasting on his exposed hind quarters.

Grandfather promptly returned home and fetched a large bear trap which he set on the creek bank next to where the bear had

started eating on the ox. He fastened it securely with a long chain and returned home to wait for the culprit to be caught. At least, the family would be rewarded by some fresh meat and bear grease to last for a year or more.

But to his surprise the next morning, there was no bear in that big trap. He had indeed returned to feast on the carcass of Longhorn Swan, stepped into the trap and had been caught by one hind foot. In his rage to free himself, the bear had chewed off that foot and leaving it in the trap, he scrambled off through the brush. As the bear had left a trail of blood, Grandfather could easily follow his trail and did so with his trusty 44 Winchester Rifle. With great caution he tracked the wounded bear far into the woods of South Slough where he had finally bedded down to rest. After shooting him, grandfather dressed out the meat, separating out the fat and started packing it all back home to the delight of everyone.

And so the saga of Longhorn Swan was often told and retold to our family, as one of the tragic dramas of early life on South Slough.

Gishgiu (T'cicgi'yu) and Kitzn-jin-jn

My great grandmother was a remarkable woman from 19th century Western Oregon, who spoke numerous languages and dialects of the Southern Oregon tribes. She had been married to the most prominent chief (headman, tribal leader) in all of Southwestern Oregon. Gishgiu was an upper Coquelle woman and her marriage to Kitzn-Jin-Jin, the chief from South Slough, united the Coos and Coquelle in a bond of friendship and strong social relations.

In 1851, Kitzn-Jin-Jn attended the treaty talks at Port Orford and was a signatory (under the name "Kitchen") to Anson Dart's treaty. Sometime before Grandfather arrived at Coos Bay in 1853, Kitzn-jin-jn was invited to participate in an elk hunt with some visiting Lower Umpquas. They all met about halfway between Coos Bay and Reedsport (just north of present day Hauser) to join forces in the big hunt.

Kitzn-Jin-Jin was requested to lead the party out after the elk, but when his back was toward the others, they all attacked him and shot arrows in his back, killing him. It is rumored that some of his

own tribal members joined the Umpquas in the assassination (Wasson 1916).

After the coming of the Whites to Coos Bay and the Coquille River valley, life for Gishgiu and her people was quickly snuffed out; they were either killed or herded off to concentration camps, scattered far away from their ancestral homes.

She too had gone with the soldiers, first to the detention camp at Reedsport and then on to Yachats. Finally she had enough of the death and misery heaped upon her people in those places and ran away, returning to find her daughter, Susan Adulsah, married to my grandfather, George R. Wasson, and living on South Slough. "Gekka" (as she was fondly called by her grandchildren), first hid from the soldiers, by living in a hollow log in the forest not far from her daughter's home. After her son-in-law discovered her presence there, she was moved into the family home to live in peace as an honored family member.

Even though she was now blind, her presence in the home added immeasurably to keeping up a large house and raising a big family. There have been many stories and anecdotes about Gishgiu,

which the family all told in remembering the feisty little woman who defied the U.S. Government and outwitted the soldiers who sought to capture and return her to the concentration camp at Yachats. Most of them have been lost and forgotten, but some are well imbedded in family memory.

### Gishgiu's Flight from Yachats

My great-grandmother, Gishgiu, went with the American soldiers in good faith, first to the concentration camp at Reedsport and then on to Yachats, because she believed that the treaty, which had been signed by her husband, Kitzn-Jin-Jn, would eventually be honored. Unfortunately, conditions at Yachats were so bad that she finally lost faith in the word of the American government and ran away. Along with my father, Aunt Lolly, Aunt Daisy, and Aunt Mary often told me the story of "Gekka" running away, and coming back to South Slough.

Diving into the ocean, she swam around the major headlands such as Cape Perpetua and the Sea Lion Caves, to avoid the soldiers on the trail above. After hiding in the bushes during the daytime,

she walked the long beaches at night, arriving at Coos Bay through the sand dunes. At the turn of high tide, Gishgiu entered the water and swam with the ebb flow until it carried her across and down to South Slough. There she walked up the slough near her daughter's home, and made herself a comfortable den in a hollow log not far away. At night, "Gekka" made contact with her daughter, Susan Adulsah, who gave her food. They both were very frightened that soldiers might be sent to get her, as she was now a "runaway" Indian, hiding from the U.S. Military, and so they met secretly that way to hide Gishgiu until they could come up with a better plan.

Grandfather became suspicious of his wife talking to someone in her Indian language late at night. He usually thought nothing of Grandmother getting up and doing things in the middle of the night. This was more secretive, but when he discovered that his mother-in-law was living not far away in a hollow log, he became indignant and insisted that she move into the house with them where she belonged. However, the soldiers from Fort Yamhill, had orders to round-up those runaway Indians and a detachment was sent out to scour the country where they might be hiding.

One day when Grandfather was out in the logging-woods with his bull-team, word came to the house that soldiers were headed there to take "Gekka" back to Yachats. Quickly, the women emptied the storage space behind the living-room staircase and tiny Gishgiu crawled back under the bottom step. Then all the boxes and trunks were shoved into place as though nothing more could possibly be under there.

While the soldiers were ransacking the house looking for Gishgiu, some of the younger kids, caught up in the excitement of a fun game with real soldiers, were running around pointing to the bottom step of the stairs saying "Gekka, Gekka." Fortunately, those soldiers had no idea what the kids were saying, and just pushed them out of their way as they hurried with their search, nervously pounding the floor with their rifle butts, looking for loose boards under which the old woman could be hidden.

Swiftly, one of the older children raced through the woods to summon Grandpa for help. Now they say that Grandpa Wasson was a big man, and no two soldiers could possibly stand up to his fury. He marched into his house, grabbed the soldiers both by the back of

their necks, and threw them out into the yard, (some say that he threw them through the parlor room window). He told them to never come back and, needless to say, they didn't.

Gishgiu lived out the remainder of her days with the family, mending clothes which she could do even though she was blind by then, yet doing all the things an old grandmother would need to do while sitting in the dark.

#### Refuge Island at Sunset Bay

As conditions were intolerable in the concentrations camps for the Southern Oregon people, many fled and sought refuge back in their home areas. Large groups simply migrated down the coast to nearby estuaries such as the mouth of the Siuslaw River, rather than going all the way farther south where their homes were now occupied by White settlers.

It was fortunate for Gishgiu that her daughter Susan Adulsah was married to a White man and living in a big house on South Slough, her ancestral home area. There she found refuge and the protection of her son-in-law, George R. Wasson.

However, for some other women there was no such help when they fled back to their home places. Soldiers from Fort Yamhill were constantly roaming the Coos Bay area rounding them up and returning them to the reservation sites up north.

Everyone of Native blood (and some sympathetic Whites) in the Coos Bay area knew there were “runaways” hiding out around there, either with a family or living in makeshift shacks on their own.

It became a routine process of warning the “hide-outs” when soldiers showed up to round them up again. People would spread the word, running from one area to another to sound the alarm. When taken by surprise, the people would often run into the woods as the soldiers chased them on foot and tracked them down again.

This was especially difficult for the mothers with small babies, as the rushing madly about would frighten them and cause them to cry. Soldiers found several of those mothers who couldn't muffle the screams of their children when hiding out. My Aunt Daisy told me of a hiding place for those mothers with small babies, but at my young age, I couldn't fully understand.

We were on a picnic at Sunset Bay one time when she was looking wistfully out at the small island with trees and brush on top, just out from the mouth of the bay. The island rises some 50 to 100 feet high, with soil and trees on top, and is about 60 by 100 feet in surface dimensions. It is surrounded by water except at low tide when access can be made on foot across the narrow pebbled beach and seaweed covered rocks.

I asked her about that island, as I knew she had stories for most places around there. I expected there would be a tale of some magical being having lived there. However, that was not the case at all this time.

She said there are still holes or pits, which were dug in the top of that island, where the women used to hide. I was shocked by that, and asked more. "Why would they go up there," I asked in amazement. Aunt Daisy replied a bit impatiently, "Because they had small babies and couldn't keep them from crying when the soldiers were chasing them. The sound of the surf would drown out the cries of their babies and they wouldn't be easily detected."

As Aunt Daisy gazed out there deep in thought, she seemed to cry out in pain to unseen people, as though they were still out there, waiting to hear a message from someone on shore. Her voice sounded mournful with a wailing sort of tremolo “`OH-hoh-hoh-hoh-hoh-hoh-hoh-hoh,” gradually descending in tone and trailing off to nothingness.

Once again, I knew when to stop asking questions. I could not imagine why soldiers would be chasing women with babies. But more astoundingly, I could not imagine mothers with small babies climbing up the rugged and steep cliffs of that island, digging holes, and actually living in them for days at a time.

Such stories were far too painful for the older people to tell often. I learned to listen carefully the first time, as soon as I knew a story was coming. I find now that it is equally painful for me to remember and recall in detail, the experience of listening to the mournful outburst of those old people as they shared the anguish of my ancestors and relatives.

### The Sugar Thief

There has always been one particular story about “Gekka,” which seems to be a classic example of how she fit right in and served the family well. My Dad and Aunt Daisy told it something like this: Grandmother (Susan Adulsah) had begun to notice that things seemed to be missing from the store room, which was a small log out-building just to one side of the main house, with loosely fitted log rails barring the entrance. Anyone could crawl through if they wanted inside. The items, which seemed to be rapidly disappearing were sugar, syrup, and dried apples, which were stored in large wooden barrels, just as they came off the ship from San Francisco.

It seemed that the only possible explanation was that a runaway Indian was sneaking in there and stealing the food, as no other White families lived nearby at that time. Grandfather said that something had to be done, “they are always fair when treated right.” It was decided that someone who could speak all of the languages in Southern Oregon, should wait in hiding for the thief (or thieves) to show up and talk to them in words they could understand. It would probably be best to try to catch them at night, when the stealing

seemed to occur. So Gishgiu was elected to wait up in there all night since she could speak more languages than anyone else. Also, she was blind and the dark wouldn't even bother her at all.

The next night, with a bed made for her up in the far corner, "Gekka" crawled in there to wait for the thief to show up. Sure enough, along in the night, she heard someone climbing through an opening in the logs. She thought, "I don't want to frighten them, I'll just let them get good and started, then I'll talk to them just a little." There was a scratching noise, as if they were trying to light matches, and they were probably damp. Soon Gekka heard them in the sugar barrel and decided, "now is the time." She had waited until they were way down inside scraping near the bottom when she spoke to them, at first in her own language. She said clearly, "Listen to me, whoever you are, you don't have to steal from my son-in-law. He is a good and generous man, and would never refuse you anything." There was no response, the digging in the barrel stopped for just a moment, as though the thief (or thieves) paused to listen yet there was no answer to her words. When they went back to scraping again, she tried another language saying her son-in-law would help them if

they would only answer her and identify themselves. Again there was no response; they just went back to scraping sugar. Gishgiu tried all the languages she knew, finally scolding them in Chinook Jargon, "Why don't you talk, why don't you answer me?" Still they made no response. "Well," she said to herself, "they just deserve to be punished. I'll call my son-in-law." She yelled loudly for Grandfather to "Come quickly, they are stealing the sugar and pay no heed to me." Grandfather came rushing in with a lantern in one hand and his faithful Winchester in the other. There, digging into the sugar barrel, was a big black bear. Grandfather was a good shot, so there was short work of the sugar thief.

Kalla Alla Alta, "The Hollering Asshole"

(as told by Aunt Mary)

Long ago, in the early days before the arrival of Euro-Americans, there were various strange beasts and beings living in the same area as the Miluk Coos around South Slough. One of those beasts roamed through the jungle-like forest nearby and was well known for its bad

temper and often bellowed out in anger. It was said to have one sharp horn on the tip of its nose and was known to charge menacingly in furious attacks on the people. It was feared greatly by everyone, and therefore great caution was used in venturing alone into the deep forest of its domain.

However, there was a man who undertook the carving of a large cedar canoe, which had to be worked right where the largest cedar trees were growing, back in the forest from the village. He had been working alone as was the custom for men who were the traditional canoe builders.

When he was about half way into the task, he had the hollowed out canoe turned upside down and was chopping with his adze on the bow and stern to finish out the form. As he was deeply concentrating on his work (and probably singing appropriate songs for the occasion), he was unaware of how much noise he was making. He was also unaware that he had attracted the attention of Kalla Alla Alta.

Suddenly the huge one horned beast bellowed angrily and charged him from behind. The man just had time to dive under his

overturned canoe to hide. But the angry beast was not daunted by his cover, and rammed his horn through the canoe, tossing it into the air and attacking it repeatedly. With this distraction the man had a chance to escape and ran back to the village in great alarm.

All the men in the village gathered and planned a method of capturing this menace to rid themselves of his great danger. Others had tried to attack and kill him, but their arrows and spears merely bounced off his thick armor plated hide. They all knew there was only one place of vulnerability on this huge demon and they needed only to find access to it.

After that episode had quieted down, they all went back out into the forest and commenced digging a wide, deep hole, being cautious not to attract further attention of the beast. After placing small poles and sticks across the open pit, they covered it with tree branches and moss, in disguise to look just like the surrounding ground surface.

A close watch was kept in that area, in hopes that the demon beast would return. Finally he was detected roaming nearby and the men all gathered ready to finish their plan of execution.

The canoe carver made himself obvious on the far side of the hidden pit, and began making loud noises that would attract attention. It worked; the beast became angry and charged him, crashing through the thin cover, falling inextricably head first, into the deep pit.

A lethal weapon of dispatch had been prepared by sharpening a spruce pole to a fine point and hardening it by roasting it in a fire. Now the only vulnerable place on his body was exposed and the men rammed the sharp weapon deep inside Kalla Alla Alta through his anus.

They of course wanted to rid themselves completely of this demon beast and merely killing him was not completing the job. They gathered huge amounts of wood and built a fire over his carcass to burn him finally out of existence.

My Aunt Mary often mentioned this story to me, saying that as young kids, she and her siblings often warned each other to be quiet out in the woods as they might attract the attention of Kalla Alla Alta, the “hollering asshole.” It seemed the way of young people to remember and delight in the old stories of tribal history.

### The Ocean Cave by Humbug Mountain

My father once told a story to my younger brother and me about a cave in the solid rock, somewhere on or around Humbug Mountain. It was accessible only from the ocean, by canoe or small boat, only during low tide.

The Tututunnes told that one time many years ago, some White men in a sailing ship landed on their shores. The White men spotted the cave and examined it carefully by inducing one of the Native men to take them inside the mouth so they could look around. After seeming satisfied with it, they had the man take them back inside with his canoe, carrying a chest or box. They then dug a deep hole in the back of the cave and buried the box.

As intrigued young boys, we imagined that the box (trunk, or chest) was of course full of golden treasure. We asked whether they had killed the man after he took them in there, as that seemed the way “pirates” would have done it. I don’t now recall his answer, but he did seem amused with our question.

For many years, I have thought of that story when driving along the Southern Oregon Coast past Humbug Mountain, wondering just where that cave might be.

In the summer of 1982, I drove down to Frank Port (just a few miles south of Humbug Mountain) to examine the remains of the ship which had been burned there after some marijuana smugglers had run aground after their failed smuggling fiasco.

The Oregon State Highway Department had been blasting and taking out rock from an area on the north side of that area, working their way into the back side of the farthest pinnacle of rock. As I looked at the work area, I noticed a dark hole about fifty feet up from the sea level and climbed up to explore where the blasting work had ended. There the workers had broken into the back end of a cave, open only to the ocean and obviously accessible through the mouth only at low tide.

I wonder whether that old story is true. The cave is not actually located on Humbug Mountain itself, but it is indeed a cave very nearby, and few people have known about it, or at least, never mentioned it. Nonetheless, it is a delightful and intriguing story.

### The Hairy Giant at Coos Bay

Near the south jetty of the Coos Bay bar, there is another cave, which used to have a large boulder blocking the entrance. As a child, I often heard some of the old people talk about that cave, and condemn the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for destroying that boulder which once blocked the entrance. It had been blasted apart to be used as rip-rap in building the Coos Bay jetties. The old people were angry because that was the Giant's Cave and he was an important creature in the traditional folklore of the local people.

The legend says that once a large hairy giant lived in that cave. All the people were afraid of him, and they tried to avoid him. But often, he would go out on the beach on a sunny day and spread a large bearskin robe out on the sand. When he crawled around on it, he would very carefully pick at the fur, and ask the curious children around if they would like to help him "work" that hide. It was a favorite task for young children to hunt and pick fleas from the fur of large hides which had collected there over the winter. When several of the children got near the center of the hide, the

hairy giant would suddenly grab the sides and scoop them up in a bundle so he could carry them back to his cave.

The people were very concerned about this constant threat to their children, so they got together and planned a way to rid themselves of this giant child stealer. They collected a great amount of food and prepared a large feast on the beach in front of the giant's cave. When all the food was ready, the giant came out and helped himself, eating all he could hold. That was just what the people had planned. Then, full from the huge feast, the giant went back into his cave to sleep.

When they were all sure he was sound asleep, they pushed the huge boulder right up to the cave entrance, blocking it so he couldn't get out. Then they went up on top to his air vent (breathing hole) for fresh air into the cave and built a large fire of pitchy wood. The smoke suffocated the giant and they were rid of his danger to children forever. I often wondered in my child-like dreams whether he would have been wise enough to catch me. I felt sad that the Army Corps of Engineers lacked concern for the special places with such dramatic stories attached to them.

### III. ESSAYS ON CULTURAL CONCEPTS AND EXPERIENCES

#### My First Sun Dance

In the spring of 1979, I began my dedication to an initial series of four Sun Dance ceremonies. I had just returned from Kathmandu, Nepal, in the Himalayas where I'd experienced Tibetan people in exile. It was stunning to meet people who dedicated themselves to spirituality and prayer to solve world problems. Their escape into exile, crossing the Kyichu River and losing most of their beloved yaks in the swift spring run-off, had reminded me of Alvin Josephy's description of the Wallowa Nez Perce losing their horse herds in the spring run-off when crossing the Snake River into exile from their homeland.

I had traveled to Nepal to experience social and cultural surroundings without the all-pervasive Anglo-European-Judeo-Christian influences and guidelines, which dictate and command our

daily lives in America. My next adventure was to be back home in the Northwest, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana.

As I began to meet other Indians in that spring of 1979, I learned of a Sun Dance ceremony over on the Crow Reservation in Montana. Joseph Epes Brown (scholar on Native Americans, in the Department of Religion, at the University of Montana in Missoula) had told me how to get there, and to ask for the Tom Yellowtail family. They would take care of me. I sat outside the Sun Dance arbor each day during the ceremony seeking what little shade I could find, and taking in all I could of the sacrifices by the participants inside.

At the end, I was called by a young boy, to come over, to visit his father's camp. It was actually a fancy Winnebago where some of the dancers were indulging decadently in strawberry daiquiris for their first rewards after completing the four day fast.

I was offered a seat by a shriveled old man who had been introduced as the oldest living Crow Indian. I'd said I wanted to talk to old people and they were giving me that opportunity, saying "Here's the oldest Crow alive."

Robert Yellowtail started telling me his life's story, how he managed the Klamath Indian Reservation and other battles with the federal government, when a grandson interrupted, "Grandpa, George here is from Coos Bay." The old man halted immediately. "Coos Bay, why my best friend was from Coos Bay. His name was George Wasson. We went to Carlisle together. We shared battles with the federal government and fought Senator Walsh to a standstill! Did you say your name was George Wasson?"

I could only nod my head "yes" through the tears of utter disbelief. You know that feeling when you're dreaming that you need to run but your legs won't move? You want to say something, or yell but your voice is gone. There's a kind of "deja vu"; you faintly recognize what's happening only you can't quite believe it. There I was listening to my father's best friend from their school days in 1898 at Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. They had been some of the earliest young Indians to endure the benevolent dictate of Colonel Pratt to "kill the Indian and educate the man."

Robert Yellowtail suddenly became 50 years younger. The color in his face turned brilliant. He glowed with an angelic aura of delight at remembering his best friend, George Wasson. I remained speechless for several eternities before I could or would even attempt to respond verbally. Somehow, I got back over to the camp of his brother, Tom, the premier medicine man of the Crow Sun Dance.

Word spread quickly by the moccasin telegraph. I was invited to stay a week or two with Tom Yellowtail and his wife, Susie. Events led me to drive some of their grandsons down to Fort Washakie, where I too was duly inserted into my first Sun Dance.

During the next five years I fulfilled my commitment to the Sun Dance ceremony. It was there that I began to find my long awaited means of helping my father accomplish his lifelong goals. That process had begun.

### Sweat Lodge Medicine

I received the right to build a sweat lodge and the responsibility to use sweat lodge medicine from Tom Yellowtail on

August 3, 1983. Tom stated that he received his first sweat lodge medicine from Hank Old Coyote before he obtained his Sun Dance medicine from John Truhero.

Before writing down this information and presenting it here, I thought carefully about the possibility of disclosing privileged information that should not be mentioned outside the traditional Native community.

Tom Yellowtail (see Fig. 9) shared this with me to use, with no restrictions on it. It should be noted that this contains no personal medicine information such as his own medicine song. I would admonish anyone who follows these instructions for building a sweat lodge and performing a sweat that they are welcome to do so. However, it would be a grave breach of spirituality to assume or pretend that an actual medicine, cleansing, or healing ceremony is being performed without first receiving the right and responsibility to do so.

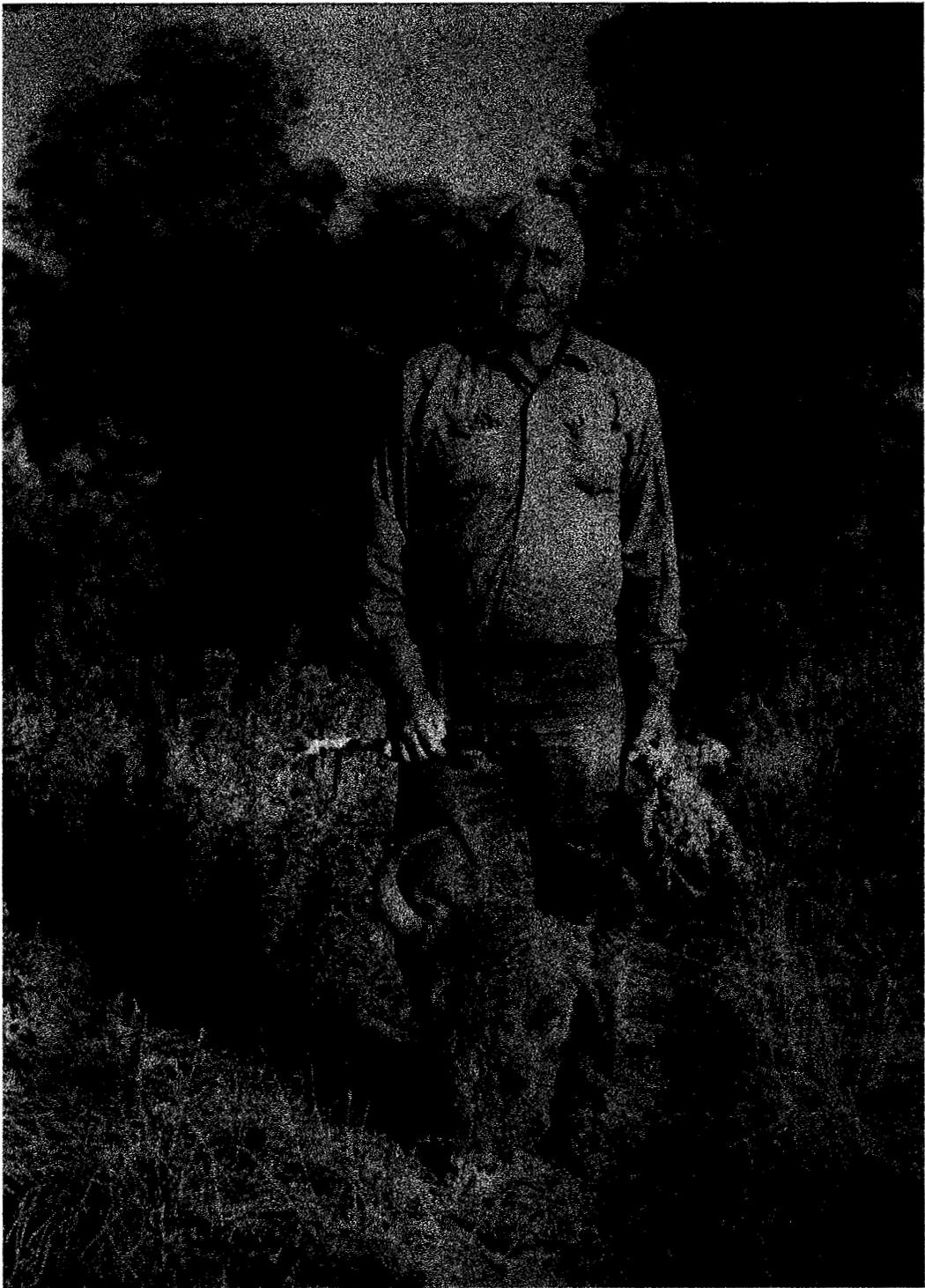


Figure 9. Tom Yellowtail, Crow Sun Dance Medicine Man.

That right comes from either a personal vision quest (under a medicine man's supervision), or by having the medicine ceremonially conferred upon one's self by a medicine man.

Instructions from Tom:

- Use 12 poles of red birch, red willow, cherry, or plain willow.
- Offer a prayer before construction when the materials are stacked up together.
- Plant the poles into the ground in a circle, leaving a "door" opening to the east.
- Dig a hole inside and a little to the north side of the entrance.
- Build a fire layered with rocks at the end of a short pathway, east from the sweat lodge opening.
- Make small bundles of willow switches to take inside and switch your bodies to bring out the sweat.
- Carry the glowing hot rocks without ashes, into the pit.
- All men entering should strip down naked and if preferred, wet down their bodies before entering.

- The person conducting the Sweat should first sprinkle “April Showers” over the rocks with one of the switches.
- The first quarter uses .....4 dippers.
- The second quarter uses .....7 dippers.
- The third quarter uses .....10 dippers.
- The fourth quarter uses .....“No Count,” “Million.”  
(as many dippers as the group wishes.)

I had taken a blanket and three other gifts to Tom, asking if it would be alright if I learned the correct way to build a sweat. Tom looked at me very thoughtfully, collected a buffalo skull, his small pipe, some tobacco and sage, and then said we should go down to his sweat lodge by the river (Little Big Horn River). He next positioned me facing east in front of the sweat lodge opening while he stood behind me. His prayers were all in Crow, so I couldn't understand what he said until he paused and spoke the name of Hank Old Coyote. I had also recognized the sacred name of Ahk-bahd-aht'-dea. When finished, Tom said, “There now, I have given you half of my sweat lodge medicine.” I was totally surprised and asked why he had done that. He said that he thought it would be

good if I could take some of it back to Oregon. “The people are in great need of it over there.” I believe he might have been referring to my own tribe as well as other Oregon Indians.

I asked him why he had mentioned the name of Hank Old Coyote in his prayers. Tom told me that in conferring the medicine, he mentioned the source of the medicine to him from the creator, “Grandfather,” “The Old Man.” That path of transfer of “medicine-power” passed to him through Hank Old Coyote, and just at that moment when he was praying, he couldn’t quite remember Hank’s Crow name so he had to say it in English. Tom said it would work anyway, because the Creator understood English as well as Crow.

### Coyote Taboo

My friend Barre Toelken is a well-known American folklorist with a fair amount of personal experience and accumulated knowledge of American Indian cultures and traditions. I think somewhere way back in his own family tree there was a little mixing up of blood lines and he is now a little tainted with Seneca blood himself, even

though he might deny that gives him any right to claim "Native American Indianness." Suffice it to say, he has lived with and around traditional Navajos, (he has a grown Navajo daughter from a previous marriage, and several grandchildren through her) and other Northwest Indian people over the past 30 some years. Barre's personal contact with various Indians has rendered him well grounded in the generics and specifics of traditional and contemporary Indian thought patterns. He has a good feeling for "thinking like an Indian" while functioning successfully in the world of academia and known internationally as an American folklorist and expert scholar on American Indians. One of his favorite subjects, (one which I often share with him), is that ubiquitous character, "Old Man Coyote."

I've grown up with the "collective cultural memory" of Old Man Coyote, ("Talapus," the old people called him down around Coos Bay), always lurking somewhere in the shadows, behind a tree, around the next corner, virtually everywhere. Nearly all of my Father's family and relatives talked about him, and that made him as real to me, at ages 5-12, as Jesus and Santa Claus. Even though I

felt a little puzzled in the process, I readily learned that you could talk about Jesus and Santa Claus at anytime, any place, and to anybody, but not so with Old Man Coyote!

Only my Indian relatives would acknowledge "Coyote" and then not all of them would even bother. I think some of them were too preoccupied with trying to better themselves and rise above their "mud-flat Indian" ancestry, and refused to admit they even knew such stories, at least not in public or in front of decent folks.

My Dad would sometimes talk quite freely about tradition and culture, the old ways, yet at other times he seemed to get lost in thought. He'd grow quiet in the middle of a story, almost as though he forgot what to say. Sometimes it seemed like he just ran out of energy. I remember being afraid once that he was going to cry when his voice got soft and he spoke carefully, then it might sort of trail off, unfinished. Those were special moments and they hang out there in memory now like a cloud or a curtain waiting to be lifted a little for a closer look inside.

He was a half-blood, born in 1880, the youngest of his family, the fourth son of a fourth son. My older brother, Wilfred, pointed

this out to me (before his death in March, 1990), adding that I was named George (the IIIrd) and that I was my father's fourth child, and a son. He seemed to imply some significance on my having been born in that numerical sequence. Perhaps he was warning me that I would be destined to follow in our father's path of trials and tribulations.

Dad was educated at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Both his mother and grandmother had hopes and dreams that he would do something to make a difference for his own people. His grandmother, Gishgiu (*T'cicgi'yu*), had admonished him early on about getting back the land taken over by the White settlers.

His task and assignment in life was formidable! He had to live in two worlds; he had to be as good at both lifestyles, and as knowledgeable as anyone in either place, Indian or White man. By that very fact of being bicultural, he also knew that he would never again have a resting place in either world. My Dad had no choice, no options in his destiny - he involuntarily became as a "twosided coin," a "double-edged sword," useful to both sides, Indian and

White, but at any moment, easily rejected by either, if things didn't quite go well for one or the other.

Some people have said that my Grandmother, Susan Adulsah, spoke ten languages. Maybe that was five languages and five dialects, I don't know for sure. It is well documented that she was considered in her time the ultimate resource and authority in the Coos Bay area on tribal history, family trees and relations, culture, and traditions. On several occasions she was summoned by the Coos County Court to explain details of family ties and land ownership or residence for both Indians and Whites, during the period of unwritten records before, during, and just after the earliest White contact or settlements.

Grandmother had an obvious plan for her son George and she did not want to hamper or hold him back by teaching him the Indian languages. It was her determination that he should get the best education White men could give him, then he could have the best chance to compete with and even beat them at their own game!

However, his Grandmother, who was not married to a White man, but was adored, and protected by her son-in-law, after she ran

away from the Yachats concentration camp, could not help but fill him full of the old ways, including all she had time to tell him about "Old Man Coyote."

My Aunt Daisy, Dad's older sister, went to Carlisle also, and completed registered nurse's training at West Chester, Pennsylvania. She too had learned much of the old ways and stories, but when she told me about "Coyote," they were cleaned-up a little so as not to be too dirty, just a little "off color." However, it was my Aunt Mary to whom I shall ever be grateful for not being hampered by an eastern education to dilute the richness of her storytelling to me. And yet, there was one other person who didn't tell as many stories but talked to me a lot as a young boy, and imparted to me a flavor and attitude about tradition, culture, and Indianness, that only an old full-blood with adequate skills of cross-cultural survival could do.

Eddy Ned was the last surviving Coquelle full blood, and he used to work for my Dad cruising timber, sometimes staying at our house for months at a time, in-between jobs. Often, he could be very direct and would not hesitate to tell me that I was acting, talking, or thinking incorrectly. He would privately tell me that a certain thing

was the White man's way; another was the Indian's way. This sometimes caused a little confusion and personal conflict for me, but intuitively, I understood that one could not always talk about or say what he knew just any time or to just anyone. Some things you learn and then just keep quiet about them. When the time is right, you'll know how to act, or what to say if anything. And so it was with Eddy Ned in talking about Talapus, "Old Man Coyote." He gave me a traditional lesson on learning the Coquelle taboo of not talking about "Coyote" out of season. At first my young mind and emotions made me feel he suddenly didn't like me any more. I didn't see what I'd done wrong when he wouldn't talk to me, or tried to get me to be quiet, and he'd change the subject.

It wasn't until one winter, about 1945, when he became very ill with the flu or maybe a bad chest cold and laid in bed for several days, that he felt like telling a thing or two, which I hadn't quite understood. I remember clearly that he was staying in a little house over by my maternal Grandmother's. She would make soup and broth for him. Sometimes I'd get to take it over there, and stay for awhile. Eddy was eating raw, large, white onions. He'd cut off big

slices with his hunting knife up on his chest as he lay in bed, and told me that old Indians believed that eating lots of raw onions would help cure a bad cold.

Now as I think again about those things which he said to me that winter, I suspect he might have even been concerned that his illness might be fatal. In a way that surprised, and especially delighted me, he abruptly started talking about something I'd tried to talk about during the summer, a few months earlier. He wanted to explain to me that you talk about "Coyote" only in the winter and I heard that message, but it didn't fully register.

I was enraptured by the surprise of his resuming that conversation which he'd cut off abruptly the previous summer, and now continued as I'd wanted then, and wasn't mad at me like I'd thought. He actually liked me after all. Then suddenly, he told me it was time for me to go home. He was ill and I shouldn't be that close to him anyway. Thus, my lessons about taboos and traditions were sometimes short, often sporadic, and yet always profound.

It was these kinds of lessons I had to sort through one spring, when my good friend Barre Toelken, asked my opinion on, or "permission

for," his intention to discuss "Coyote" stories at a conference on mythology, and storytelling, to be held at Carroll College in Helena, Montana. He knew the associated taboos among most western tribes about when to tell trickster stories, the same as I knew. But he's worked through a detailed analysis of "Coyote" and had a brilliant dissertation he was pleased with and wanted to share with some like-minded fellow scholars. It would require not only talking about structure and analysis, but also actually relating the story (or maybe parts of several stories) in full. It was for scholarly and academic purposes, you know. Did that make a difference? We both knew it didn't, and he was hoping against all hope that I would take the responsibility to give him some special dispensation, in light of this scholarly cause, to break the taboo with impunity. I could not and did not, but I had a suggestion for him which was actually my own way of delighting in "passing the buck" to someone of much higher status and prestige than myself, and whose response I would dearly have loved to hear.

I had learned that Crow medicine man (my Sun Dance mentor), Tom Yellowtail, and his wife, Suzi, would be attending the

same conference. I suggested to Barre that he introduce himself to Tom, present his dilemma, and ask for an opinion, if Tom would care to respond.

As the conference date drew near, Toelken became more concerned about the issue and quite flustered about his decision to follow through with it all. Little things began to happen to him; as he prepared to leave for the airport he rushed to retrieve something from a closet. He tripped and fell headfirst into the closet corner, receiving a gash in his chin with his head right at a poster of a coyote for which he'd been frantically searching. He rushed on to the airport, flew to Montana where friends tended to his wound, and then he met Tom and Suzi Yellowtail.

Barre and I have discussed this notion of breaking a taboo and what the consequences might be of dealing with "Coyote" out of season. I have only been taught, "don't do it," not about what the consequences might be, so I've never had an answer for myself. Barre introduced himself to Tom and Suzi and proceeded to give a detailed explanation of his intended topic and his concern for maintaining respect for cultural tradition, etc. I believe he might

also have made a point of showing that he'd been experiencing a few odd happenings like splitting his chin open and maybe that was payment to him for having the audacity to discuss "Coyote" in the springtime. I think he wanted Tom Yellowtail to say oh yes, indeed, you have prepaid the consequences, now you are free to talk as you choose. However, Tom said almost nothing. Barre, a little anxiously, prodded him to respond, when Suzi Yellowtail burst out laughing, "Oh go ahead and tell it," she said. "We could use the rain."

### Loki: Native Intuition and Premonition

(l̥o' k̥e) *n. Myth.*

A Norse god who created discord, esp. among other gods.

The old uncle of Ohiyesa gave the following advice, based on observation of the wolf's habits:

You ought to follow the example of *shunk-tokecha*. Even when he is surprised and runs for his life, he will pause to take one more look at you before he enters his final retreat. So you must take a second look at everything you see (Brown 1992:35).

I sat at a table in the northwest corner of the Portland airport lounge. I'd temporarily forgotten that I was with Barre Toelken, when suddenly I jumped up yelling, "LOKI, STOP! COME BACK!" I stood there suddenly aware that no one had heard me. I was completely embarrassed. I hadn't actually yelled out, but it seemed as though I had. I sat back down and waited for Barre to return from making his phone call. I decided not to tell him that I thought I had made a fool of myself. He already knew that I was still in somewhat of a shock from our week of experiences in Montana.

That was sometime in the early 1970s, when I was an Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Oregon. As I think back on all the events affecting my life then, I can't recount all that happened but I remember the highlights: Viet Nam, Wounded Knee, unrest on the University of Oregon campus (including several fires and bombings), Kent State, etc. It was truly a most remarkable time for me. I am yet overwhelmed at some of those spectacular events. I mention this, because the story I'm about to tell is remarkable enough by itself, even if no other excitement had taken place that

year. In light of those other occurrences, my first visit to the Joseph Epes Brown household becomes even more dramatic.

My friend, Barre Toelken, (then Head of the University of Oregon Folklore Program) had arranged for me to accompany him to Missoula where he was participating in a conference sponsored by Joseph Epes Brown. I had been invited to tell Coyote stories. Naturally, I was excited about flying up there in the middle of winter and staying at the Brown residence. Barre had given them a fine build-up for me and they seemed like a most interesting family. They raised Arabian horses and buffaloes on a small ranch nestled at the foot of the eastern slope of the Bitterroot Mountains. Joseph had built a large Swiss chalet style barn for their prized Arabians, with rustic living quarters in one section, where the family stayed while constructing the main house. It became a three-storied, hogan-shaped mansion, made of local stone columns and wood beams. They lived a cross-cultural life style, in an exotic setting, to put it rather simply. I had grown up on horseback, and I secretly hoped that I would be offered a chance to go for a ride while visiting there.

As the day for our early morning departure arrived, I was "all

packed up and ready to go" (that was the English translation of one of my Miluk ancestor's name). I had been thinking about ancestors when I started looking for my Grandmother's string of dentalium shells. I always wore it around my neck, hidden under my shirt, when flying or doing something important. Suddenly I became panicked when I realized that it was not in its usual place. It never got lost, not even temporarily. I could always find it - but not this time. It seemed as though a message of warning was coming to me. I was stunned. Voices seemed to be telling me something horrible, fearful, or dangerous was soon to take place. A warning about an impending death was the main topic I understood from all of the chaotic messages coming to me from that unknown source. I rushed through the rooms in my house and looked fruitlessly for the dentalium. That I could not find it, seemed a certain omen.

Barre's wife, Miiko, drove up to my front door to pick me up and drive us to the airport. I was in distress. I told her that I wasn't ready, and she should go get Barre at his office first. My mind raced through all the possibilities I could think up for an explanation of the dire warnings. I knew Barre had flown many hours over the past

year without an accident. Could it be that the time had come for that fatal one? I felt that I should cancel the trip and prevent us from going. And then, just as suddenly as it all began, another message came through to me clearly. *Go. The danger is not for either of you, but you will be influenced by the dramatic event. . . .*

There was a break in the information, just as it had been for me in remembering what happened that day in high school, when I got knocked-out-cold playing basketball. The memory picture just faded out and became blank space. I was now quite calm, but seriously impressed by the experience.

Barre drove up in his van, and I rushed out the door with my bags. Naturally, he was disturbed that I had not been ready the first time. As we drove to the airport, I explained that I had nearly tried to abort the trip for us. I explained, as best I could, about the stunning premonitions, which I had just experienced, and from which I was barely recovered. There was hardly a word from Barre, except that he seemed struck by my stubborn seriousness. I think he wanted to respect my emotions, but in light of the imminent departure time of our flight, he found it a little difficult.

Nonetheless, upon arrival in Missoula, he related the incident to Joseph and let it be known that I was yet concerned. We all stated that there should be concern and alertness during our visit. Prayers should be offered to seek help and protection from any dangers. Once again, I knew that the danger was not for anyone in the group, Barre, me or Joseph and his immediate family. Yet . . . there was no further clarification available.

The conference went quite well. I went to an evening session and told Coyote stories, particularly the one about Old Man Coyote and the Strawberries. It was loved by all, but I didn't feel quite right somehow. I wished I had done better. As there were several more days of the conference in which Barre and Joseph would be working, I stayed back at the Browns. Joseph had indeed offered me a chance to go riding. He had a fine gray gelding that was well acquainted with mountain travel and would be ideal to ride up into the wilderness for a winter jaunt. The three dogs (a grown German Shepherd named Loki and two half-grown pups) were to be our companions. Elenita had prepared a lunch, which I placed carefully in the saddlebags, and we all started off in the crisp cold air toward

the canyon trail. We followed the roads around some sheep pastures toward the foothills and the trailhead. There the timber began, and the trail wound through the open lodgepole pine toward a narrowing gorge where icicles hung from the rocks in the rushing little chasm. The trail was close to the edge in some places, and sure-footed mounts are a real blessing there. Blue Smoke was such a sure-footed guy, and a pleasure to ride in those conditions.

As we made our way upward, the pups hung back behind the horse, trotting along and peeking around in expectation of some possible excitement. Loki, however, was being obnoxious as he charged off into the woods, barking at this and that unseen quarry or as though warning off potential intruders. When he returned to the trail, he refused to trot along behind Blue Smoke. Loki was the "alpha dog," and he would settle for nothing less than the lead and boss of all within his self proclaimed "domain." He wouldn't run around to take the lead on the trail. No, he preferred to nip at Blue Smoke's heels, bite his tail and annoy the horse into moving over to let him pass. My own male ego would not tolerate that kind of attitude, and I would not let him around. Occasionally I whirled

around and shouted at that obnoxious ass and told him to grow up and stay in place where he belonged. Again Loki was dashing off the trail, trying to lead the pups away from behind Blue Smoke and me.

We arrived at the wilderness boundary some time past noon and finally stopped to rest and have a bite of lunch. Loki continued his antics, dashing out into the woods, barking a warning, and when the pups rushed to join him, he would wrestle them down in the snow and generally bully them around. They grew tired of that and stayed closer by where I was sitting on a log with my sandwiches spread out. Off he went again, but this time I waited until his back was turned and let out a loud threatening bark of my own. There was no doubt it was convincing as Loki stopped in his tracks, whirled around and looked stunned as he wondered what was about to attack him. Quickly, he darted several directions, giving short bursts of clipped staccato barking. He'd pause abruptly, listening for another challenge which had been so loud and so near. I couldn't hold it any longer. I grabbed a snowball, threw it at his hind end, and I fell over laughing at having embarrassed the "king," the "big guy." It then all became true slapstick chaos as the pups leaped on

me licking my face and rolling me around in the snow, my feet up in the air and on the log yet. Blue Smoke would not be left out either, and he reached down and munched on the lettuce out of my sandwich. The pups ate the remainder of the meat, and finally, Loki came wagging his tail into the fray. He accepted the bread scraps as though he had forgiven me for shaming him. It was truly a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience, one of those "peak experiences" which so many people like to talk about, but so few have convincingly had. I'm convinced that the real *peak experiences* don't get talked about, and those who expound on them are actually in doubt about it, and are really trying to convince themselves more than anyone. I felt that way too and couldn't talk about that experience for a long time.

It's strange to me to think that some people call themselves animal lovers or dog lovers. They have "pet" dogs, lead them around on a leash or string, sometimes tying a bandanna around their necks to look hip or for some other novel notion. In town, dogs can be found tied up to parking meters, lamp posts, hand railings, and bicycle racks, as though they are temporarily "on hold" until their owners are ready to take them up as toys or pets again. I can't

do that. It's painful to me to see such animals trapped in those conditions of dire social poverty. Therefore, I don't have a "pet dog" in my life. Stupidly, and mostly out of naiveté, it's assumed by some around me that I don't like dogs because I don't have one, and I am critical of those in the city who do. How far from the truth that is, they will never know. Perhaps most could never know, even if all was explained to them.

In my fondest memories I recall "Queen," an intelligent and superbly trained border collie who belonged to my neighbor, Rose Walker. Rose would loan her out to work at rounding up sheep for other ranchers, but in the evening she had to be taken back home for supper. She would work, but refused to eat for strangers. I always felt highly complimented and special, because Queen would eat when she stayed all night and worked for me. Perhaps she was always grateful that I deigned to sleep in the barn to assure and comfort her all night while breeding with Bob, my stepfather's dog. From then on, it was as though Queen and I had a happy secret, which always made her happy to see me. She was also the only dog I'd ever heard of who would squat over a saucer and urinate on

command so her owner could collect "scent" for coyote traps.

I sometimes think of my short acquaintance with "Blondie," the cute little part- border collie, part Australian shepherd, part-coyote, who stole my heart at the Peterson Place on the South Fork of Pistol River. I was caretaking for Mose Miller while he went out to visit his family. Mose had told Blondie that I was to stay at the ranch and that she was to stay with me and eat what I gave her. She understood very well. We gradually became acquainted on long hikes through the hills and woods, where I taught her to dig through the wood rat nests to roust them out. Those nests in the hills of Curry County are enormous piles (up to 10 or 12 ft. high) of leaves, sticks, cow chips, and any other debris from the forest floor. As I poked a long stick into the first one, Blondie had a hard time paying any attention, until the rats began coming out. Then she went crazy barking and chasing them around the base. It took only a short while for her to learn that they escaped up into the trees by means of long branches hanging down into the pile. At last I gave up and moved on, but Blondie would not and continued barking and jumping at the heap, demanding to chase at least one more rat. I

moved on up the wooded ridgeline, looking for and causally enjoying the happiness she had experienced. Eventually I became aware that her barking had temporarily stopped, and now changed direction. She came trotting hurriedly along, hot on my trail with her nose to the ground. When at last she saw me, she stopped and growled threateningly at me. Then, she barked a warning call. I spoke to her softly and started moving on up the trail. Blondie rushed at me again, with the same threatening growl and bark. I turned toward her with out stretched-hand, but she quickly wagged her tail and started off in her own direction. Again as I turned back up the hill, she repeated the same attack and retreat pattern of communication, as though she desperately needed me to follow her. I understood her clearly then and followed her off the trail and back down into the woods. I just knew that she was leading me back to that old wood rat nest where we'd had so much fun. No way! She led me to her own newly discovered wood rat heap and jumped around in ecstasy as she squealed and barked for me to start jabbing at the ubiquitous wood rats inside. I fell down in the leaves rolling and laughing at the brilliance of that little mixed breed dog. She was one

of the most delightful companions imaginable. I anticipated hiking through the woods with her again the next fall when Mose went on his annual trip, but it was never to be again. Mose sadly told me that a neighboring rancher mistook her for a coyote about to chase his sheep, and shot her up on the edge of her own territory. The loss was painful, but the delightful memories are indelible.

I hardly thought of those other dog relationships, as I frolicked with these newly found companions. It seemed like such a short time that we'd been out riding and competing for macho alpha position in the woods when I realized it was getting late and that our fun had to be directed back toward home.

I collected myself, brushed the snow off and re-tightened the cinch. Swinging up into the saddle, I let out a yowl-howl which was immediately taken up by all of the other "guys," Loki and pups alike. Blue Smoke was pumped too, and we took off like a pack of horny young warriors out to count coup on the nearest intruders, or bring down the biggest damned elk in the Bitterroots. Testosterone felt tame to our exhilarated tempers and mid-winter excitement. We fairly loped through the woods and slowed just enough for safety's

sake along the icy rock ledges where the trail overhung the frozen cascades of the adjacent mountain stream. We howled intermittently, while Loki charged off here and there, back to trail behind, and Blue Smoke cantered to one side allowing him the lead again. Loki proudly held his tail up in dominant position. It was a moment of pleasure at having reconciled the relationship between us. We seemed to know who had what position and who was in control; Loki assumed the lead wherever I chose to go on Blue Smoke, and the pups brought up the rear in deference to our shared authority. We'd made peace all around.

We galloped through the open woods, jumping the downed pines, and soon came to within sight of the trailhead. I thought we'd slow down and regroup before we all left the timber and started back down the dirt road toward home. As I looked around and counted heads, I realized that Loki was not around. It seemed that maybe he'd just charged off to one side and would be right back, but not so. As we slowed to an easy canter down the dirt road, I could look off to my left across the adjacent pasture. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a flock of sheep running off over the

crest of a low rise. Then I saw what I most dreaded to believe. My premonition was immediately back in focus. It turned on with such intensity that I could hardly believe I was alive, in the same world, or even the same person. I was transported out of myself and somewhere above the whole scene, while at the same time right there astride Blue Smoke who then seemed a miracle horse, or maybe part of my own being, an extension of myself, on loan to do the impending impossible. All thoughts were present at once and actions were both decided and observed simultaneously. We charged down the lane as I called to Loki to STOP! COME BACK! . . . LOKI, STOP! COME BACK! He couldn't hear or even begin to obey my pleading commands. It was all beyond his control. Loki was a victim of his own male condition. He was an addict to the glories of male superior hunting and fighting talents, which are seemingly inherent in all testosterone-producing males. I don't know exactly how it works, but I do know how it feels and how overpowering the urges can be. Unwittingly, having been in "combat" with that macho dog over his inherent alpha position, I had unleashed his primal urges and natural responses to pursue and dominate with the expertise of

the stud that he was.

I heard bullets zinging through the tree limbs just above our heads. By then we had charged on down the road to where we could command a better view of the field of action. The sheep rancher was far up to our left, shooting about 200 to 300 yards at Loki with his 22 Special. It was a small caliber rifle as far as wounding and making big holes, but accidentally well placed hits can be deadly even with such small slugs. Blue Smoke was going wild with my yelling at Loki and the rancher, warning him that we were coming into the line of fire as Loki limped his way back across to our corner of the field. The flock of sheep had all moved back up to the other side, and was now out of sight. As Loki retreated and attempted to make his way out of there, the bullets continued to fly all around. As I watched in helpless horror, the red faced rancher ran blunderingly down the hill shooting intermittently into the air, hitting Loki a few times, and sometimes missing into the trees around Blue Smoke, the pups and me.

By the time Loki dragged himself into the fence corner alongside our place on the road, the enraged and incoherent

rancher stumbled through some trees just across from us. I commanded him to lower his rifle unless he intended to shoot me also. It was as though he couldn't even think about what he was doing. He yelled, "I won't shoot you, I won't shoot you." But the gun was still pointing at Blue Smoke and me. I expected that bullet to hit one of us anytime. Again, I spoke authoritatively and told him to lower the gun. At last he did; he lowered the rifle and just stared at me with his neck veins pulsing and out of breath. I next told him, "Finish Loki off!" He was so badly injured that he would never recover to himself again. How did I know? Loki was telling me. His back legs were paralyzed and he whimpered as he tried to drag himself under the fence. The man was still nearly insensible. Again, I instructed him to put a bullet through Loki's head and stop his pain and misery. "Show him mercy. Do it now!" I commanded.

The incoherent man just aimed his rifle and proceeded to jack the bullets out of the chamber, not firing one shot. Loki managed to squeeze under the fence and drag himself onto the road behind the confused and disoriented pups. They were scared of Loki and whimpered at me for guidance and protection. The left rein on Blue

Smoke's bridle broke off at the bit, and he felt out of control, not knowing what I was doing. Finally, I dismounted and walked over to the fence, picking up an unspent cartridge as I got there. I handed it to the man and told him what he must do. After re-attaching the loose rein, I remounted and got Blue under control again. I explained that I would dash to one side, leading the pups away from Loki and that he was to finish him off with one quick well placed shot between the right ear and eye. Miraculously, the shaking man took a quick steady aim and completed the merciful task. Loki was looking directly at me with a steady eye, and he'd stopped the low whine just before he went silent.

I dismounted once more and asked the man to take me out into the field to survey the damage Loki had done to his sheep. The man seemed to think I was most honorable, or valiant, or something like that, and continued to say so as we searched the area. All we found was a couple of tufts of wool where he had managed to grab a mouthful or two and pull them out. I saw no evidence of blood drawn except where the bullets had struck Loki. I told the man I was sorry for the inconvenience we had caused him, and that I must now

go back to the Brown family and take care of Loki's body. Back down the road I hugged the pups and we cried as I removed his choke chain and carefully laid him to one side of the road where we could retrieve him later.

I shall always remember the comforting words of Joseph Epes Brown as we placed Loki to rest in the orchard, just east of the teepee site. Joseph, Sasha, and I said prayers and offered tobacco after carefully caressing his limp form and saying good-bye.

"It seems as though you [George] were sent to prevent such a death to anyone of the family members, as that man has made threats against us in the past. If one of us had been there instead of you, it might have been our death also."

Late into the night Joseph and Elenita drummed and sang the mournful prayers of Lakota traditional songs while I sat in tearful contemplation. The young people of the family retired to their bedrooms to privately mourn in silence.

I've never been one to believe much in premonitions, or in predicting the future. I tend to doubt the veracity of those who claim to have such abilities, and who profess special powers of

clairvoyance or the like. Yet when one has undeniably impressive experiences such as I've related, one tends to open up to other possibilities. Loki will always be one of my heroes; he taught me humility and acceptance of other leaders with grace and compassion. I learned there's always room for a good leader to share his glory at the top of the pack, with another hero.

Thank you, Joseph, for sharing such wisdom with me through Loki. I'll follow the example of *shunk-tokecha* and, "pause to take one more look at you" before entering my "final retreat." In fact, I'll never forget to take a second look at everything I see.

### Woot'lat

"Woot'lat" is possibly one of the least known words of Chinook Jargon and seldom used today. I doubt that anyone actually uses the word regularly in speaking, but I suspect numerous people who know Jargon, also know the meaning.

The following definition is offered in "Chinook, a History and Dictionary," by Edward Harper Thomas (1970); WOOT'LAT

(a Chinook word): a phallus (often represented in carved pestles.)

Natural pillars and towers of basalt were sometimes call "woot'lat," and venerated. Rooster Rock, along the Columbia River, just upstream from Multnomah Falls, was a notable Woot'lat.

Other such pinnacles of rock or even outstanding tree stumps were often revered similarly. But not all were of the same size, and Chinook Jargon being flexible in nature and usage, adapted itself quite well to such variations.

In pronunciation, a smaller object might be merely called a *wootlat*, but for the enormity of Rooster Rock, the pronunciation was stretched out, and the word became much more meaningful as "WOOOOTLAT."

In the early 1900s, official names of places across the country were being formalized and printed on maps. There was special concern by governmental bureaucrats that only names of suitable nature could be used so as not to insult or embarrass the genteel public with anything off-color or vulgar. Chinook Jargon was essentially an honest, straightforward language composed of the most useful or appropriate words from among the many languages

and dialects of the wide variety of Indian tribes who spoke it. Even though many White men used Jargon and also contributed both French and English words to it for common usage, it was hardly the language of the genteel folk of the Northwest by the time maps were being published.

The early explorers, trappers, mountain men, and even some of the early miners and settlers understood the ways of thinking among the Native peoples and easily fell into using their concepts of respect toward a tall pillar of rock proudly thrusting itself up from the land without hesitation or apologies. Who couldn't help but notice the symbolism and even smile a little respectfully?

Traveling along the Columbia by canoe or raft and on foot or horseback along the canyon or desert trails, was always slow progress. There was no speeding by like today, with only a glimpse or quick glance from the freeway; a traveler back then would see the Woot'lat of Rooster Rock for many miles along the river. It could be seen for several hours or a whole day and in sight of several camping places nearby. So it should be well understood that the White men thereabouts might be inclined to use a catchy or

colorfully direct translation of the Jargon to English whereby "Woot'lat" (phallus or penis) would readily be called "Cock Rock." It was so; it was called that and therefore when the sensitive censors of our governmental bureaucracies determined to "clean up" that name, they chose to sidestep the obvious male anatomical inference of the name "Cock Rock" and shifted it over to "Rooster Rock."

Ironically, the local "bad boys" today, delight in re-interpreting the official name from "Rooster" back to "Cock" (with every intention of identifying with the unofficial public nude beach nearby), while not one of the name users having the slightest idea that they have brought the name concept full circle to the original meaning of the Native term, "Woot'lat."

### The Bad Luck Canoe

There is another such previously venerated phallus on the Oregon Coast, but of a much more unique and special nature. For many generations, perhaps hundreds of years, the "Big Stump" has been projecting from the sand (even visible at high tide) out on the beach

just south of the mouth of the Alsea River at Waldport, Oregon. This special Woot'lat was the broken off butt of an enormous redwood tree. No one yet knows how it got there, but I've heard conjectures from some old people that it grew there many, many years ago (see Figs. 10 and 11).

Not far away, several other redwood trees lay eroded and worn away by wave-action, or human chopping and cutting. When occasional winter storms wash away much of the sand, there lie exposed root systems which extend 25 or 30 feet in either direction from the root-wads, giving the distinct appearance of having just blown over right where they were growing.

However, the Big Stump, which has been sticking up out of the sand and waves since long before the coming of the White men, was well known among all of the coastal people from the Columbia River to the Coquille River and southern Oregon. It was known to be a redwood and therefore highly respected for its "Tahmahnawis," a Chinook jargon word meaning magic or big "medicine." Any traveler along that part of the coast would have to walk or paddle right by it, as the travel route was along the beach at low tide.



Fig. 10. George B. Wasson, Jr. standing by the Big Stump. On the beach south of Waldport, Oregon. January 17, 2000. Photo by John Bauguess.



Fig. 11. Close up of George B. Wasson, Jr. standing by the Big Stump. January 17, 2000.  
Photo by John Bauguess.

It was therefore most propitious for the wary traveler to carry a handful of white stones, small rounded white beach pebbles, to toss up into and around the Big Stump as offerings and gifts to its spirit. Such travelers would prepare in advance of reaching that location by picking up stones along their way, having all thoughts and offerings ready upon arrival, not as just a casual afterthought or token gesture.

Redwood was held in such high regard among coastal peoples that one time when someone carved a large canoe out of such an honored driftwood log, all the people around South Slough on Coos Bay considered it dangerous and extremely bad luck to touch or even look at it.

Sometime about the turn of the century, my Grandfather, George R. Wasson, evidently didn't take the taboos of the local people very seriously and quite matter-of-factly took the canoe out fishing. He caught a large amount of salmon (some say he had the canoe full) and took them home to my Grandmother, Susan Adulsah, for her to clean and smoke or dry for the winter.

He learned his lesson well about taking Indian traditions and taboos seriously, when my small but strong-willed Grandmother adamantly refused to even touch or look at them, leaving the whole catch of salmon to spoil right where he left them, contaminated in the "bad luck" canoe.

#### DeSmet Indian School and IHS (Indian Health Service)

One spring, about 1989, I attended an Indian Health Service (IHS) meeting in Spokane, Washington. While there, a group of us also visited the DeSmet Indian School in nearby Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, now a National Historic Landmark. It was an awesome three-story brick structure of mid 19th century architectural style. There was a full basement and three stories above. The ceilings were very high; the floors were of wood, and there was narrow tongue and groove wainscoting part way up the walls. The old cast iron steam radiators were quite tall and had ornate Victorian designs embossed on them, which sometimes were barely discernible through the many coats of enamel paint.

The building was a most imposing structure, almost formidable looking, as it rose atop a little knoll in the northern Idaho rolling hills country. Just west of the school on an adjacent hill about one fourth mile away, lay the cemetery with its tombstones and white crosses all lined up in orderly rows.

There was no doubt that this was solidly Roman Catholic country as there boldly stood on the south end of the cemetery a twenty foot tall cross at the base of which was a life-sized replica of Michaelangelo's, *Pieta*, all done in everlasting white painted fiberglass and plastic resin.

Across the north end of the second floor in the old school building, I walked into the now abandoned chapel. Some of the pews had been removed along with nearly all of the statues and the stations-of-the-cross. But there was the barren altar and one statue of the Madonna standing guard off to one side. I stood there in wonderment at the effort it had taken to build this whole structure. I could easily envision that entire chapel in its entire original splendor and glory.

I had already seen the guardian angels in the new sanctuary

recently built nearby, and I could not imagine how they had been physically removed from their pedestals, carried down three flights of stairs and over to their new locations. What was even more astounding to me was thinking about the Indian converts who had helped place them upstairs originally. Those angels were nearly life-sized, in complete detail of physical characteristics, with outstretched wings five feet high! What must they have imagined? What must they have felt, those traditional migrant buffalo hunters of the northern Great Plains?

Father DeSmet was one of the earliest "Black Robes" (Jesuit priests) to bring Christianity to the Northwest tribes. He settled among the Spokanes and Coeur d'Alenes of eastern Washington and northern Idaho, where he dazzled the already devoutly religious and spiritually oriented Native peoples with the highly ornate vestments, detailed and mystical rituals, and enchanting ceremonies of the Catholic Church. Perhaps he recognized in those potential converts their zeal for spiritual power, their dedication to self-control, self-denial, and chastisement to attain "medicine." It was surely encouraging to the determined priest in long black robes to

observe the awe with which the savages responded to his swinging pot of incense, the intermittent ringing of his crisp, clear sounding silver bell wafting through the cool, clean mountain air. One might imagine that he, too, responded more emotionally to the incantations in Latin, with the haunting “melismas” of Gregorian Chant which had become almost common place to European worshippers and his clerical brethren back home.

From personal experience, I know that Indians generally did not take such things lightly. Religious and spiritual matters were after all, the "real world" or a representation of the real world and dedication to such was what life was all about. Surely, never before had a missionary encountered a more receptive and grateful flock of willing converts.

It was the dawning of a new age for the tribes. Old men had long before dreamed and foretold of these strange white-skinned people. Horses had been introduced much earlier and all the people knew how that had enhanced their lifestyles. They had heard of other stranger predictions of large flying birds and enormous fire breathing iron horses with humans inside them. Obviously, such

people must have extremely powerful spiritual medicine to bring about such fantastic wonders, and those spiritual "savages" wanted access to their religious secrets too.

There were conversions by the hundreds, thousands perhaps, and the "new age" was well underway. However, the ministry of the Catholics in conjunction with the Hudson's Bay Company of the British Empire, was not to be the only influence on the Northwest tribes for very long. The Americans noted this foothold gained by their foreign competitors and took decisive actions to establish and ensure their own control and possession of the Northwest Territories. Subduing the Native populations was of utmost importance in accomplishing this goal, so the anti-Catholic Americans encouraged and supported their own Protestant missionaries to move into the Northwest and take the word of God, the Bible, and the Ten Commandments to those religion-starved heathens. Thus, they were to be converted to the White man's way of life, settled down on farms, or removed to reservations, to make way for the "people more worthy of this beautiful and fertile country," as Jason Lee's companion, Gustavus Hines, so eloquently

stated their general attitude in 1840 (Beckham 1971:35-36).

The inevitable clash between Christian zealots with denominational differences became insidious, deceitful, and brutal while the Native people were aghast in disbelief that these self-proclaimed holy men were bitterly arguing about the same God and savior. Yet, the Catholic influence, on these Native flocks, remained firmly implanted.

Attending the same meeting was a young woman from my tribe, who was really new to Indian country. She had never been exposed to much American Indian culture, history, or tradition, yet she was intelligent, educable and now employed by our tribe in our new Department of Health Services.

Upon first arriving, she and I were guided through the original school building. We toured the deserted upper floors with the guidance of a local volunteer, a young woman from the Coeur d'Alene tribe. The first floor was mainly offices; the second floor contained classrooms and a chapel. But the third floor was where the living/sleeping quarters had been located. Across the whole south end was the section for the boys. In the middle on the west

and across from the stairwell was the girls' dorm, while all across the north end, directly above the chapel had been the domiciliary cubicles of the resident school nuns. Even their claw-footed, cast iron/enamel bathtub seemed cloistered in its own protective wall, which jutted out into the foyer of their main hallway. It was obviously a modern convenience or afterthought placed there in later years with a high wainscoting screen put around it to create privacy.

As we walked through the boys' dorm at the opposite end, we paused and stood in silence, each lost in thought. Presently we were brought back alert by an eerie sound of "breathiness," as though someone was heaving a deep sigh and slowly blowing out air through pursed lips.

We all looked at each other from our separate places about the vast empty room. "Must be old spirits," I said. Erin rushed over wide-eyed. "Don't talk like that," she said. "It really makes me spooky, and I get scared in places like this." I spoke reassuringly saying never to be afraid of spirits, that after all they were living in the real world and we could be honored to encounter them and

learn much from them. Our guide had been quiet for awhile and then spoke as a true Native convert. "Yes, you should not be afraid. They say those are only the old people who died long ago (before Christianity came). They are just coming around asking us to pray for their souls so they can go to heaven too."

Over at the new chapel, some workmen who were out front painting and doing minor repairs, let us inside to look around. The wood floors creaked and popped as we walked around, almost as though they were talking with each footstep. It was an exotic mixture of 18th and 19th century religious statuary in a 20th century semi-modern environment. There stood the alabaster angels as if hovering before the flock of worshipers.

I was momentarily transported in memory back to the rebuilt churches of post-World War II in Augsburg, Germany. In many instances, the elaborate and rare works of religious art from the medieval, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque masters had been stored in deep underground vaults for safe keeping during the war which demolished many churches. Later when new structures were completed and some old ones refurbished, it was quite common to

see these exquisitely detailed iconic works of art placed in strikingly modern settings, which only increased one's awareness of their painstakingly crafted completeness.

There was a strange feeling of wonderment in my response to those hallowed houses of worship in Germany. It seemed so appropriate there. After all, those people had been steeped in the Christian religion for hundreds of years; the Lutheran Church, St. Anna Kirche was over 1,100 years old. Now, I was looking at the same kind of religious trappings and feeling as though these worshippers here in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, might be descendants of some pre-Lutheran Catholics just like all over Europe.

That feeling of wonderment was not lost with my return to "the here and now." It was most obvious that these local converts had not lost contact with their past several hundred years either, and that Christianity had its price to pay for intrusion into this ancient way of life.

A blonde-haired Virgin Mary with porcelain white skin stood demurely in her sky blue cloak and mantle to the left front of the altar platform. Someone had placed a finely beaded medicine bag

over her slightly extended left hand, just as a child might have awkwardly placed a Christmas tree ornament in a precarious location.

On the right side of the platform was another statue with raven black braids, creamy olive-toned skin, and dressed in a handsomely decorated and fringed buckskin dress. This "Indian Princess" had strong dark eyes, her posture was straight and her gaze was directly ahead as though out on a walk through the woods. Over her heart was a wooden crucifix bound together by leather thongs and held in place by her right hand. In her left hand she held a black Holy Bible, the same style as those the Gideons leave in hotel and motel dresser drawers. My feeling of wonderment continued as I looked up at the faint smile on her face and realized that she was slightly extending her left arm as if offering the Bible to anyone who might want to look at it.

As the business after lunch meeting did not involve either of us, I took the opportunity to borrow a car and invited Erin to drive around and look over the area with me. I had been explaining to her something of the variations in Native attitudes, cultures, and

traditions from the coastal areas, inland to the mountains. I was looking for those cultural remnants of the aboriginal people, which not even the Roman Catholic Church could wipe out and obliterate.

I suspected there might be some other such indication of enduring tradition over in that cemetery, even though one could see from a distance the non-traditionally straight rows of the evenly spaced burial plots. Sure enough, there it was. Each grave was a personalized tribute to the life and soul of the one interred there. I had explained how love gifts and favorite personal belongings had been customarily buried with the remains, and that now, many such gifts and mementos for the loved one are placed on top of the graves.

Erin had become engrossed in reading names in one section where there were a number of graves all with the same Victorian style marble crosses with elaborate inscriptions of religious symbolism. Suddenly she called out to me with an air of shocking disbelief, to come and look at that whole section. There must have been a major epidemic with which the early Indian Health Service was unable to cope. All the graves in this early period were clearly

patients lost under poor health care. I rushed over to look, and sure enough, each of those old crosses had IHS embossed in Gothic script at the top.

After my initial stunned silence, I broke into hearty laughter and after explaining the religious significance of the three letters (a kind of Greek shorthand, for Jesus), she laughed too. We looked at various collections of colorful items from toys on children's graves, basketballs, and athletic equipment, to plastic flowers and framed photographs. A corral fence with ropes enclosed the grave plot of a lifelong horseman and packer; packsaddles, harnesses, and other tack hung around on it. One man had obviously been well known for his tobacco chewing habit; engraved on his headstone was the nickname "Snoose."

Needless to day, the evidence showed clearly that some cultural attitudes and traditions are infinitely more powerful medicine than lessons of the hickory switch, or "Bell, Book or Candle" of Catholicism, and shall endure well beyond the grave, remaining steadfast in their own integrity.

Coyote and the Strawberries: Cultural Drama  
and Cultural Collaboration

George Wasson and Barre Toelken

*BT*: The collaboration in this essay is of a different—though parallel—variety from that illustrated by the other chapters in this collection [See *Oral Tradition*, 13/1 (1998)], for here the text is articulated in English, the original language of the Coquelles having been demolished in the last century. As has been the case with many small tribes, however, the culture did not entirely disappear with the eclipse of the language that carried it. Indeed, one could argue that in their retention of certain foods, basket designs, and stories, many of the smaller Northwest coastal tribes actually intensified parts of their endangered culture by adapting them—translating them, if you will—to contemporary contexts and social needs.

In any case, it is clear from George Wasson's recollections, that the stories were told in relatively recent times by old-timers in his tribe, who were bilingual. That is, original translations (or

renderings), were articulated by intellectually capable people who felt some need to continue the performance of these dramatic narratives. Among other considerations, then is the question: why? What was there in a story like this one that was so important that it needed to be retained in a world that was falling apart? Other stories no doubt dropped out of use, but not this one. Others were maintained as well, and those that illustrate the breaking of sexual taboos (for example) might be seen provisionally as representing tribal views of sexual conduct that were under attack by settlers, missionaries, and teachers. But what about sleeping in a hollow tree, eating too many strawberries, escaping from a whale, and exchanging eyes? How do these represent timely concerns, or tribal values too important to lay aside in the confusion of traumatic events?

We could, of course, take the know-nothing stance and simply claim that this is an engaging story, that its actions are funny and entertaining, that Indians just seem to enjoy Coyote stories in the same way Anglos seem to like travelling salesman jokes: it's just what they do, and we don't need to encumber the merely

entertaining dimension of their discourse with our scholarly agenda. But it is perfectly evident in performance that George Wasson enjoys many aspects of this story that are not manifest in the “text” itself. The utterance is only a part of the total meaning—which is of course the case with most traditional narratives. Wasson not only savors the story and enjoys telling it, but he also has his own personal memories of growing up in the very area where the story takes place. He recollects family and tribal value systems that inform the meaning of coyote actions in the story—an important matter on which we have been well-instructed by Clifford Geertz, among others. Wasson also visibly registers the physical and emotional sensation of having sounds and gestures coming from his own vocal cords and hands that unite him with his father and his aunts, from whom he first heard the story. These and other factors emerge not from the fossil of the “text,” which is, after all only visualized skeleton of a live, interactive performance, but from a sense of the cultural matrix out of which the story has grown and to which it refers.

Our job in this essay, then, is not to cope with the difficulties of translating Coquelle into English, for this step has already been achieved by earlier Coquelle intellectuals, living tribal repositories and articulators whose expertise far outreaches ours. Here, it is a network, a constellation of cultural beliefs and assumptions, which is to be approached and understood. The primary basis for this understanding must come, of course, from the narrator's own culture and experience. But, since we know it is especially difficult to examine consciously and rationally, the assumptions in one's own culture, assumptions that seldom come up for critical review, we also need to recognize that there are a number of questions—perhaps even impertinent ones—that can come only from the questing outsider who, presumably alert and respectful of the possibilities of meaning, has not internalized or rationalized the cultural norms and “obvious” assumptions, and thus may pose questions that the insider might never need to consider.

This story, narrated on tape by George Wasson for friends, and the discussion that follows it represent an ongoing interaction between the essay's authors. The comments of each author will be

preceded by his initials, but each segment has been reviewed and revised several times collaboratively. The story text is broken up into numbered segments for clarity in the explanatory notes, but since we do not subject the narrative to a performance study (which would have included intonation, pacing, audience response and so on) these segments are provisionally dictated by their principal themes or images.

### Narrator's Introduction

GW: This story, "Coyote and the Strawberries," has been a Wasson family favorite for many years. I've heard it told time after time by various family elders, mainly my dad (George B. Wasson, Sr.), Aunt Daisy, Aunt Mary, and Aunt Lolly (Laura). Various cousins have been told the story also, but it seems that few of them carried it so personally in their memories as did my late brother Dr. Wilfred C. Wasson and I. In fact, most Coos/Coquille tribal members did not bother to practice telling such stories, and so for many the chain of direct aboriginal contact with our ancestors has been broken. I learned the story by listening to people who had

listened to the last generation of traditional full-bloods before the coming of the Whites. My learning of the story in English was from native-speaking ancestors who selected their own form of translation from the original Miluk renditions (Miluk is a division of the Kusan language, a member of the Athabascan family. The Coos and Coquelle [later spelled “Coquille” by whites] are closely related tribes who often intermarried). Whatever interpretation took place, was done by the Coquelle themselves, as they coped with the problems of maintaining meanings in the new language—not by outsiders who had not grown up in the aboriginal cultural context. Variations on some of the themes in this story can be found in a tale called “The Trickster Person Who Made the Country” (Jacobs 1940:184).

I’ve told “Coyote and the Strawberries” to many different groups of people—some Native, some who are totally unaware of the genre, and some who know it so well they couldn’t wait to be titillated by the retelling in a good comfortable setting. The story must be told, only when the storyteller has complete control of the audience. The occasion must be one of suitable respect for the

topic, for although the story contains humor and elicits laughter, there is no room for ridicule, disrespect or derision in response to its content. I try to limit the number of times I tell the story each winter, and to select the most auspicious occasions to present it.

This story has held fond memories for me as brother “Will” and I often listened to one another telling it and each offered corrections or additions when the other forgot an important point or aspect. Will often deferred to my telling of it since my rendition included more of the old gestures and vocal inflections of our older relatives as we remember how they told the story to us. I’ll always remember my first telling of “Strawberries” after his death. He and I shared that story so many times and so personally that I can recall the places in the narration where he might “correct” me, or remind me of the next episode, should I appear to falter in my presentation. I was just starting to tell it to a group of 200 listeners in a nicely darkened arena room late one evening during a men’s symposium in Eugene, Oregon. As I began telling the story, retreating into my own world of memory, experiences, and emotions, I heard Will make an ever so slight comment of approval—something like “Ah, yes,

that's a good one to tell now." I was startled, and actually glanced to one side of the room where it seem to me he was sitting back contentedly in a chair. Realizing what was happening to me, I held the state of suspension for myself and absorbed the emotional glow of his presence. His death had not been a full year prior to that event, and my mourning for his passing continued to be painful and humorous simultaneously. At length, I had to explain to the listeners why I'd stopped talking and stood crying in front of them. After a lengthy pause I resumed the story; it was a good experience for me, and I knew that particular reincarnation of it was especially poignant and enlightening for the listeners as well.

In keeping with the taboo against telling Coyote stories out of season (winter being the Coyote story telling time), I have seldom allowed anyone to record my telling of it. However, this particular rendition was recorded at my home in the winter of 1993, in the company of a few non-Native friends including Carson Bowler, an attorney. The recording was for Suzi Jones and was included in *The Stories We Tell: An Anthology of Oregon Folk Literature* (Jones and Ramsey 1994: 125-30). [See also Susan Wolgamott's Coquelle story,

“The Girl Who Married a Sea Otter” (Jones and Ramsey 1994:262-263)]. Even so, I request that each reader respect the cultural dictates of my Coos/Coquelle ancestors and read aloud or discuss this story, “Coyote and the Strawberries” only during the winter.

If readers do not heed such warnings, I am not responsible for any dire consequences that might befall them, their loved ones, or anyone who knowingly listens to it “out of season” (see Fig. 12).

“Coyote and Strawberries”  
as told by  
George Wasson

(1) Coyote was going down South Slough off Coos Bay, and he was going along when a hail storm came up.

(2) Big hailstones came down and started hitting him, pelting his body, and he was jumping around, saying, “Oh, that hurts! Oh! Oh!” And he had to get out of the hail storm, so over on the side of the trail there he found this big tree. I think it was a Cedar tree.

(3) It had been burned, maybe even hit by lightning (which would make it a taboo tree to mess with), but anyway this big Cedar that had a hole down in the bottom, a cavity that had been burned to the bottom and partly hollow down there. So he rushed over, and he got down inside there, and he huddled up to get out of the hail storm. But it didn’t quite protect him, so he used his magical powers, his *tamanawis*, and he commanded the tree to grow shut around him.

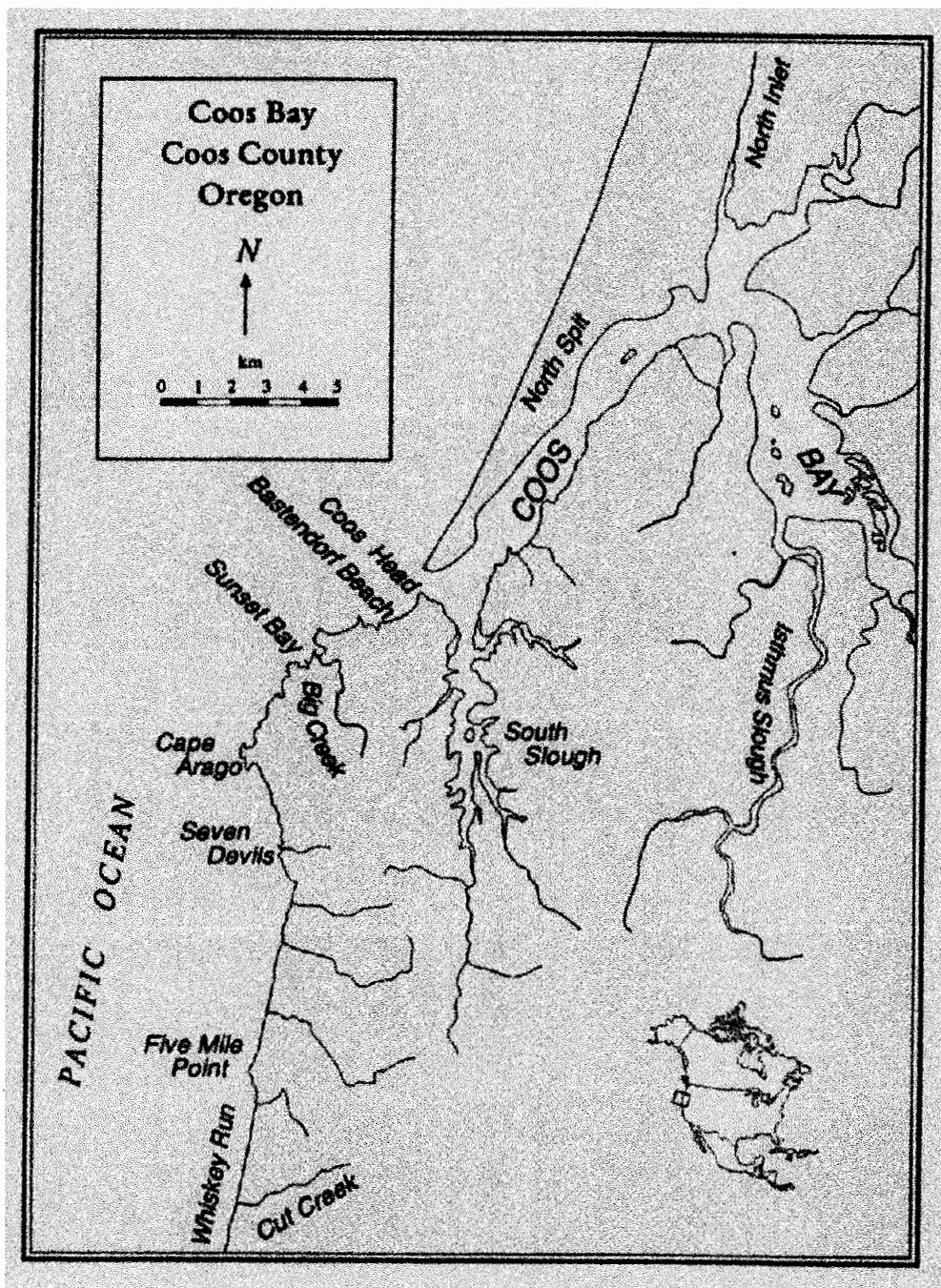


Figure 12. Map of Coos Bay area, Coos County, Oregon. Locations mentioned in the story are: South Slough, Coos Head, Bastendorf Beach, Sunset Bay, and Big Creek.

Created by Mark Tveskov, 1998.

(4) So he said, "Tree, grow shut. Grow shut around me." And the tree did that. He left a little hole he could see through, little hole he could look through, and he was looking through the hole and he could see outside, and he felt really proud of himself, saying how smart he was, how good he was. He had commanded the tree to grow shut.

(5) Well the hail storm passed by, and Coyote was sitting in there, and he decided "Well I guess it's time to get out of here now," so he used his powers, his *tamanawis*, and he said, "Grow open."

(6) Nothing happened.

(7) Then Coyote says again, "GROW OPEN!"

(8) Still nothing happened. He thought, "Well, I'm not doing something right there," so he commanded the tree, "Grow open." And nothing happened, and on the fourth time, he still said, "Grow open." Nothing happened at all, and there was Coyote stuck inside of the tree. He must have been too proud of himself because his powers wouldn't work, the tree wouldn't grow open.

(9) So he was looking out that little hole, and pretty soon he saw one of the Woodpecker Girls flying by, and looked through the hole, and he called out through the hole, "Oh Miss Woodpecker!"

(10) She looked around and she said, "Where's that coming from?"

(11) And he says, "come over here, over here to this hole." And she flies over the tree and she looks in there. And he says, "Yes, in here. Peck this hole bigger so I can get out."

(12) Well, she starts working away. She starts pecking on the hole and she pecks on it and pecks on it, and it gets bigger and bigger.

(13) As the hole gets bigger, Coyote can see a little more of her, and he looks out and says, "She's pretty nice looking."

(14) He reaches out there, and he thinks. "I'm just going to stroke her on the tail feathers." And he reaches

out and just starts to touch her on the tail feathers, and he grabs her, and she jumps back and says. "What are you doing" He says, "Oh, oh, I didn't mean to do anything." He'd grabbed her by the tail feathers, grabbed her by the tail." Oh, oh, I'm sorry. I don't mean to do anything. I won't do that." And she starts work and says, "Okay. I'll work some more."

(15) She started to fly away, and he said, "Oh, I won't do that again." And so she starts working away, pecking away, and the hole gets bigger, and she's inside pecking away, getting it bigger, working away.

(16) And he looks up. By that time he can see the front of her, and he says, "She has nice beautiful round breasts." He said, "Oh, she's got her head up in the air, she won't even notice me. I just reach up and just kind of, I'll just kind of stroke and just touch them a little bit."

(17) And he gets so excited, he grabs her, and she jumps back and flies away, says, "No more. I'm not going to help you."

(18) Well, you might know, there's a little Woodpecker down the coast that has two marks on it" white marks across its tail and across its breast also. That's probably where they came from, Old Coyote messing with her when she was trying to peck the hole bigger.

(19) So anyway, she flew away and left Coyote inside the tree, the hollow tree, and he's trying to figure out what he's going to do to get out.

(20) Then he has a bright idea: "Aha." So he reaches up behind his braid, behind his ear, in his braid, and he pulls out his clamshell knife, and he takes his clamshell knife, and he starts cutting himself in little pieces.

(21) He reaches down to his foot, and he cuts out a piece and he pokes that out through the hole. Then he cuts off another piece and he pokes that out through the hole, and he just goes like mad. He starts cutting himself

a little piece, poke, cut off a piece, poke it through the hole, cut off another piece, poke it through the hole. Working up his legs, all the way up his body, he cuts himself all up in little pieces, pokes 'em out through the hole, and then he's going to put himself together when he gets outside.

(22) But while he's doing this, he's cutting out his intestines, his guts, and he throws 'em out through the hole, but while he's doing this, here come Bluejay flying along. Bluejay flies along and looks down and say, "What's all that?" Looking around, down the bottom of that tree, all that interesting stuff, coming out that hole over there, falling on the ground. Nobody's around any place.

(23) Bluejay swoops down and grabs a string of intestines and flies away.

(24) Well Coyote gets all finished, gets all poked out through the hole, gets outside, puts himself all back together [narrator pats hands against various parts of his body as if assembling himself]—back here, back there, everything back into place. He doesn't notice that Bluejay has flown away with part of his intestines. And he just thinks he's just fine, so he's all put back together, and he goes on his way.

(25) Walking on down, and he goes on down South Slough and comes upon where Coos Head is now, he gets up on there, and here are Strawberries all over. And Coyote says, "Oooh. Oh look at that, nice Strawberries." Well, you can tell this is an unusual year because here's a hail storm when the Strawberries are ripe out on the bluff out there, so unusual things are happening.) And here's Coyote, "Oh, I love Strawberries!" And he reaches down and starts picking Strawberries. And he picks a Strawberry and eats it, and picks another one and eats it and says, "Oh, these are so good." He just keeps eating Strawberries, picking and eating, picking and eating. (Well, you know right away, he's doing something wrong here because you're not supposed to pick Strawberries

and eat them yourself. You're supposed to take them back home to share with other people. So here's Coyote doing the wrong thing again. Picking and eating, picking and eating.)

(26) But he just can't get full. He just can't—he tries eating faster. So he picks faster and eats faster, picks faster, pick and pick, and he just goes as fast as he can. But he can't get full at all.

(27) When eventually he looks around behind him, he sees a whole string of strawberries laying on the ground, and they come right up to his rectum because that's when he discovers that Bluejay flew away with the lower end of his intestines and flew away with his rectum. And he just got a straight line right through, and the strawberries just go right in one end and out the other.

(28) And Coyote's looking and he says, "I've got to stop that." So he got an idea. He said, "I'm going to have to plug it up." (Aunt Mary always says his "bunghole," "Plug up his bunghole.") And so Coyote figured what's he going to do.

(29) So he looks around there and says, "This'll do." And he walks over and there's this old rotten log, and he kicks on one of the knots sticking out of this old rotten log, knots sticking up, everything's rotted away. The knots are out there and he kicks one off, and he grabs that and he says, "Oh, I'll take that." And he takes it, and he shoved it up his bunghole and jumps—"Ouch!" And he throws it down, "Oh that hurts! That's rough, that hurts." And he says, "That won't do. I want something that's more smooth."

(30) And he looks over, and here's a rock down there. He says, "Well, I'll try that." So he picks up his rock, and he takes it, and he starts to shove it up, and , "oh, that's cold." And it's too big and it falls right back out. "No, that won't do it. I've got to have some way to plug it up so I can keep strawberries inside of me."

(31) So he's thinking about it, and he looks down the trail there, and here's a wild carrot, a wild carrot growing down there. And he says, "Ah, that's just the right thing." You know it's just about so long, and it's tapered, and it's nice and soft and pliable, and that's just what he wants so he reaches down and picks it and very carefully turns it and pulls it out of the ground. Yes, that's just right.

(32) He breaks off the stem and throws it away. But he's thinking, "You know, I ought to have something to make sure it stays in better." And right over on the side a little ways there is a great big fir tree that's been hit by lightning, and it's dripping pitch, pitch falling from down there. So he takes this carrot—(Well, you know that something's wrong here also, 'cause he shouldn't mess around with a tree that's been hit by lightning). But here's this tree hit by lightning, and Coyote goes over and takes this carrot and rolls it around and around in the pitch, gets it all pitched up and the takes it and very carefully slides it up into his bunghole and pushes it up and takes some more pitch and packs it in place.

(33) Oh, he gets it all nice and glued up there and pats it real tight, and it's all sealed up. And he's really happy with himself.

(34) So then he goes back to eating strawberries, and he's eating with both hands just as fast as he can go, eating and eating, more and more and more and more—eating strawberries until he gets so full he can hardly walk. His belly's just puffed way out and by this time he's worked himself way down to the edge of the bluff.

(35) And he looks over there, and he can see a fire out there. He's worked out toward Bastendorf Beach. And he gets off out there, and he looks way out there, and he goes closer and closer, and he gets up on the edge of the dunes, and he looks out, and there are

people there with this fire on the beach. And he's thinking, "Oh, someone's cooking something."

(36) Well, you know, Coyote's such a glutton he's always ready to eat something more. And he calls out, "Hallooo." And the people look up.

(37) And it's the Seagull Boys out there, and they say, "Oh, hello mother's brother," and he says, "What are you doing?" And they say, "We're playing 'Jump over the fire.'" He says, "oh, well I'm very good at that." "Well, come over and show us."

(38) So Coyote goes over there, and he goes along and he runs over by the fire. He's disappointed it's not food, but he comes down there, going to show off, and he runs up—here his belly's so big he can hardly walk—runs up there and he takes a little jump over the fire.

(39) And they say, "Oh, well that was very good, but you really ought to jump over here where the flames are. There's where the contest is. Jump over the fire."

(40) "Oh, well, I can do that too." So Coyote circles back around and he goes over, he makes another run at it. He takes a run, and he jumps over, and he just barely gets over the fire, and he drags his tail right through the flames, and his tail suddenly explodes into fire.

(41) And he looks back there, and oh, his tail is burning, and flames shooting up. And he starts batting at the flames, batting at this tail, and he's running in circles, and it gets too hot, and suddenly, the pitch melts, and POP! – out goes the carrot.

(42) And Coyote's running in circles. Strawberries start spewing out. He's running in circles, batting at his tail, strawberries spewing out, and they're flying all over the Seagull Boys, just spewing out, covering everybody, strawberries everywhere. And the Seagull Boys are mad. They grab rocks and they start throwing rocks and sticks at Coyote.

(43) And he runs and heads for the ocean as hard as he can go, runs and jumps out into the ocean, going

to put his tail out. And he jumps out there, and what happens, but he jumps right out into the waves and out in the waves is a big Whale. And he jumps—right as the Whale is coming up, he jumps right into the Whale's mouth, and the Whale swallows him.

(44) He goes clear down inside the Whale's stomach. And everything's all quiet down in there. Coyote's down inside the Whale's stomach. The tail is not burning any more; it's gone out.

(45) Coyote's feeling his way around: "How's this happen? Where am I?" And he's wandering around in there and BUMP, suddenly he hits his head on something. He reaches up and there's the Whale's heart, and Coyote bumps right into it. And he says, "Aha." And he has an idea, so he takes his clamshell knife again and he says, "I'll get out of here."

(46) So he takes his clamshell knife and reaches up and cuts off the Whale's heart. And the Whale dies.

(47) There's Coyote, inside the Whale, out in the ocean. The Whale dies, and it floats up to the surface, and there's Coyote, standing up inside the Whale, with his arms out, holding on. He can tell they're out in the big swells because the whale is going back and forth, real slow-like with the great big swells there. Back and forth, back and forth.

(48) And pretty soon it gets a little rougher. They're going a little faster, and he can tell they're coming into the breakers on shore, and it gets faster and rolls some more, and the breakers are tossing him around, and he gets tossed around.

(49) Pretty soon there's a bump, and rolls over, and then everything's still. Aha, he knows then that they've washed up on the beach because the Whale came ashore and washed up on the beach, and so Coyote is going to get out of there.

(50) Once again he takes his clamshell knife, and he starts cutting between the ribs, through about this much blubber, and a foot thick or more of blubber.

Coyote starts cutting, and he starts cutting, and cutting between the Whale's ribs, trying to get a place to get out of there.

(51) Well, that Whale washed ashore right on Sunset Bay. (and that's a very famous place where Whales come ashore because there's another old story about a woman who went out in the ocean and married the sea otters, and she had them send a Whale ashore every year [as a present to her people.] So Whales are very important to the people.) And they had been watching it. Now, they didn't know Coyote was inside it. The Whale comes ashore and washes in at Sunset Bay, and all the people are watching. They've all come down to Sunset Bay, and the Whale is on shore. And they're all waiting for the ceremonious occasion to cut up the Whale and share it with everybody.

(52) And just as they all arrive, here comes Coyote. He cuts his way, finally cuts through between the ribs, and he's just covered with oil and Whale blubber, just covered like Crisco all over him, just really tight. His hair all matted down, and he's really shiny, sliding out, and his tail's all burned off. Coyote's just squeezing his way out between the ribs, and everybody's mad.

(53) Well, the Seagull Boys are there too, and they haven't forgotten the strawberries yet at all.

(54) All the people are mad because Coyote's contaminated the whole thing, this great gift from the ocean for all the people. Coyote's contaminated it.

(55) Everybody starts throwing rocks. Seagull Boys throwing rocks. Everybody throwing rocks at Coyote.

(56) He can't see anything because of all this blubber in his eyes, and it's all blurry. But he can hear. Down south he knows where Big Creek is; he can hear it running in down there, and he takes off running as hard as he can down the beach.

(57) And all the people throwing rocks at him, and he runs and runs and goes way down the beach. And he goes way up to Big Creek, and he starts running up Big

Creek, and he hears the Salmon Girls going up Big Creek, and they're paddling, paddling in the water. And he gets ahead of the people real fast, and he runs up and says, "Oh Salmon Girls, oh come over here."

(58) All the people are still trying to catch up with him. He says, "Oh you're so pretty. Come here, and let me scratch your sides." And he reaches down and he's scratching their sides for them. He says, "Oh you're so lovely. I could scratch better if you get up here in my lap." And so they let him. They get up in his lap, and Coyote's taking both hands and scratching both sides.

(59) Well, he's probably got other things in his mind, too, but he hears the people coming too soon. They're right on his tail.

(60) And he's scratching, both sides so casually, rubbing their sides, and he gets right up to their heads, and he grabs their eyes, pulls their eyes out of their heads.

(61) He takes his own eyes, out, which were all blurry and greasy, and he sticks them in the salmon's head.

(62) Because at that time Salmon had bright shiny eyes, and Coyote had greasy eyes, and now he traded with them, so salmon now always have greasy eyes and Coyote's got the bright shiny eyes.

(63) And that's the end of that part of the story, as they told it.

### Narrator's Notes

Section 1: The South Slough estuary is now a federal sanctuary. It was the central area of the Miluk (a division of the Kusan language) speaking Coos people on Coos Bay. My paternal

grandmother, Susan Adulsah Wasson was the daughter of the principal headman Kitzen-Jin-Jin at the main village on South Slough, when the Jedediah Smith Expedition camped there in 1828. The area still holds strong family significance because the Wasson family cemetery, located on the original allotment land of Grandma Wasson, is now protected within the sanctuary boundaries.

Section 2: Port Orford “white” Cedar was a special tree to the coastal people of Southwest Oregon. Its straight grain, pungent aroma, and superb durability made it especially desirable for carving special high prow canoes (The information here is from George B. Wasson, Sr. my father, as told to John P. Harrington in 1943). Along with being a white Cedar tree, this tree had been struck by lightning and thus had special qualities of spiritual honor and sacred power. This particular tree is not to be “trifled with”. When striking a tree, lightning often splits out a long strip of bark and sap wood as it usually runs vertically with the grain along the cambium layer. In the process, that narrow strip or sliver of wood becomes endowed with the power of the lightning and is considered highly special for medicine power and healing purposes. Therefore,

both the tree and the split out strip of wood must be treated with great respect.

Sections 3-5: *Tamanawis* is a word from Chinook Jargon (the *lingua franca* of the Pacific Northwest Indians that was later adopted by the early white traders, trappers, missionaries, and settlers). It means magical power, “supernatural” power, in non-Coquelle concepts. However, such powers of magical or mystical abilities were considered common and natural to Native people.

Section 4: In learning this story, I don’t recall any special number of times required for Coyote to command the tree to “grow shut.” However, when his power seems to have failed him, he employed the undeniably sacred repetition of four times. When there is no response to his commands, he somewhat nonchalantly begins another approach as though he doesn’t even care about his abusive attitude (feeling proud of himself) toward his spirit power.

Section 9 ff.: Redheaded woodpecker scalps are highly honored and prized as “wealth” and medicine power items. Woodpeckers are likewise granted respect for their spirit power potential contained in their red scalps. It would have been

considered disrespectful for anyone to tease or taunt a being of such high spiritual status. As unmarried women are protected from casual male interaction, it is quite forward of Coyote even to call to the Woodpecker Girl for assistance. His attempt at molesting her is even farther out of bounds in the acceptable social rules of the Coos/Coquelles.

Sections 20 ff.: Only the memory of clamshell knives has been retained through stories such as this. I don't know of anyone who has actually seen one, but there are examples of clamshell cutting tools among various coastal archaeological collections.

Unfortunately, clamshell does not survive well in the coastal middens. It usually decomposes quite rapidly, breaking into many small fragments within a few decades.

Sections 22-24: Bluejay is commonly a mischievous character in the tales of coastal peoples. Perhaps the noisy nature and curiosity (or plain thievery) of Bluejay establishes an air of caution or expectation when the name comes up in a story. The act of stealing some intestines is therefore fitting for the character of Bluejay.

Section 25: Coos Head is located on the south side of Coos Bay, just between the mouth of South Slough and the south jetty, or Bastendorf Beach. It's only a few miles from the head of South Slough to its confluence with the main bay and the ocean beach.

Section 29: Knots from old rotten logs held no special sacred significance to the people but were gathered for burning in a cooking or heating fire, as they contained highly concentrated resins and burned hot. However spruce knots were prized for their superior burning qualities. The pitch content in spruce knots allowed them to burn a long time, and, therefore, spruce knots could be used for torches to light one's way in the dark. Family stories relate the time when George R. Wasson, "Grandpa Wasson," used a spruce knot to light his way home in a rain storm one dark night, after failing to save his lead ox, "Longhorn Swan," [see pp. 206-214] from drowning in the rising flood.

It's interesting to note that Aunt Mary used an old New England term for rectum, "bunghole" (the hole in a wooden barrel or keg through which the contents are emptied by means of inserting a wooden spigot). Mary's father, George R. Wasson, came from a rich

maritime tradition in New Brunswick, having relatives in New England, and therefore taught many Euro-American terms to his half-Indian family.

Sections 29-33: Insertion of objects into the rectum or any other means of bodily insertion or ingestion for the purpose of “plugging up” one’s excremental functions borders on a form of insanity or perhaps even witchcraft. *Berdaches* (who performed an intermediate, alternative gender role) were often the shamans or doctors; indeed, such male-females were known to function among the southern coastal tribes of Oregon---e.g., “Old Doctor” of the Tolowas (Williams 1986:60)---as wives of other men. In some tribes, however, pregnancy and childbirth among *berdaches* were often faked for emotional reasons by ingestion of certain herbal concoctions to induce constipation, and then “stillbirth” delivery was claimed by the “mother,” after a painful excretion of the rectal plug (Devereaux 1961:160). Undoubtedly, such practices were known to the Coos and Coquelles, and such references to plugging up the rectum as in this story would elicit responses of humor, surprise, or even shock among the listeners.

Sections 31-32: The “wild carrot” was possibly *Daucus carota* (Walters 1982:108). However, the blossoms, used for burning or smudging medicines to cure migraine headaches, were the important part of this plant, and the relationship might be in name only. Most likely the plant called “wild carrot” in this story was one known by several different names, *yampah*, or *year-pah*, *Carum gaidneri*, or *Carum oreganum*, Wats. (Haskin 1959:237).

Section 35: Nowadays, Bastendorf Beach is about a mile or so from Coos Head. In olden days, before the building of the jetties, it was a little closer, but due to the sand buildup on the south side of the sough jetty, the beach is now farther away.

Section 37: When the Seagull Boys refer to Coyote as “Mother’s Brother,” they are using an honorific term generally applied to the person in one’s extended family who is most respected as a teacher and disciplinarian in place of one’s own biological father. In many matrilineal societies, the husband, or the biological father of the children, has no responsibility or control over their discipline and education. That duty falls to the mother’s brother, perhaps as an assurance that a male with the mother’s genes will control and

shape the development of offspring. Because the Seagull Boys are playing a game and have invited Coyote to join, there is the suggestion that they are deferring to his superior magical powers and are willing to enjoy the entertainment he provides.

Section 37: One can expect that Coyote is going to have problems with his attempts to participate in the game “Jump over the Fire,” since he just bragged about himself as being “very good at that.” Bragging about one’s prowess is not a socially acceptable trait.

Section 51 ff.: Sunset Bay, where this scene takes place, is just a couple of miles south of Bastendorf Beach. The gift of whales being sent ashore by the underwater people is told in “The Woman Who Married a Merman” (Frachtenberg 1913:157) [see also “The Woman Who Married a Merman” in St. Clair 1909:27-32] and represents an important cultural backdrop to this story. A chief’s daughter who is dedicated to taking care of her widowed father and his family is secretly courted by a sea otter. Eventually he persuades her to join him under the sea. Later, when she becomes homesick, the two try to visit her family but are driven off by a hunter shooting arrows at them. They turn themselves into a handsome young couple, visit her

family, and work out a family agreement in which the Sea Otter sends a Whale to his in-laws every now and then, and they in turn leave a bundle of arrows in the sea for her children to play with. The story dramatizes the special meaning of a beached whale and accounts for why the Coos and Coquelle would not hunt sea otters.

Section 59: I've heard reference to another story in which Coyote seduces the Salmon Girls by scratching their sides and enticing them onto his lap where he proceeds to copulate with them. The resulting pregnancies are a puzzlement to them and all the people as well, but I don't know the details of the outcome.

### Analytical Comment

*BT:* It is tempting, in trying to comment on and analyze a tale like this, to employ a standard folkloristic approach and look for other "variants" characterized by the same or similar motifs, themes, and plot structures and then compare all the variations and constancies to see where the basic story lies. For example, in a Nehalem Tillamook tale, South Wind gets himself imprisoned in a tower of rocks and asks Woodpecker and Yellowhammer to peck him

loose. (They break their bills and get angry when he tries to touch their legs.) He gets out by cutting himself to pieces and throwing the body parts out a hole, when Raven and Seagull eat his eyes; he gets new eyes by trading with Eagle. In a Chinook story, Coyote is caught inside an immense cedar tree: (see “Coyote in the Cedar Tree” [Judson 1910:74-76]) the birds try to peck a hole for him, but to no avail; he cuts himself up and throws the parts out through a Yellowhammer hole; Raven steals his eyes; he swindles a woman out of her eyes by claiming that the rose petals he has inserted in his sockets allow his *Tamanawis* rays to work better. In a Cheyenne story, a character called White Man throws his eyes up into the air and, after doing it too many times, loses them; he catches a mouse and steals one of his eyes, meets a buffalo and begs one from him; now one tiny eye rolls around back in its socket, while the other hangs out over half his face. A Columbia River story describes how Coyote creates a rock fortress around him so he can perform fellatio on himself without being seen; but then he requires the birds to help him escape, and the deed becomes known. A Navajo story has Ma’ii (Coyote) beg the birds to teach him how to throw his eyes up

into the air so that he can see great distances. They pry his eyeballs out and later replace them with pitch (which accounts for the yellow eyes of coyotes today). Afterwards he gets too close to the fire and the pitch melts (which accounts for the brown streak seen under coyotes' eyes). A Nez Perce tale describes how Coyote gets swallowed by a huge monster who has consumed all the local animals (see "Coyote and the Swallowing Monster" in Phinney [1934:26-29] and reprinted in Ramsey [1977:9-12]). Coyote kills him by cutting his heart off with a knife and leading all the animals out through the monster's anus. In many Eskimo stories, the removable eyes of the loon are related to the seeing powers of shamans. And one could go on, *ad infinitum*, for this particular group of motifs is really quite extensive.

The problem with this "comparative" approach, however, is that it skims along the surface of a hypothetically conceived story, focusing on clearly identifiable motifs—that is, noun concepts (in this case, confinement, hollow trees, berries, plugs in the anus, eyes, and so on)—and conveniently overlooks the more complex issues of relationships, ritual and social obligations, moral behaviors and

responsibilities, issues that are usually the crux of Native American stories and that vary considerably in their organization and meaning from tribe to tribe. Thus, while a survey of “eye juggler” (see, for example, the Cheyenne story “The Eye Juggler” in Feldmann [1971:151-52]; the Paiute story “Coyote the Eye-Juggler” in Jones and Ramsey [1994:121-22]; and the Nehalem Tillamook story “South Wind Loses his Eyes and Gets New Ones” in Jones and Ramsey [1994:123-24]) or “swallowing monster” stories will demonstrate that the images were indeed used by a number of tribes in the Northwest and West, this fact itself does not help us very much in determining what the motifs “mean” to the Coquelle who told—and still tell—the story.

For me, one of the most telling illustrations of this principle came when I took George Wasson with me to visit my friend, Yellowman, in Blanding, Utah, one winter. After we listened to Yellowman telling Ma’ii stories to his family for a couple of hours, I asked the Navajo family if they would like to hear some of the Old Man Coyote stories from George’s Coquelle background. Yellowman was clearly interested, but as George’s stories went on (and the

included the one we discuss here), I could sense a kind of impatience growing in Yellowman's demeanor. Finally, he asked me, "Where did he learn such things—from a missionary?" I explained that these were the Coyote stories from George's tribe. "But they're not Coyote stories," said Yellowman. "They even describe Coyote eating fish!" he whispered. I told him that the Coquelle themselves eat fish, and so naturally Old Man Coyote would also eat fish. He shuddered and changed the subject. I had thought that especially the eye exchange motif would sound familiar to him, but as far as Yellowman was concerned, other culturally unsavory actions (like eating fish) far outweighed such insignificant details. Clearly, although Coyote seems to be the personage who can do whatever he wants (acting as what I have elsewhere called the "exponent of all possibilities"), he is limited in some ways, for if his actions fall too far outside the realm of cultural allowability, he becomes unreal. Of course, here we are speaking not of what a character like Coyote can or cannot do, but about those culturally constructed concepts in which people will or will not think.

Motifs and story structures are among the easiest of factors to deal with because we can “see” them, and think them, but for that reason they tell us very little about the unstated, relatively invisible, assumptions on the basis of which a certain pattern of motifs may be said to achieve a cultural meaning beyond simple entertainment. Yet, especially in a case like this Coquelle story, the text may be the bulk of what we have available to work with, since we may not have access to enough people who know and can articulate the particulars of their culture’s values and logical assumptions. If motif and tale-type (the standard tools of European-based narrative scholarship) are not totally satisfactory for our purposes, then, what recourses do we have in our attempt to speculate on the meaning of “Coyote and the Strawberries”? For one thing, of course, we have the performance, and the continuing performances, of George Wasson and his family; we have the intonations, smiles, and nuances of the narrator, plus his recollections and explanations (as provided in his notes to this essay); and, combining these resources, we have a greater possibility of judging the “logic” of actions in the story by their own cultural context rather than by our own. Thus the text

becomes a potentially richer document for us to work with than it would otherwise be, and we can ask better questions of it than “I wonder how many tribes believe one can exchange eyes with others?” or “Do Indians really believe that’s why Coyote has yellow eyes?” We are not as “thick” into the story or culture as Clifford Geertz might wish us to be, but we’re further in than we were.

Another temptation in dealing with this story is to jump to the assumption that there is actually a universal macro-tradition of “The Trickster,” a concept that has become not only a handy carrying bag for anthropologists, but a passionately faddish focal point for Jungian analysts, literary critics, and New Age gurus. Although the term is widely used as if it represents an actual, consistent, self-sustaining archetype floating in the cultural air or inherited through our psychological DNA, the fact is that the conventional figure of the Trickster is so amorphous as to be useless for critical purposes: for one thing, if we look at him cross-culturally, including all the details from all cultures who seem to relish his adventures we note that in most traditions he seldom play tricks on anyone (though he is not above cheating and lying to gain

his ends). More than a tricky personage, he is a sacred creator, a buffoon, a clown, a selfish egomaniac, and an oversexed opportunist (usually at one and the same time). When we look at him in each specific instance, however, we see that his character is constructed somewhat differently in every tribal tradition. Far from representing the random childish urges of an unsocialized personality, the Coyote (in some tribes he is a spider, a rabbit, or a raven) usually is depicted as doing things that humans cannot achieve because we lack the power (ordering the world, killing monsters, inventing death) or custom. Thus, Coyote stories usually show us not tricks but colorful dramas that create vicarious experience in specific matters which are important to us but in which we normally cannot, or should not, have personal experience.

To the western mind this odd combination of sacred and secular, wise and foolish, in one character is perhaps a “tricky” idea, but in fact it makes palpable a fairly common concept among Native American tribes: good and evil, sacred and secular, smart and dumb, are not mutually exclusive qualities, but are overlapping, interdependent aspects of each other. This is a much more

complicated idea than trickery would account for, and, in its avoidance of contrastive values (like Good versus Evil, which is common construction in Euro-American worldview), it represents a set of assumptions far more rare in western thought than Trickster fans are likely to appreciate. Rather than a binary computer, in which [a] and [not -a] are mutually exclusive, the coyote character is more like an analog computer in which [a] can also be [not-a]. This is by no means an easy abstraction to deal with, especially in western culture; but it may be the reason why a dramatization of the concept works better than an explanation---in anyone's culture.

For critical purposes, we can use this knowledge to help phrase some of the questions we wish to pursue in regard to the possible meanings and functions of any Coyote story, including the one under examination here. (1) If Coyote is usually a combination of value-charged elements important to moral or cultural survival, how do his actions function to foreground or articulate some of these values in this particular story? (2) If Coyote's actions are possibly sacred as well as secular, what do his actions here mean in cultural terms? (3) If Coyote usually is observed to be breaking

significant rules or challenging meaningful taboos, what do his actions in this story suggest about rules and taboos among the Coquelles? (4) If we accept the proposition that Coyote represents the dramatic embodiment of cultural values, then what exactly is it that is being dramatized in this story? The following comments and observations apply questions like these to the principal scenes of the story narrated by George Wasson:

Scene 1: Coyote in and out of the hollow tree: Coyote gets into the tree for his own comfort and convenience, in spite of the suggestion that the lightning-struck tree is taboo; can we not read it as a culturally moral consequence that he cannot get back out without dismembering himself and losing an important part of himself in the process? Selfish disregard for taboo, propriety, and behavior is self-destructive, if we understand this scene as a dramatic enactment of cultural value.

Scene 2: Coyote and the strawberries: berries and other gathered food were normally brought home and shared with others. In this vivid tableau scene, because of his self-destructive behavior in scene one, Coyote is shown stuffing himself endlessly, a

hyperbolic enactment of selfishness, since it does not nourish him, and indeed leads to even more anti-self (and culturally questionable) behavior.

Scene 3: Coyote and the Seagull Boys: where in scene one, Coyote is in a tree and cannot get out without trauma; now, strawberries (and the wild carrot) are in Coyote, and cannot get out without an equally traumatic explosion. That this release of selfishly-consumed-and-contained food has a negative impact on respectful relatives seems to me to be no accident. Dramatically, it says that selfishness, self-destructive behavior, disregard of taboo, and (with the fire-jump game) bragging, are like defecating on your relatives.

Scene 4: Coyote in and out of the whale: just as he has entered a powerful tree without regard for propriety and taboo, now Coyote has entered a whale, a sacramental, familial gift from the ocean (see Wasson's explanation, and the synopsis of the Sea Otter story). Just as he cannot get out of the tree without cutting himself up, he cannot get out of the whale without killing it and tainting its sacred flesh by digging through it like a maggot. Because the error here is

intrusion into a ritual process (once again, to save his neck) and is not connected to selfish diversion of food, as it was in Scene 1, the consequence is not constipation but a kind of blindness.

Scene 5: Coyote and the Salmon Girls: partially blinded by the blubber, Coyote can still hear what's going on and locates the Salmon Girls, whose eyes he needs; in order to escape his current predicament, he requires clear eyes, as do we all. In another story common along the southern Oregon Coast, Coyote wipes his penis off on his grandchildren's eyes as they awaken so that they will not see clearly that he has spent the night copulating with their mother, his daughter-in-law. Today, when we clean the white mucus from our eyes in the morning, we are reminded to avoid incest and not to trust what we see until we can see clearly.

Overall, we have Coyote in and out of a storm, in and out of a tree, in and out of a strawberry patch; then a knot, a stone, a wild carrot, and strawberries are in and out of Coyote; Coyote is in and out of the fire; Coyote is in and out of the whale; Coyote is in and out of trouble. Strangely enough, he is not shown as sexually in and out of the Salmon Girls, which would have been a typical possibility,

given his tastes. (Clearly, the story here focuses on other modes of selfishness.) But his eyes are in them, and theirs in him. The story dramatizes several Coquille concepts of behavior with respect to lightning, sacred or powerful trees, sharing of food, self-destructive action, misuse of natural objects or disrupting of natural processes (knot, stone, and wild carrot in anus), bragging, respect for relatives, disruption of ritual processes (tainting the whale offering, which also entails disrespect for the familial rituals embodied by the whale), and cheating others of their ability to see clearly. Indeed, no one in the story sees very clearly in the figurative sense: in addition to Coyote, it is clear that Woodpecker Girl does not anticipate Coyote's immoral action. Blue Jay cannot see who owns all those nice tidbits on the ground, the Seagull Boys do not anticipate getting showered with half-digested strawberries, the whale opens it's mouth without seeing that Coyote is going to jump in, the people gather on the beach without knowing that their whale is inhabited by Coyote, and the Salmon Girls get up on Coyote's lap without sensing that they are about to lose their dear eyesight. The action is very much like a Greek play, in which characters act their

normal parts without seeing what the aggregate consequences will be, while we as audience members, armed with the shared perspectives and values of culture, obtain vicarious experience and depth of meaning (including irony) as we witness the dramatization of abstract ideas.

It seems to me that these are only the most obvious possibilities in the story, and in fact the narrative may contain many others, which are “there” by nuance only, to be registered most richly by those for whom the cultural matrix is familiar. But even at this, I think it is striking to note first of all how many cultural issues are dramatized in the story, and secondly how differently these familiar “motifs” structure a particularly Coquelle, not pan-Indian, constellation.

GW: Some people have remarked to me that this is just a funny story, created with improbable situations that we know couldn't happen in real life. It seems obvious that no one could actually cut himself into small pieces, poke them through a hole, and then reassemble the parts in the manner so matter-of-factly

demonstrated here by Coyote. I'd suggest that there might be a subliminal message in that event, either explaining or dictating the limits of Native medical practice, which were of course almost entirely herbal and spiritual, with almost no use of surgery on the human body.

Contemporary listeners also seem to assume that the story, while "cute," is somewhat odd or illogical: Coyote jumps into the mouth of a Whale. Yet many Judeo-Christians are familiar with a similar concept in the story of Jonah and the Whale and often read or hear it as a narrative with serious philosophical implications---whether or not they believe it actually happened.

There is still another aspect of the story that I've never heard anyone accept as historical fact: Coyote picking ripe strawberries just after a severe hail storm just doesn't seem to depict a probable situation. Today, hailstorms hit the Oregon Coast in February and March, and strawberries don't ripen until about June. However, in the past 20-30 years, scientists (and west coast dwellers) have been observing a phenomenon of nature known affectionately by the Spanish term "El Niño," (The Christ Child). Due to the constant

blowing of winds far out on the Pacific, a layer of water builds up, raising the sea level in the South Pacific to the point at which it dissipates in a great surge or wave. As this surge moves toward South America, the ocean currents are strongly affected, welling up water from far below, dramatically changing the food supply of plankton and moving currents of warm water northward along the west coast of North America. These dramatic changes result in severe weather pattern changes, which in 1995 produced more rainfall in southern California than previously recorded in written history. The weather pattern also brought a heavy snowfall of up to four inches in southern Oregon. At Coos Bay and South Slough, snow fell as late as the first week of April. Although the evidence is circumstantial, it could very well be that this story carries forward--- along with all its cultural meanings---a record of remarkable weather changes in earlier times that were taken to have some connection with human and animal behavior.

*BT:* Consistent with the metaphorical aspects of “seeing.”

Characters spend a lot of time in this story looking: Coyote looks out

the hole in the tree, looks out and sees Woodpecker Girl, looks at her while she's working on enlarging the hole; Bluejay comes along and looks over the pile of body parts lying all around; Coyote looks at the strawberries; he looks around for something to stop up his anus; he looks out on Bastendorf Beach and sees the Seagull Boys; he looks at his burning tail. But when he is inside the whale, where it's dark (perhaps reflecting his spiritual blindness at this point), he doesn't look; he feels and hears. As he comes out of the whale, he can't see, but only hears and runs until he gets the clear eyes of the Salmon Girls and makes his escape. Does he regain his vision through the mediation of the Salmon, whom the Coos and Coquelle still reverence with a salmon bake every year? Does his return to normalcy come about through his acknowledgement that the salmon provide the basis for life? After all, he does not take them or eat them, or desecrate them: he gains clear vision from them. Perhaps so do we, according to this drama.

In any case, it is clear to me (with the new eyes provided by this exercise) that no single answer will suffice, for the living contexts in which the story reaches articulation each time are

changing constantly, and the text changes continually according to the audience, the occasion, and the feeling of the narrator; and we can probably assume (or at least allow for the possibility) that this dynamism has been a part of the picture, and thus the meanings, down through time. This was no better illustrated for me than by George's response to my editorial suggestion that we take out all the parenthetical asides in the story text and place them among the explanatory notes, leaving the story itself clear of contemporary commentary. "First of all, it's not accurate," he insisted, "because those words were actually there when I told the story that time. And besides, in that case the story was being told to some people who were non-Coquelles, and the explanations were a necessary part of the story, just as on some other occasion, maybe with my family, some of those things need not to be said, while others might be said anyhow, just so we could share the recollection of 'Yes, that's how it was,' or 'Yes, that's where it happened, all right.' "

*GW:* The reason for retaining comments is that the story itself is alive, and so, of course, it changes from one telling to the next,

depending on the situation, context, or audience. Those “incidental comments” are part of the story itself and are always there. They vary depending on when, why, and where the story is being presented. Separating those explanatory parts included at that particular telling from the rest of the text would give the impression that they resulted from later analysis and could mislead the reader as to how the telling actually took place.

*BT:* Omitting explanatory comments would also add to the impressions, harbored far too long by most scholars of folklore and literature, that the text of a story has a single, discrete form and content, that a story can exist without its context, that a narrative can mean something without reference to information about the real physical and cultural world in which it operates, that the actions of a story character are understandable without reference to the culture that constructed the story.

*GW:* Coyote stories are truly like Coyote himself: each time a story is told, it experiences a new birth, a re-generation, or a fresh

reincarnation. Each telling is in a different setting or location, with a different audience, with a different reason for telling it. Therefore, each telling requires a new set of explanatory remarks for the benefit of the new audience. Some know more than others about the content and the meaning of the story elements, but—since repetition is a standard aspect of traditional oratory---there is never a need to apologize for telling or explaining something that some, or even most, of the listeners might already know. The present story, along with our discussion of it is no exception.

\*[Special thanks to Mark Tveskov for the map of the Coos Bay area in Coos County, Oregon.]

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

##### The Drama of Contact and Change

What must life have been like for Susan Adulsah? She was born the daughter of a prominent headman of the Miluks on Coos Bay. Her mother was the daughter of a chief from the upper Coquille River area. The marriage of her parents took place at what has become known as Laverne Park on the North Fork of the Coquille River. That union was said to have united the Coos and Coquelles in lasting friendship.

During the romantic era of Indian “adoration,” the trend to say “Lo, the poor Red Man,” and to wax philosophical on the natural beauty of the Natives, people often spoke of the daughter of a “chief,” as being an “Indian Princess.” This was often said about Grandmother. In 1909, a local Coos County author, Agnes Ruth Sengstacken wrote “The Legend of the Coos” (Peterson and Powers 1952:259), saying that the young woman in the story was probably

Susan Adulsah. It was common for some Wasson family members to even say they were descended from an “Indian Princess.” I think awareness of that false concept of “Indian princess” has now become commonplace.

Susan Adulsah was educated by her mother to speak all the local and neighboring languages fluently. Some say she spoke 10 languages. She also knew the history of all Coos Bay, and was often considered the ultimate resource on tribal, village, and newcomer relationships. Her knowledge of and attention to details often surprised some people and caused a bit of merriment if not embarrassment when she was called up to be a witness in a court of law.

It was often told in the family that a certain pompous White attorney in Coos Bay was cross-examining Grandmother and asking whether she knew him in person. Grandmother answered in the affirmative, adding something like, “yes, I’ve known you since you were a little boy. The first time I saw you, your mother had you out on the back steps, combing nits (lice eggs) out of your hair.” That

attorney lost his punch in hoping to discredit the word of Susan Adulsah.

I often wonder how Grandmother (and her mother as well) adjusted to the sudden and dramatic change in social and cultural lifestyles after the arrival of the Euro-Americans. These ancestors were born and raised in the “Stone Age.” They first knew only clothing of cedar bark, woven grass skirts and capes, and deer skin clothing. They used broken rocks as tools, and cooked in baskets with heated stones, or in pits of heated sand, rocks, and covered their food with seaweed and plant leaves.

They lived through some of the most dramatic changes made by human beings on earth. They survived and adjusted to the developments from the Stone Age, through the Industrial Revolution and into the age of telephones, electricity, steam engines, automobiles, and airplanes. I marvel at the endurance and cultural fortitude of my ancestors. I am proud to know what they were like, and to tell about them. Yet, I mourn the loss of their collective knowledge.

The greater portions of their traditional cultural knowledge - their languages, stories, myths, and legends - have been lost for all time. The curious linguists and ethnographers arrived too late to gather that great wealth from the ultimate sources.

The great Library at Alexandria has “burned” more than once.

### Twilight Conversations

Twilight, in the late summer or early fall along the southern Oregon Coast spreads a lovely golden rich buttery glow across the landscape. As dusk settles gently around the small valleys and meadows, there seems to be a presence of home, comfort, and companionship with everything and everyone, friends, family, and loved ones. When the persistent northwest wind of summer has ceased its constant blowing along the open coast, the soft hush of the ocean waves breaking onshore carries gently over the coastal hills and into those small valleys or along the river-bottom lands. All of nature seems pleasantly at rest and humans along with their

animal companions seem to follow along into the lull of peace and reverie.

Susan Adulsah sat apparently alone in the front parlor of her home on her Indian allotment up South Slough. There was no glow from a kerosene lamp nor had the fire been started in the fireplace as the warm summer evening comforted her and an unseen companion in the darkened room. She spoke somewhat softly, carrying her part of a gentle conversation in one of her own Native languages.

Susan was much alone now as the last of her youngest children had grown up, married and moved on to raise families of their own. Her husband George had preceded her in death several years earlier as had a couple of her children. But I suspect that somehow, she did not feel completely alone or even lonely. Always busy working, gathering roots and berries, cooking and making baskets, or just enjoying the company of her best friends, "Old Libby" or Susan Ned from down by Bandon.

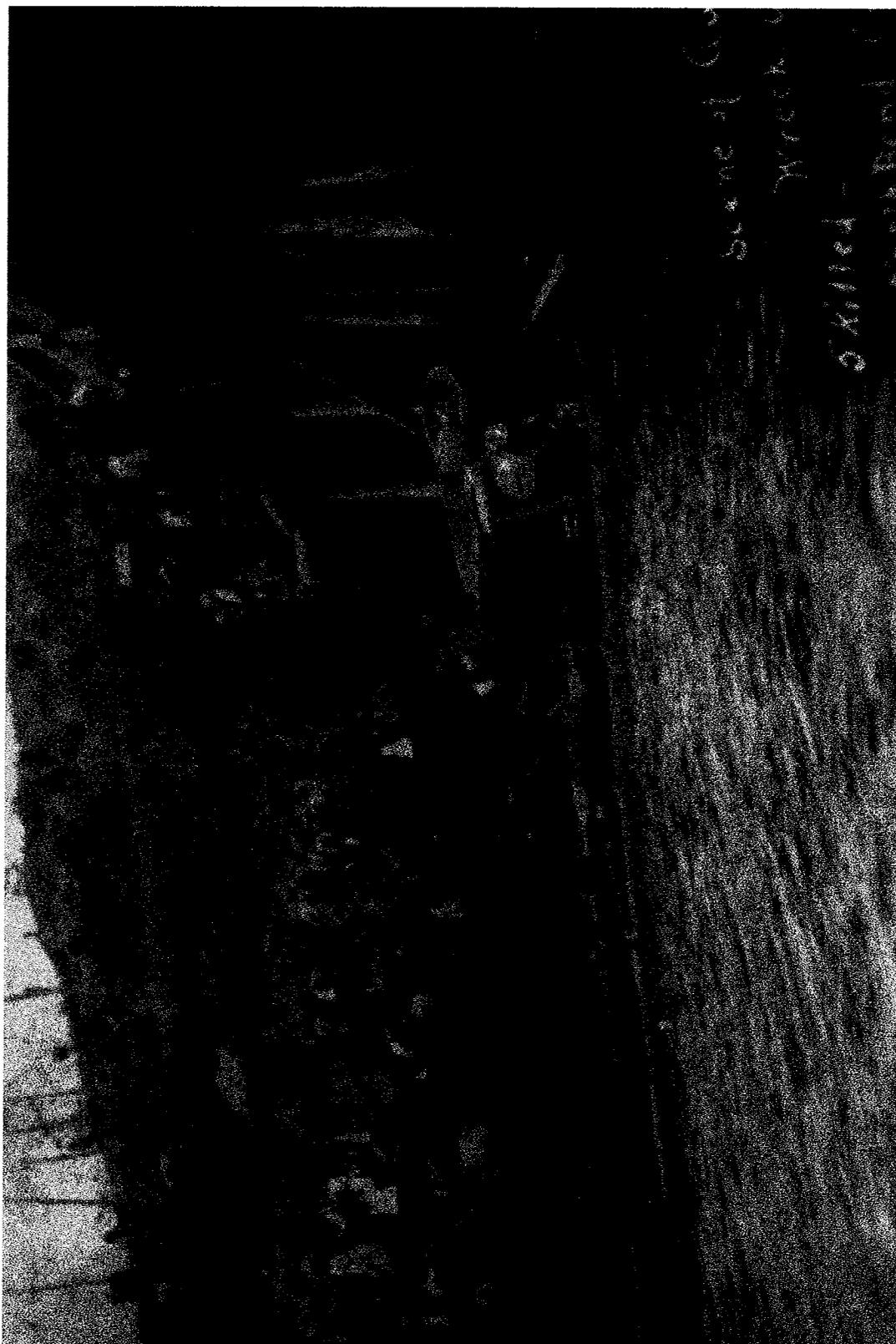
But this evening, she sat alone in the room and others in the kitchen gradually realized she was talking with someone in Indian.

Not having heard anyone else enter the house, one of Susan's granddaughters-in-law burst into the room to see who could be there, but the old woman appeared to be all alone. "Grandma," she blurted out, "who are you talking to?" Susan Adulsah sat quietly for a moment, collecting herself and sighing with a bit of exasperation, replied, "I was just talking with my son, Jim." Jim was killed in an auto accident on Pony Slough Bridge in 1914 (see Fig. 13).

Grandma Wasson was not an easy person to deride or scoff at, or dismiss for her old Indian ways and beliefs. Yet some of the non-Indian in-laws who had little or no concept of (or perhaps no respect for) her traditional culture, implied that the old woman was getting senile, "just a little bit crazy" and would laugh at her, mostly behind her back.

As a young girl, my cousin, Elizabeth Coddington Burnette, knew Grandma well, and often sat in rapt attention listening to her. Elizabeth grew up to become a registered nurse. She often took care of old people and knew the true symptoms of senility. That last summer of her life, Elizabeth was terminally ill with cancer and had come to stay with my mother at Pistol River for a week.

**Figure 13. Automobile wreck on Pony Slough bridge, 1914.  
Five people were killed including Jim Wasson.  
George Wasson was the only survivor.**



I stayed there for that week also, and we visited several times each day, in the early morning when she first awoke for breakfast, and again, when she awoke from her afternoon nap. “Georgie” she said to me, “Grandma was not ‘crazy’ or senile at all. I’ve seen lots of old people, and she was perfectly sane with all her faculties!” She spoke to me emphatically, “Don’t listen to those people (non-Indian in-laws), they don’t know what they’re talking about!”

Grandma Wasson was devoted to her traditions and spiritual practices. She sat and talked with her dead son Jim, when she had the opportunity to be alone without other distractions. She understood the spirit world and had no fear of communicating with friends and relatives who had passed on before her.

I recall clearly how Aunt Daisy (Elizabeth’s mother) had told of Grandma admonishing someone for attempting to kill a small lizard which had crawled through a crack in the outside wall, along side the fireplace. It ran up onto the fireplace mantel and sat looking around the room, bobbing up and down as lizards do. As someone grabbed the poker to smash the unexpected visitor, Grandma jumped up quickly, grabbed them by the arm and scolded, “never

kill small animals, especially small gray lizards, that might be one of your dead relatives coming back to visit us.”

I asked if she thought Grandma Wasson believed in reincarnation. “No!” she had responded, “That lizard wasn’t Uncle Jim (reincarnated in another life form), she just knew that the spirit of a dead person could come back to visit us in the body of a living animal.”

I’ve often wondered whether Grandmother has tried to visit and communicate with me in the same manner. At times I feel so, but I know I am not as receptive to spiritual communications as she was. I hope that someday I might be more aware of such opportunity to learn from her and understand her lessons.

### An Emotional Process of Discovery

In the spring of 1995, our small group of students gathered around the tables in the research room of the Anthropological Archives, in the Museum of Natural History, at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington D.C. Just the name of the place alone, was enough to

intimidate anyone who wanted to look, and see what was in there. Several boxes of notes and papers concerning western Oregon had been selected for us to examine.

It was fun at first, and then became a little tiresome just looking through so many pages of notes, lists of words, letters and reports. Occasionally, someone would speak up and mention that there was information on Coos Bay Indians or something close to home. That was always interesting, and we'd say, just mark it to be copied, we'll read it later. Work continued in that busy manner most of the time. But then, there were moments everyone would realize that someone was suddenly very quiet, just staring at a page and reading intensely. We each had those moments of discovery when the page just jumped out at us and was so interesting we couldn't stop reading, but this moment was something different.

The reader seemed almost stunned and with tears welling up, slowly closed the pages, then made some short notes on a tablet. This time it was a letter written by one of the soldiers who had escorted the people from southern Oregon up the coast on foot to the concentration camps. The soldier obviously had compassion for

the fellow humans who were being herded away like animals to another pasture or into corrals. He told of the painful progress of an old woman named Amanda, who had no shoes or moccasins and had to walk barefooted over the rough trail on the high rock bluffs. He was concerned for her and had tried to help by giving her some rags to bind around her feet. But Old Amanda's feet were bleeding, and he always knew when she was somewhere ahead of him as he could detect her bloody footprints along the trail.

Much earlier in 1975, I had been exploring in the National Archives, looking to see what I might find of interest to me and my fellow tribal members back home. I knew that my Dad and others had attended Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania just at the turn of the last century.

I had selected a box of records on Coos Bay Indians, and found the personal files for my father, George Wasson, his sister Daisy Wasson, and Sosipatra Suvoroff (later to become my Aunt Pauline, married to my dad's brother, Tom Wasson). Here were short letters and post cards from them to the school director, Colonel Pratt, telling him of their successes in life after returning to their homes

on Coos Bay. They sometimes mentioned how they “missed the old place” (Carlisle) and wished they could return for a visit sometime before they died. A short newspaper clipping told that George B. Wasson had a tailor shop in Marshfield, and had hand made all of the new uniforms for the “nattily dressed bell boys” of the newly opened Chandler Hotel, rushing to meet the deadline for the grand opening.

Poignant moments such as these made all of us realize that hidden in those boxes of musty papers were bits and pieces of historical information which provided a personal glimpse into the reality of daily life for our ancestors.

What else lies waiting for discovery is yet to be known, but young researchers will continue to uncover and learn more of these bits and pieces as the Southwest Oregon Research Project (SWORP) materials unfold some of their mysteries in the future. We owe it to our young tribal members to allow them to discover and explain the details of our lost, hidden, or forgotten history, and culture, which many in the older generations have often longed to know.

### The Hidden Pathos of Southwest Oregon

Southwest Oregon still echoes and reverberates with excruciatingly painful memories of the horrible slaughter and spiritual, emotional devastation of both the local aboriginal inhabitants and many of the non-Native newcomers who intruded onto them with a demonic passion of greed, lust, scorn, and brutal indifference for less possessive souls. Not one square mile of Coos, Curry, Josephine, Jackson or Douglas counties has been spared the awful impact of murder, human torture, desperation, and anguish spilled out of the people who experienced the vulgar onslaught of the mid-nineteenth century.

More than a hundred years of annual pounding rains and hurricane force winds have effected little to nothing in the way of clearing out, washing up, or erasing the eternal vibrations of such brutal genocide. The coastal bluffs, strands of beaches, river boulders, and creek gravels (along with the jagged and craggy peaks of the Siskiyou, Klamath, and Coast Range mountains), all have been indelibly imprinted with the horror of hate and desperation with

which the people were slashed and ripped from their beloved homelands.

Those same mountains, crags, and gravel-bars still exude those painful messages today. Their impact is inescapable, even to the unwary newcomers, but the curious historians and culture researchers who insist on sifting through the aboriginal residue are doomed to receive more than they asked for.

Forewarned is not necessarily forearmed. There are no inoculations against the fevers of guilt and disgust, which inevitably saturate intelligent and compassionate researchers upon ferreting out the secrets of human extermination in the late nineteenth century landscape of southwest Oregon.

Time is only an *ever-expanding capsule* of energy exchanges. Human experiences are energy expenditures of emotion, compassion, pain, suffering, wondering, love, and spiritual devotion. Those experiences do not dissipate into a distant past as presumed by western linear thinkers. Those experiences of the “past” are all that make up the present. Our human emotions and memories are

all that exist in life now, as the future depends on what we are doing now and what we will do next. It then becomes the present.

As memory is all we have to create reality, the “past” is always current in the present. Those life experiences fade or remain alive as determined by the intensity of the emotional energy expenditure on their unfolding evolution. Those more intense experiences remain hovering in the *reality memories* of the people who witnessed them, and the geographic places within a beloved homeland, where such events unfolded, resound interminably with the haunting echoes of their dramatic appeal.

Just as a photographer imprints an image on film, or a sound technician records sounds on metal or vinyl, so too does the human psyche in compassionate oneness with its aboriginal environment, record and imprint those emotional images into the immediate surroundings of the dramatic events. It’s all there and waiting for the unwary inquisitor.

Anyone who insists on probing into the hidden dimensions of any aboriginal history, and particularly that hidden history of

southwest Oregon, must be ready to endure a gruesome and tragic entanglement of cultural perspectives.

Be careful what you wish for. Whether it be political or sexual power, economic or social enlightenment, spiritual or academic credentials, be careful! You just might get what you seek.

### Bi-Cultural Symbiosis

Susan Adulsah and her husband George were an excellent combination of different cultures, Indian and Euro-American. It seems that their unbounded respect for each other provided strength and fortitude for survival, achievement, and success in an ever-changing frontier world. Their combination of Indian traditional knowledge in Native survival, hunting and gathering, and New England knowledge and expertise in the maritime trade and logging/lumbering abilities, provided the perfect union and melding of cultures in the “frontiers” of Oregon.

George was a Canadian citizen living in the Oregon Territory. Susan Adulsah was a Native Oregonian, but not considered an

American citizen in her own homeland, by the U.S. Government.

When Oregon became a state of the union on February 14, 1859, both George and Susan became foreigners together.

I've often wondered how they felt about that and how it affected them socially around Coos Bay and Coos County. I know that Grandfather "legalized" his marriage to Grandmother through a Justice of the Peace sometime after they had been married in the Indian customs for several years.

Grandmother had no real concern about the legitimacy of their marriage, as Grandfather had actually purchased her from Gishgiu, by ceremoniously presenting her with an ancient set of jet beads, strung on buckskin, thereby sanctifying their marriage according to Native tradition. George R. Wasson, the Scottish immigrant from New Brunswick, had great respect for the Native traditions of his wife and mother-in-law.

It is ironic that both George and Susan were suddenly foreigners in Oregon at the same time. Grandfather was obviously aware of that, and concerned about his citizenship. So, on August 1st, 1859, barely six months after Oregon became a state, George R.

Wasson applied for naturalization as a U.S. Citizen and was duly granted it (George B. Wasson, Sr., 1916). The irony of it all, is that his wife, Susan Adulsah, a Native in her own homeland, became a citizen at that same time, she being now legally married to an American citizen.

Grandfather was fiercely proud of Grandmother. She adapted herself to the White man's way of life, raising their children to be proud of their Indian heritage, even though she did not try to teach them to be fluent in the Native languages. She knew that their success in life would be dependent on their education and skills in the dominant society.

Grandmother never denied, nor turned her back on her own Native traditions. But she knew quite skillfully when and where to practice her personal spirituality and traditional medicine without confrontation or insult to others.

I sometimes ponder the tragedy of the loss of the vast knowledge combined in Gishgiu and her daughter Adulsah. They were both trained from childhood to memorize and know all the history, languages, traditions, stories, medicines, and family

relationships of their Native heritage. They both knew they were the last of the “Bahsics” [tribal “historians”] (George B. Wasson, Sr., 1916), and that their dual knowledge was coming to an end, no longer needed in the rapidly disappearing traditional world. In the face of such tragedy, they endured, survived, and succeeded beyond all possible odds. George R. Wasson was indeed proud of his wife and his mother-in-law.

He had left his home and family in New Brunswick in 1849, bent on seeking his fortune in the gold fields of California. He had originally planned on joining a wagon train headed from St. Louis onto the Oregon Trail. At the last moment, an acquaintance of his could not follow up on his passage aboard a sailing ship, headed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, around Cape Horn to San Diego. George jumped at the chance to sail and left immediately after trading places with his friend. Some years later, word of tragedy having struck the wagon train reached the Wasson family back in New Brunswick, and it was assumed that George was dead.

It was many years later, about 1875, that George R. Wasson met up with a long time family friend (and cousin) from New

Brunswick, David F. Young. News from back home was exchanged, and George learned of his family's events and life changes. At last, he made contact, and reconnected with one of his beloved sisters, who had been cast out of home by their father when she bore a child out of wedlock years earlier. It was that cruel act of disenfranchisement that separated George from his father, so in protest, he left home for a new life in the west. Among the family keepsakes, I found a letter edged in black, informing the Wasson family in Oregon of the death of George's father in New Brunswick. I don't know if he ever forgave his father for that act of cruelty.

George could have afforded to travel back east to visit again and reacquaint himself with his loved ones there. But he knew that due to their snobbery, it would be difficult for many of his eastern kin to accept his beloved wife, Susan Adulsah, and he would not subject her to such indignity.

Cultural reciprocation was the process by which the Wasson family endured and survived on South Slough. George took Adulsah for his wife after her first husband (a partner of George's named Hodgkiss) died at sea from an appendicitis attack onboard a ship

headed to San Francisco. George had rowed out across the Coos Bay bar in a long boat, hailed a passing ship and went on to San Francisco to verify the death of his partner. Upon return, he gave the string of jet beads to Gishgiu, thereby legitimizing and sanctifying his marriage to her daughter.

Their marriage saved Susan Adulsah from being taken away by the soldiers to the concentration camps up north in 1856, and their marriage also made her a U.S. citizen later on. George's skills at seamanship, logging, and farming all placed them in a fine position to succeed in the booming economy of the Coos Bay area. It was indeed a symbiotic relationship. In a "culturally chaotic" frontier, the combining of their best cultural strengths into a powerful synergy produced one of the most respected families in the Coos Bay region, despite being half-Indian and half-White.

From hearing the family stories, and looking at the photographs, one can see that the Wasson children were well-dressed, well-bred, educated, and proud citizens. They all functioned well in the local Coos Bay society, and several of them traveled across the country for an eastern education (see fig. 14).



Figure 14. The Wasson Daughters, left to right:  
Laura, Nell, Daisy, and Mary

Several converted to Christianity, which tended to denounce their Native heritage and traditions. At times, some children and grandchildren even denied or covered up being Coos Indians. Yet all of them remembered stories and retained some traditional habits. They all knew the story of Old Man Coyote and the Strawberries. They all loved Native foods and enjoyed fishing, digging clams, picking berries, catching eels, and other traditional food. A couple of native plants seem to have held a special place in their childhood memories and carried on into adulthood for them. It seems that everyone relished picking and eating the new salmonberry shoots in spring. My guess is that it was easy for children to find, pick, peel and eat them when playing outside, or walking to and from school. My father and his sisters all showed us children how to do that, and it has been a special memory for me and my sister Bette, munching on salmonberry shoots with Aunt Mary and Aunt Daisy. My father once warned us not to eat too many of them though. He said a young boy was found dead, or died of appendicitis perhaps. An autopsy was performed and a large ball of salmonberry shoots was found inside his stomach. We were always cautious after that.

One item of tradition which I have kept alive for regular use I learned very early. Indian tea or “yerba buena” (*Saturegia douglasii*) is a vining mint that was used by the Indians of the west coast for making their favorite tea. Aunt Lolly (see Fig. 15) was very fond of it, and every time we went to visit her, my father warned me ahead of time to pick her some to present when we arrived. I’ll always remember the delight with which she would express thanks for the “Indian Tea.” It was her favorite beverage.

Grandfather was an intelligent, hardworking, benevolent entrepreneur in the frontier of southern Oregon. He mined for gold, made plenty of money at it, and assisted the local community by helping set up new industries. He was known to row out over the Coos Bay bar to catch a passing ship, go to San Francisco and purchase new equipment for setting up a sawmill and a railroad operation. He built the first sawmill on Coos Bay, powered by an undershot water wheel. Earlier, he had built a water-powered sawmill at Randolph (the first in Coos County) to cut lumber for the mining camps (see Fig. 16).



Figure 15. Daisy and Laura (“Lolly”). left to right:  
Aunt Daisy, and Aunt Lolly, Charleston, Oregon.  
1940s.

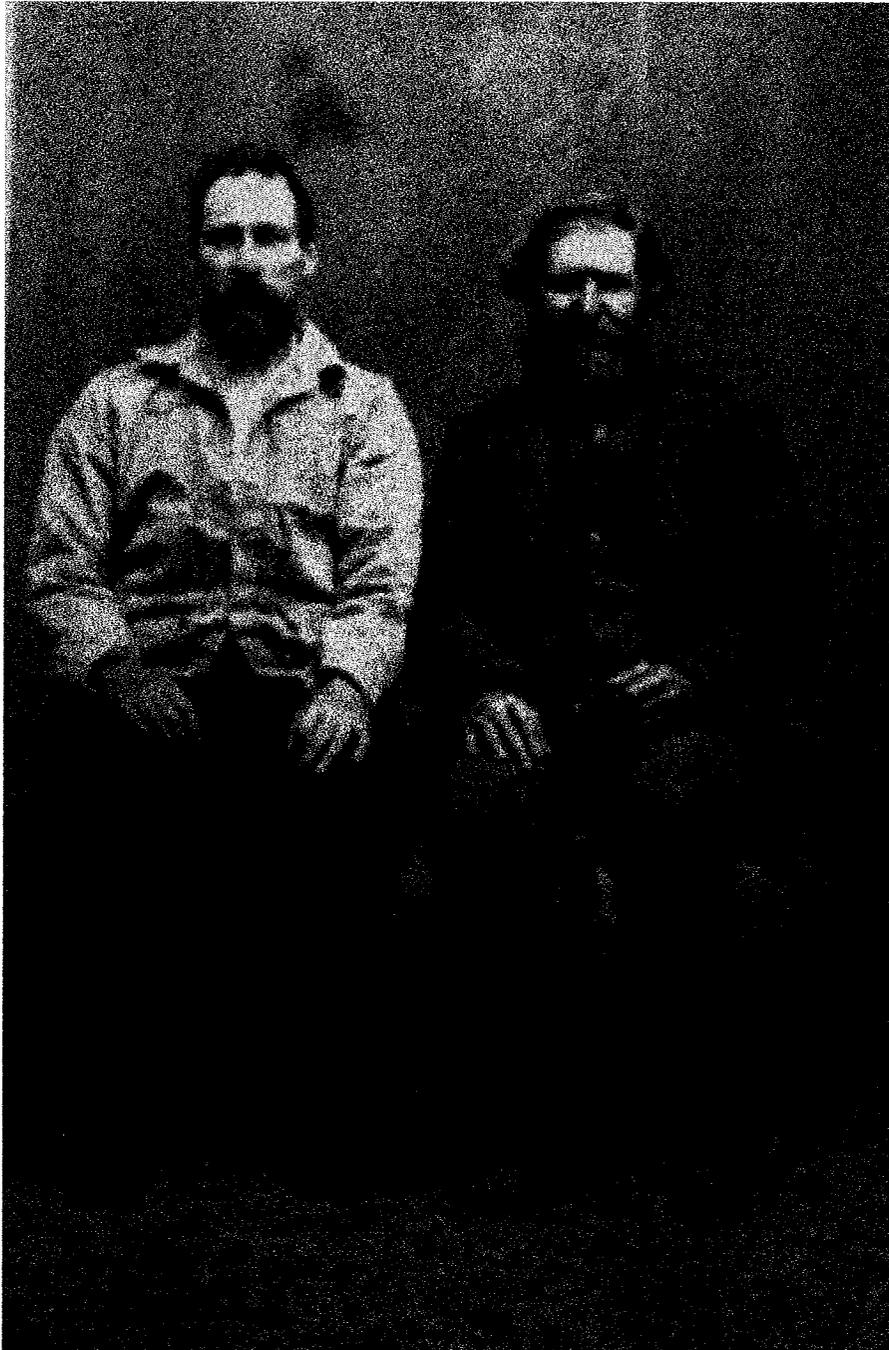


Figure 16. Winchester and Wasson, Good friends and neighbors on South Slough, Coos Bay, Oregon.

To educate his children, he hired a schoolteacher to come and live at his home and invited neighboring children to attend school there too. He was a most principled man as demonstrated when he left home in protest against his father. He had a soft place in his heart for less fortunate people, particularly the Natives, and yet maintained a strong air of flamboyance and sophistication of his own.

George R. Wasson was great friends with various notable figures of the day, but shunned notoriety for himself. One family story tells that when some U.S. Army personnel passed through the country, a young Coos girl was kidnapped and taken with them. The distraught family called up Grandfather to intercede, which he did most readily. He rode his horse back out into the Willamette Valley and caught up with General Sheridan. The girl was promptly released and returned to her home and family.

Esoteric personalities have also been part of Grandfather's group of friends and acquaintances. From an early age, I knew of the name, Joaquin Miller. I had no idea who he was, perhaps someone who lived down the coast or somewhere, but his name was

common place in my family. We were told often that anytime Joaquin Miller was passing through the country, he would stop off and visit the Wasson household, always staying over for a day or so and talking at great length with his good friend George Wasson. It wasn't until many years later that I learned of Joaquin Miller, the flamboyant "Poet of the Sierras." Then I knew why his name was mentioned so proudly in family circles.

Grandfather had great love and compassion for his stepdaughter, Laura (my Aunt "Lolly"). She was born before he married Susan Adulsah, but he treated her as one of his own and protected her from any mistreatment. In subsequent years, Aunt Lolly's first-born son was readily accepted by her husband, Ira Metcalf, and raised as his own too.

It seems that one of the other Wasson daughters felt a bit above Lolly who stayed at home before she married, instead of seeking work outside the family. Aunt Nell had a job in the town of Marshfield and was becoming a worldly young woman, moving comfortably in the upper social circles of the day. Upon returning home to Sough Slough from the city, Nell promptly displayed new

dresses (bolts of cloth to be sewn into dresses) she had purchased for herself (and possibly a couple of her other sisters). Grandfather was reading a newspaper, and casually looked up, asking, "Where's a new dress for Lolly?" Nell had not purchased one for her.

Without saying anything more, he quite methodically got out of his chair, collected his coat and hat and left the house.

When he returned a day later, he presented Laura with three new dresses. He had taken his row boat and gone all the way from upper Sough Slough up the Coos Bay and around to Marshfield, purchased three bolts of cloth for dresses and rowed back home on the next morning tide. When he presented the dresses he stated, "Don't you ever buy a new dress for yourself and not one for Lolly too." She didn't (see Fig. 17).

As I remember and analyze the nature of the stories and anecdotes from my Wasson ancestors, I note that acceptance, tolerance, and forbearance stand out clearly in family attitudes. Outsiders were welcome in the household, and many old Indian friends came and stayed with Grandmother over the years.



Figure 17. Lolly and Nell. Aunt "Lolly" (Laura),  
(seated) and Aunt Nell, (standing)

There was a wide range of differing personalities just as the difference between my grandparents. It seems that such individuality actually drew them together and bonded them tightly. In his book, *Stigma*, Irving Goffman (1963:132) states, “. . . it is very difficult to understand how individuals who sustain a sudden transformation of their life from that of normal to that of stigmatized person can survive the change psychologically; yet very often they do.” He describes the community of friends and associates who recognize their own individual differences as being an attraction to band together. Because of the differences in each, they are similar as opposed to the common mainstream of society.

Awareness and acceptance of one’s own differences, tends to make a person more accepting of others with “differences,” thereby giving a viable sense of community, belonging, and strength as a group (see Fig. 18). However, the Wasson household was very much an established family led by a prosperous and generous father, George R. Wasson, and held together by an ambitious and energetic mother, Susan Adulsah.



Figure 18. Grandma Wasson, "Old Libby," and Two Boys.  
From left to right: "Old Libby," and Jim Wasson,  
George B. Wasson, and Grandma Wasson.

Their uniqueness is the lack of prejudice, their unbiased nature and acceptance of others into their household, and the generosity with which they treated visitors, neighbors, and friends. Quite tragically though, that constant generosity and philanthropic community building did not sustain the Wasson family in the time of great crisis and economic downfall.

Grandfather was the first person to commercially log the fabulous Port Orford Cedar. He knew well the value of that beautiful timber and its superior quality of long, straight-grained, aromatic wood. He had invested in building a railroad up South Slough. The train had concave wheels, ran on log rails, and carried the timber from inland where it had been pulled by oxen to the train track. He had made great booms (rafts) of the logs and secured them in the slough, to be towed up the bay, and either milled there or loaded onboard ships to be sold in San Francisco. He had everything invested in this brilliant and ambitious venture. Had the luck of nature been with him, he might have stood taller, more proudly, and richer than those who came later on, such as Simpson and Weyerhaeuser.

But alas, tragedy and devastation loomed large. The major storm and “one hundred year flood” around 1893 hit with demonic ferocity, dumping enormous torrents of water over the land and flooding beyond all anticipation. The “sou’wester” blew furiously, pushing the high tides to an all time high level, flooding the land, ripping apart the log booms, and carrying Grandfather’s precious timber out to sea. He was totally devastated! All was lost.

The entire family found it difficult to talk about that in later years. It was a subject that was hard to bear and went mostly unspoken. But some seemed to feel it had to be told and known among the later generations, so they gradually told the story.

The bank officers who held the mortgage loan to finance the logging venture, came in with a vengeance and took everything he owned. Aunt Daisy said that on the day they arrived at the house, Grandfather was up the slough a ways, and was just returning home, carrying only a double-bitted axe. When he saw the bank officers emptying out his house, he merely tossed the axe into the bushes alongside the driveway. It was the only thing they didn’t take from him that day. Even though all was lost, he was not a defeated man.

Grandmother had her allotment just up Wasson Creek. They could not take that away from her.

So, with his only remaining possession, the double-bitted axe, George R. and Susan Adulsah Wasson began creating a new home for themselves. George built a house and filled it with furniture, which he created himself with his axe. The synergy of their combined resourcefulness carried them through again (see Fig. 19).

George and Adulsah lived out their days in that house, and when they each passed on, were buried in the Wasson family cemetery, just across the creek from their house on Grandma Wasson's Indian allotment up Wasson Creek.

Figure 19. Cranberry pickers at Fraser's Marsh, North Slough, Coos Bay, Oregon. Standing in second row, third from right is George R. Wasson; fifth from right is Susan Adulsah Wasson, next to her friend Susan Ned.

- 1906 -



### Closing Comments and Observations

There are many observations to be made from sorting through the complex cultural details of oral traditions, oral and written histories, and experiences of Indians and non-Indians from the last two centuries in southwest Oregon.

In the process of growing up inside the 20<sup>th</sup> century “remnants” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “culturally chaotic frontier” in which my father was born, I have many memories and observations, which only now can be analyzed and explained in a context meaningful to other tribal descendants today.

I hope that my comments, admonitions, and suggestions will be helpful to other descendants of the “systematic acculturation” of our ancestors. I hope that some of my insights will help explain various curiosities about tribal traditions and family history, as I perceive them from what I learned growing up and have uncovered through years of research. I hope that perhaps an “educational guide” or “formula” for how to live and respond to life as tribal descendants can be realized here, for the younger generations, which are yet to come. It’s just as confusing for young tribal

children today, as it was for their ancestors yesterday, growing up Indian, living in two worlds, and being loyal to both.

My final thoughts are to state that I'm grateful for the symbiotic relationship of my grandparents, Susan Adulsah and George R. Wasson. I'm proud of both my Coos/Coquelle and Scottish ancestries. Had it not been for their marriage, the Wasson/Indian descendants would not have survived in the Coos Bay area today.

**APPENDIX (Additional photographs)**



Figure 20. The Five Wasson Children, Salem, Oregon, 1937. From left to right: Susan, George, Wilfred, John, and Bette.



Figure 21. The Five Wasson Children, Empire, Oregon, 1975. From left to right: Susan, Bette, John, Wilfred, and George.

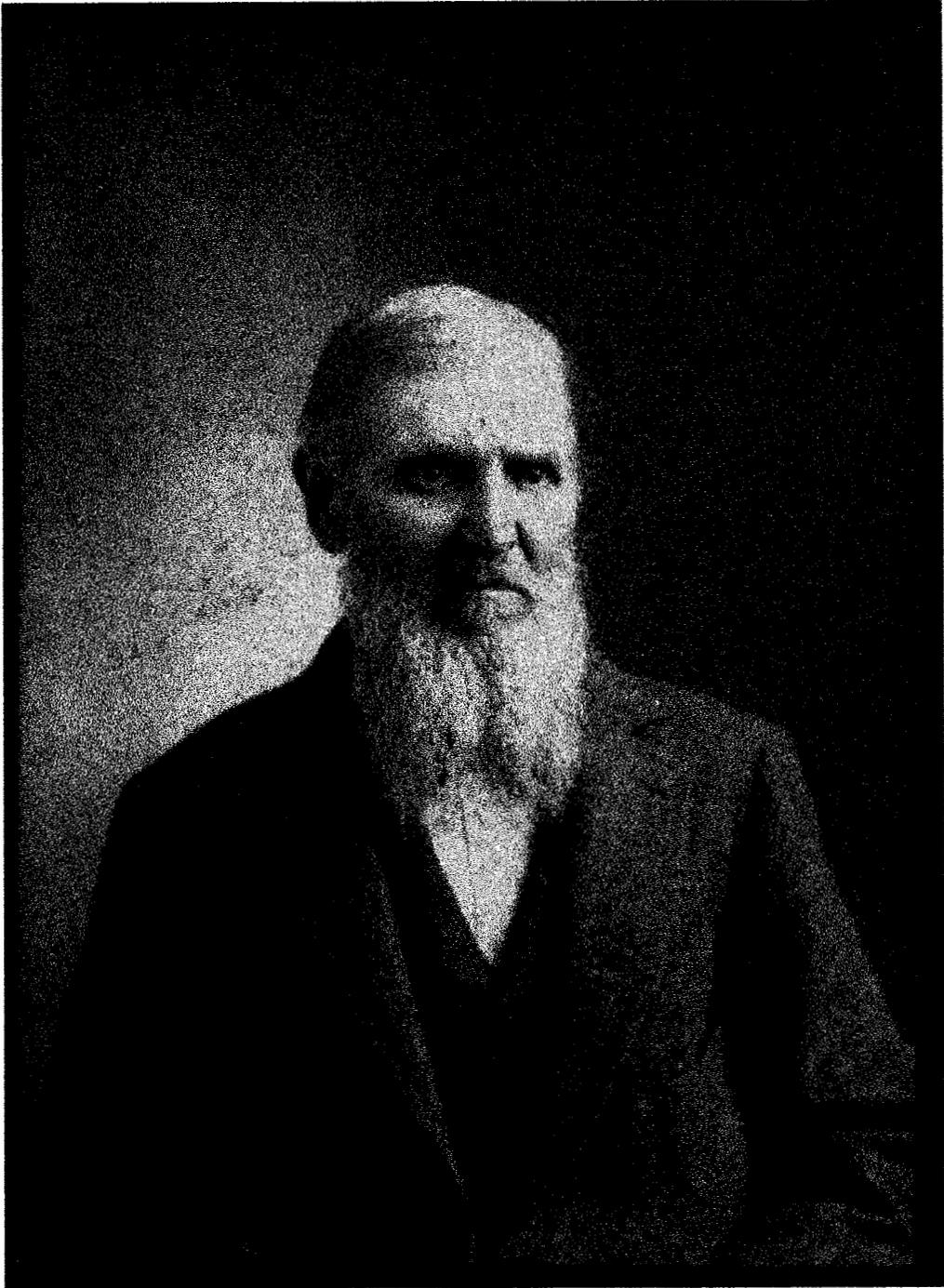


Figure 22. Grandpa Wasson, older, (see photo of Cranberry Pickers, p. 374).



Figure 23. George B. Wasson, Sr. with "beaver stick," 1947



Figure 24. Grandma Wasson  
(With two unidentified men)



Figure 25. George B. Wasson, Sr. Washington D.C., 1918

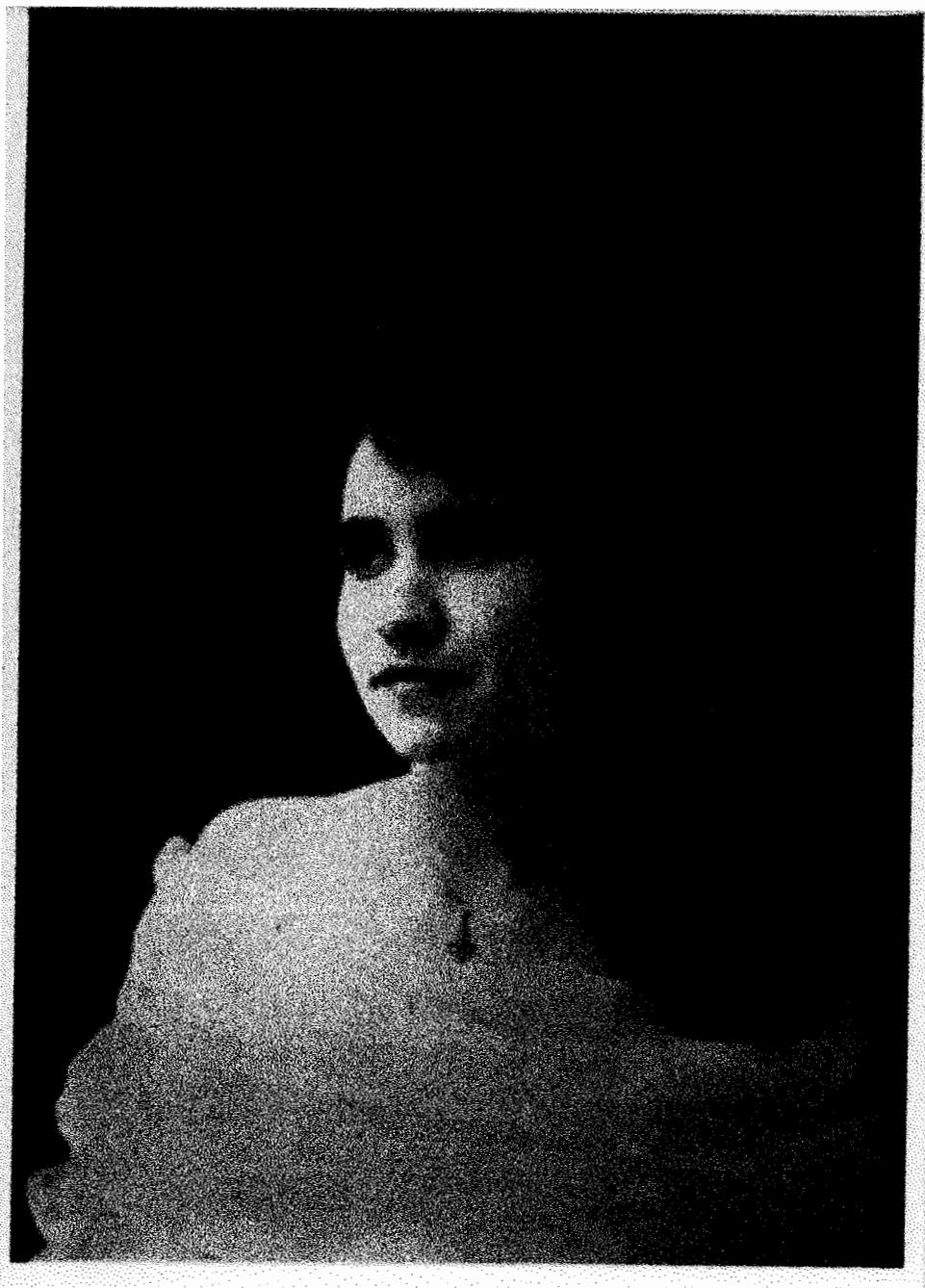


Figure 26. Bess Finley (Wasson/Hockema), Coquille, Oregon, 1918

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