

SOUTHEASTERN INDIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

In cooperation with The Seminole Tribe of Florida

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My interview with Billy Osceola, who was a past tribal chairman.

C: The story I am going to tell you is a legend I have heard. It is only a story, nothing more, about how the Seminoles came into this area. Have you heard this story before?

O: How the Seminoles acquired the name is somewhat inaccurate. It was not Seminoles. The Seminoles were a part of the Creeks. The Indians here in Florida were the same people as the Creek Indians. Lately they acquired the name "Seminole."

When wars were born and beset the native people, our people were forced to go out west, but they did not want to go--they hid. When forced to go on the long trail to the West, some of the Indians would elude in the night, and returned to their homelands. The Indians were terror-stricken, and they kept running away. A special label was given the runaway Indians, the definition of which was "Seminole." "Seminole" means runaway. This is my version of what I heard how the name Seminoles were given to these Creeks. And that is about all I have heard. Those who were forced out to Oklahoma retained their name, the Creeks. There a lot of Creeks there.

C: There is a story how the Seminoles were gathered and forced into boats to be sent out to Oklahoma. The deportation was at Tampa. In fact, once you told me this a long time ago. Would you please tell me again?

O: Yes, that is what happened. According to the saga of the Seminoles, when the Indians were at war with the white man, and following the war, the whites said the Indians must be moved. Let us move them out west. "Let them live out there," they said. The Indians did not want to move there. The white men would lie and trick the Indians. They would take them to Tampa. Some of the leaders were among their people. Only a few of the leaders consented to go out west. Whereby some of the Indians were told that all of their leaders had consented to go. Those who refused to go out west were arrested and sent out to their undesired destination.

When the Indians were rounded up, they (the military men) would immediately take them to Tampa where the big ship was lying in the water waiting for its unwilling passengers. They were told that they had to board on the huge vessel, and they would put them on this big boat, westward bound.

- C: They would take the Seminoles beyond the Mississippi river--is that right? And then on to New Orleans? It was there they would leave the boat and continue their long journey on foot. These are some of the accounts I have heard.
- O: Tampa was the departing station. The big boat would be at anchor in the big body of the salt water. This is what I heard. After they put the Indians on the ship, they sailed toward New Orleans. From this locale they were driven on to the West. The oppressed people did not want to go anywhere. Many nights went by. During the night they would escape and return to their homelands. The refugees began to populate where the Seminoles Indians are presently living.
- C: Does [Seminole word] mean "sweet water?"
- O: No, it is not. Sweet water in this context means salt water, like the waters of the Gulf of Mexico or Atlantic Ocean. They call these places Wee [Seminole word.]
- C: Then, the name would not be sweet waters? Therefore the way I would translate [Seminole word] would be sweet water, but Mr. Osceola explained even though the literal translation is sweet water, they use this word to mean salt water.
- C: Would you tell me the correct way to say "swamp." I have forgotten. I learn new words, and then I leave. I forget how to say what I have learned, then I have to come back and relearn the words.
- O: "Swamp," I really don't know the literal translation. Since this type of ground is not any good, it is muddy and composed of trees and water. With this description in mind, the white man calls it "swamp." We call it dirty, muddy water; when it is a larger swamp area, we called it the big dirty water.
- C: Can you tell me the story how Coacoochee was arrested and sent to St. Augustine--how they killed him? Have you heard anything about him?
- O: No, I don't believe so. When they put them in jail (Osceola and Coacoochee), they were in jail about seven days. They ate white roots, daily. When seven days went by, nothing could stand in the way of their escape. This was the time when Coacoochee made his getaway. But Osceola remained in jail, vowing this would be his finish. I am not certain how they escaped, or where Coacoochee died.
- Osceola was in St. Augustine, and he was very ill. He said that death was very near, and therefore he would remain in

prison. This is what I have heard. I have heard it was at Moultrie, North Carolina [Fort Moultrie, South Carolina] that he spent the last day of his life. This is what I have heard.

C: Were both Osceola and Coacoochee sent to Fort Moultrie, in North Carolina [South Carolina], and both imprisoned there?

O: No, they were imprisoned at St. Augustine.

C: When did the reservation begin here? (Brighton Reservation.)

O: 1936. Long time before that time it was understood that this would be a place set aside for the Seminoles. They were somewhat neglected until 1936. Within the year 1936 special programs came about. They started in Brighton.

C: In this area, could you tell me some of the Seminole wars that took place? Do you know any stories that you have heard?

O: I am not too sure of what happened here. I remember hearing that the battles took place in the southeast area of Okeechobee. The Indians would be in hiding, but the white men would seek them out and take them as prisoners. This is where they fought at. In those areas, the death toll for the whites was high. But what happen after that, or where the people went, I have not heard. After these needless wars, we are the remnants of those who resisted.

There was an old man who died by the name of Billy Bowlegs [Billy Bowlegs III] who told me many stories about historical events. I heard him tell about the Battle of Okeechobee.

C: It was probably Billy Bowlegs's grandfather's property I have heard about. He had a garden with pumpkins, potatoes, and other vegetables, and white surveyors came and ruined his garden. Have you heard this story?

O: No, I have not. But I do know the intruders ruined a lot of things--killed the children, stole horses from them (the Seminoles.)

C: Yesterday I was speaking with a woman who said many Indians were imprisoned in St. Augustine. Stories were told that at one time the Indians found some of the people starving, and found children who were merely skin and bones. Have you heard anything of this sort?

O: I don't know anything about that. What have you heard?
(End of that conversation. Mr. Osceola was somewhat reluctant to talk about such historical events. Although he did indicate that one day he would be willing to tell what little he has heard.)

C: I asked him [Billy Osceola] to tell me the story of the turtle and the opossum.

O: The turtle had a family. They lived in a village. The men of the village went on a hunt; the turtle trailed along. After killing a deer, the hunters asked the turtle what part of the deer he wanted. "Which part do you want?" they asked him. Still he did not say a word. They kept waiting until they grew impatient with him. They asked him if he wanted the forelegs. His reply was, "If you broke my forelegs, it would kill me." So the hunters asked him if he wanted the thighs of the deer. Again, he replied by saying, "If you broke my thighs, it would kill me." The hunters were no longer tolerant of his behavior. They took all the deer meat and left. The only thing left of the deer was the blood clot.

The lesson of the story is: If you are slow to make up your mind, you must also be able to face the consequences.

C: I truly enjoy hearing these tales. My father, who is now deceased, used to tell me so many stories about our people.

O: Many of the stories are basically the same, but they do vary.

C: How about the story about a panther which almost ate the rabbit? The rabbit was in fear, and pleaded with the panther not to eat him. In desperation he told the panther where he could get a lot of turkeys that would be more than happy to be eaten. The panther asked where he could find these turkeys.

The story continues as follows: The rabbit told the panther, "If you would lie down and pretend that you are dead, I will bring the turkeys to you."

The panther replied, "All right, I will lie down and wait." Meanwhile the panther was pretending to be dead. The rabbit took off, and returned with some worms and threw them on the panther.

The rabbit went to the turkey and said, "Hurry and come with me. There is a dead animal which you might eat." The turkeys followed the rabbit. The panther saw the turkeys approach, and he jumped on the turkeys and devoured all of them.

Have you heard this story?

O: I have heard it, but...

C: A little different?

O: Yes, a little different. It was a panther and a rabbit. The panther was becoming very hungry. He longingly looked at the rabbit. The rabbit, sensing the panther wanted him for his meal, said pleadingly, "Please do not kill me. There are a lot of turkeys . I will find them for you. You may kill these birds."

The panther asked, "How do we go about doing this?" He truly wanted the turkeys. The rabbit told him to lie down on the ground, and the panther did as he was told to do.

Now, what do you call those worms that are in the wood?

C: They are called termites.

O: The rabbit took the termites from the trees. He removed them from the tree, and then he sprinkled the worms all over the panther, creating the impression that the panther was dead. The worms were crawling all over the panther.

The rabbit ran and told the turkeys that the panther was dead, and the worms were crawling all over the panther, and the little turkeys were completely fooled by all this. Rabbit told the panther, "The turkeys think you are dead. When they come to look at you, you can reach out, grab them, and you can have them to eat."

The rabbit told the turkeys, "You know your enemy who has been eating turkeys? I found him dead. He is the culprit who has been eating you."

"Really!" the turkeys said. They were frightened.

Rabbit said, "Why don't you go over and take a look at him?"

The turkeys said to the rabbit, "If what you are saying is right, we would like to see him." The male turkey thought it might be a trick, and that he was not dead at all. The rabbit reassured them, "He is dead. See the worms crawling all over his body."

They were still very apprehensive. From the distance they could see the panther. The rabbit kept urging them to get a little closer to the lifeless animal. The turkeys kept getting a little closer and closer. They were standing there and looking at the panther. As they scrutinized the panther, their eyes fixed on him, they saw all the worms swarming all over his body.

"Now that he will no longer bother you, why don't you have a big dance. Dance around the dead panther--just circle around him," dared the rabbit.

The turkeys, convinced the panther was dead, decided to do just as the rabbit told them to do. As they looked at the panther, they could see all the worms weaving in and out. The turkeys said, "That is a good idea. After all, he is dead."

They were singing and dancing and circling around the panther.

The panther barely opened his eyes to see what was going on, but the panther was looking for the biggest and fattest turkey. While lying there, and as the turkeys were encircling him, gave him the chance to see which turkey he wanted. As quick as lightning he grabbed the biggest and fattest turkey.

The remaining turkeys said, "Oh, my goodness, he is not dead." They were afraid, and quickly ran away. Since he snatched the biggest one, the panther killed and ate him.

This is a story I have heard.

- C: In this area, you must have heard how the Indians reacted when they first saw the white man. When they saw them for the very first time, what do you think the Seminoles thought of the non-Indians? What did you think when you saw the first white man? Did you think they were pretty?
- O: Since I didn't attend school or go to town often, I was a little better than ten years old when I first saw white people.
My father said, "There are a lot of white people around. They have schools and towns. They have mistreated us." My father used to tell me, "Avoid them." I often heard about the atrocities as a child growing up. I did not have the courage to go to town and mix with them. I did not interact with them. We were told to be careful.
My thinking was conditioned that the white man was not right. I really should not given it thought, but they did steal our land and kill our people. They took all of our lands. My people told this to us all of our lives, and we heard it many times over. I was never mad at the white men, but I feared them. For one thing, they didn't have a reason to kill a person but they did. As time went by I learned their language, and I understood a little of the white man's ways.
- C: A long time ago our old people taught us to fear the white man, since it was the white man who took our land and killed our people. Among the stories, they would tell us that where there were villages, such as the panther village....
- O: They are called towns.
- C: Where the towns were, the white men brought rifles and guns. They would come armed, and massacre the villages, and only big pools of blood would be flowing where many of our ancestors witnessed this scene. I have heard this many times.
Have you ever heard your grandfather talk about anything like this?

O: Yes, this has been said. At one time there was a sizable population. The first time a white man came to us, he came from the salt water. When he came out of the water, he had nothing when he set foot on our land. This land did not belong to him. There were Indians at the shore waiting and watching them come ashore. The Indians sent word that these people were going to stay and spend time with them. There must have been quite a few white people. The amount was never said.

The white man at first asked only for a small plot of land, a small area where he could keep his family. He asked, "Please permit me to stay on this small plot."

When the white man fired the shot, it could be heard in the distance. They had men stationed far away who heard the shot. They came back and reported they heard the shot. In the late evening. The white man bargained for a small plot of land, and led the incumbent to believe all they wanted was a small plot of land.

If the Seminoles would only give some land to the white men, they would measure the amount of land by how far the sound of the gun sounded. The indigenous group agreed, thinking a small gun would be fired, but to their surprise, the white men used a cannon that exploded with a booming sound which traveled for several miles.

I do not remember the details of the account of how the white men obtained land, but there is another story I have heard how the white men tricked the Indians. The settlers asked for a plot of land the size of a cow hide. The inhabitants thought this was reasonable, but again they were surprised when the settlers took a piece of cow hide and cut it into small strips, and when the strips unraveled, the cow hide took up several miles. They were tricked twice by the agreement of the cow hide and the sound of the gun. Since the Seminoles had given their word they could not back down, because a word was a man's honor.

C: Mr. Osceola began by telling me about his conversation with two men. One was a white man, and the other an Indian.

O: When people are talking, I would sit and listen. This is what I have heard: There were two men talking with each other. One was an Indian, the other a white man. I stood around and listened to what they had to say.

The Indian began by saying, "The Indians today, that is my grandchildren do not listen to what we have to teach them, because they go to the white man's schools." (Referring to public schools in particular.) He kept expressing his views and citing examples of the times they would not listen to or obey their elders; then he finished. I stood there and listened to what he had to say, and the white man also listened.

There is something I would like to say or add about the white man's school. This is what we call these schools. Yes, they think they teach our children and educated them. They are trying to educate our youngsters and to educate their boy (referring to the other Indian's son). I am not going to complain against the school.

When a person has not completed his education they are not on the same level of the students who have gone through school and have graduated from universities. They are the ones who become teachers. They are the ones who are lawyers. They are the ones who are doctors. They are the ones who are governors.

So if the children are not disciplined, the children must be somewhere else besides school. (In essence he was saying when a child is sent to school, make sure he is mentally prepared to learn, and that he is physically there. Because if these foundations are not laid for him, it is not the school's blame entirely for the lack of discipline.) Unlike others who say that when they send their children to white schools, they become uncontrollable and hard to discipline, I do not share this feeling. I also send my children to white schools, but I do not say that. I don't believe that.

The way I see it is: the school is over there, the child's home is here. Between the home and school, the child is drifting away somewhere else when there is a lack of discipline. That's just the way it is. Again, I want to emphasize that I cannot complain against the school.

C: Mr. O. said he suggests to his people that when they decide to send their children to school to be educated, they should be very concerned with the child's attitude by helping to develop it. At home the parents should teach them ethics, and encourage them to utilize them in school. He stressed talking to the children. He tells them to feed the children well before sending them to school, and make sure their clothes are ready for them to wear to school. Show interest and keep reminding them about the importance of an education. This is his prescription of taking care of the children and watching over them. If this parent-child relationship is developed, he feels that there would not be a reason for the child to become disinterested in school. However, after providing all the care and attention the child needs, still becomes disinterested, then the parent has the right to feel as though they had done the best they could, but the child chose not to follow the plan the parents wanted fulfilled through a better education. In this situation, the parents' responsibility was carried out. Therefore, the parents can derive some satisfaction from this. Certainly, the child cannot truthfully point a finger at his parents and accuse them

of not caring or helping them. Mr. O's conviction is one must help their children to the best of their ability, because it is a day-to-day responsibility of the parents to guide and direct their offspring.

On the other hand, if the parents are irresponsible, and neglect their children because of being drunk and not knowing or even caring where their children are or what they are doing, then problems can occur. A parent should not think just because the child has gone to school, that is enough. The bad habits the parents have affects the children--especially getting drunk. When the parents stay on a drunk, oftentimes the child goes to school without being fed, or his clothes ready for him to wear to school. The child is so hungry, and perhaps even ashamed of his unkempt clothes. He leaves school.

Out of hunger, frustration, or wanting something he doesn't have, whether alone or accompanied with others, he will break into a home or store for food, clothing, and sometimes even for money. By breaking and entering a home, the young person gets into serious trouble, because he has committed a crime. The child will break windows and doors, and ransack a home or store only because so very often he was simply hungry.

- O: A child given the equal chance of learning and being cared for can very likely become the president of the United States should this be his ambition. Education is the key to open many doors in life. If you have prepared your child in every way to adjust or adapt to obtaining an education, even he is capable of becoming a president of the United States if that is what he decides this is what he wants. I think the parents should tell their children these things.

If the child likes the white society and wants to become a part of that society, I think it is all right. It doesn't matter how much the education costs, because once the person obtains a degree or skills needed, he can become self-sufficient and self-reliant. He can pay for his home, his food, and what makes up his living. Nothing can stand in his way whenever he wants something, because he is trained and he uses his education to work for him. Education does make a difference.

The young people who dropped out of school or who did not complete the education they needed have suffered from lack of education. Most of these people in this situation are usually the ones who go into debt and have a hard time making a living. These people and their children have to go hungry or do without a lot of what they need. They cannot make it anywhere. Their only hope is to return to the reservation, where at least they will have a place to stay. Still, there is the problem of bringing in food and clothing for their family. These are some

of the problems we face, and sometimes we sit around and talk about these situations that confront us.

In addition to education, our own people...their traditions and their laws should be respected. Education has its place of importance, but by the same token Indian traditions has its place of importance. The Indian traditions had its values, moral responsibilities, and concepts. The Indians have medicine and a religion. Therefore, I cannot say that the Indian way of life is wrong, or not right to follow. Indian medicine has survived through the years, and we have medicine men who can help our people. We have some Indian people who have been trying to learn more about medicine, and want to carry on the ways of our people. If these interested people are dedicated and truly sincere in learning, they will listen and follow the medicine men's instruction completely. They will live a life according to the standards and life style that a medicine man must live in order for him to be a medicine man.

Many of our people still depend on medicine men when they become very ill, because they have the utmost faith that they can be helped. Thus, they will seek the medicine men's help simply because they are hoping he will help. Not only will the person go to him to seek help, but he will take any member of his family who is ill to the medicine man. When a medicine man of today follows the life style as closely as possible, and the medicine man's instruction totally, then the medicine man of today deserves the respect and confidence due to a medicine man. I believe there are some men today capable of becoming medicine men. For this reason I do not feel Indian medicine should be discarded. I do not think we should discourage any of our people who want to become medicine men. I cannot tell these people that is wrong to want to know about our traditional medicine, nor can I tell them they should only take the white men's education. Knowing Indian medicine is within itself a kind of an education.

White man's education and the Indians ways are both good. It depends on what a person does with the knowledge he had from them. The Indian can be a better person when he follows his tradition and values, and at the same time find values of the white world which he can apply to his daily life. Often times this is from the Christian concept.

Sometimes it happens the Indian rejects both sets of values, or any set of values, for that matter; as a result he brings problems to himself. His livelihood is jeopardized by his refusal to adhere to values that can help him cope with daily living, whether it is his Indian values or simply values itself. He doesn't want to obey or listen to his parents. He doesn't know how to support his family, or rather he will not support his family. Even though problems arise, if he holds to the values

that were given him, he can always manage to be strong through whatever happens. By holding to his values, he is well-adjusted and he is mentally healthy.

The Indian laws and traditions are so enriching that our elders endured much. But regardless of age, they are a confident people when they rely on their values. There are two ways that can be used as guidelines. You can see both ways. If you want to be in the white society, nothing can stop you, or if you want to follow the Indian society, or ways, go ahead. No one can stop you.

Then there is the matter of the church. Just because you send your children to church, and they begin acting rebellious or will not listen to you, you cannot say the church influenced such misbehavior. When a parent fails to teach their children the difference between good and bad, or if they have taught them the difference, and the youngsters ignore these teachings, I don't think it is right to blame the church. These are some of the things I believe.

Yet at times it is very difficult to teach these values and beliefs to my children. However, there are some young people who will listen and try to understand and live accordingly. Still, there are some who will not listen, or who will not accept any values.

C: It has been said that one of the great chiefs, Red Jacket, said in the 1800s, when learning the white man's ways, "Pick up the good they have to offer, or the best of their culture. But in learning of their culture you find undesirable ways, leave these traits alone. With these same standards you must choose the valuable teachings of our people, whether it pertains to medicine or lifestyle as opposed to the bad."

Even our leaders and elders shared the same feeling. Evident in our people's beliefs, I think Indian medicine was regarded sacred and religious. Although not everyone became medicine men, it was important to know as much about it from a layman's point of view. One of the wrongs that became a menace for some of the Indians was the abuse of alcohol, and excessive use of it, which often resulted in catastrophic incidents. As I think about the wisdom of our elders, I realize more and more just how smart they really were, and it really inspires me.

O: Some of the things you have said reminded me of an incident which is told among the Seminoles. About fifty years ago or so, a white man came to one of the Seminole reservations--Immokalee. He wanted information on the Seminole culture, or the Indian way of life. Perhaps he was in anthropology or archeology, or some field which related to the Indians. In any event, he wanted to study and learn all he could about them.

It was during this time he bought or rented an old car and

went to Big Cypress. His thinking was Big Cypress was like the other reservations where the people lived closer together and closer to town. But when he arrived there, he realized that he would have much more ground to cover, because it was widespread as well as being very rural and much further away from town than he expected.

As the days passed he collected a lot of information on their customs, their dances, their religion, their lifestyle and the way they build chickees, etc. However, his food supply was getting low, and he needed personal things as time went on. Out there in the wilderness, so to speak, he knew he would not be able to get everything he needed. He thought he should go to town, but the more he thought about it, the more hesitant he became.

Since he was doing research he had brought along with him tape recorders, typewriter, expensive camera equipment, etc., including his personal belongings. Added to that, he had gathered materials, relics and data which he had piled into his car and locked. There was no way for him to take this car into town. He would have to catch a ride with someone else going into town. He feared that if he left his car, even though it was locked, while he was away his things would be stolen. When he returned he didn't want to be faced with this situation, should he decide to go. About two days passed, and he still was pondering the thought of going to town and the possible results of his going to town and leaving his belongings.

As he was standing in the middle of what he thought was nowhere, he saw an Indian approaching who had a rifle on him. At the same time the Indian had seen him. He noticed the perplexed look on the white man's face. It was clear by now that both had observed one another, when the white man called out to the Indian. He said, "Hey, Chief. Come here!" When the Seminole heard him calling out, he looked at him and thought that the white man probably needed some kind of help, so he walked over to where the white man was standing.

The Seminole could understand English, even though his English was limited in speaking. He felt that he would at least be able to communicate and find out what the white man wanted. The white man began the conversation by saying, "Chief, I want to go back to town so I can get some supplies, groceries, and other things. I want to get all the things I need; then I will return. This is what I really would like to do, but I am kind of afraid that when I go to town, my belongings will be stolen."

After expressing his desire to go to town, the Indian stood there rather stoic, and paused before he spoke, thinking about what the white man said. As he was thinking about what was said, he

lifted up his head, began looking around in the four directions, and again looked at the white man. After he had surveyed his surroundings, then said, "The white men are not around within thirty to fifty miles, so if you go shopping, when you come back your things are still going to be here. Nothing will be stolen from you, so just go into town for the things you need. The only people around are the Indians, and they won't bother your things. When you return, your things will not have been stolen." The Seminole said everything he could to reassure the white man.

After the white man felt somewhat convinced, he said, "Okay, I believe that."

The white man left and was gone for several days. The way the white man relates the story, upon his return he found that nothing was bothered. He included this incident in his report.

- C: When I come down here to the reservations, I enjoy hearing and speaking in Creek. When I return to Tallahassee, I speak and hear mostly English.
- O: You should continue speaking Creek even when you are in Tallahassee.
- C: I do within my household. I just meant that outside of my family everyone else speaks English, and that is all I can hear or speak. If I were to speak Creek to the white people, they would not understand anything I say.
- Going back to the time when the Indians upheld their tribal laws, it has been said that the penalty for being a liar resulted in banishment from the tribe, the clan and the family. Of course, it depended on what degree of lying was involved. This punishment also applied to killing someone. The guilty person would be considered an outcast. He would be sent out into the woods, and would have to survive on his own. He would not have contact or any communication with anyone. Have you heard anything about this?
- O: Yes, they had laws to adhere to, but what I have heard is a little different. The Florida Seminoles had a council house and a ceremonial grounds. Whenever there was the annual Green Corn Dance or a ceremonial dance which was to take place, the council house was the place to take the person who had committed a crime, whether it was petty, or a crime involving a killing or hurting someone physically, or stealing, etc. After the crime had been committed, the guilty party was taken to his uncle, or himself went to the uncle. His uncle talked with him and counselled with him. Together, they tried to straighten out the problem. However, if it was a crime which could not be resolved by the

guilty party and his uncle, then it was mandatory for the guilty party to go before the council house. The guilty party did not have to go before his own clan.

The Bird Clan was the clan which held the power in the council house. The Tiger Clan were the ones who were in charge of the ceremonies. These two clans made up the largest membership in the council house. This setup was how it use to be. However, today I am not quite sure what the council house consists of, or what the roles of the clans are, nor do I know how it is run presently. It may or may not be the same setup as it has always been. However, as far as I know the Bird Clan and the Tiger Clan still have an important place in the council house functions.

It seems that these two clans are still active in their positions of talking with the guilty or accused among their other functions. The clans involved still try to straighten out the problems with the guilty party or the accused by counselling and talking with the defendant as the first step in problem resolving.

Again, going back to how it use to be at the ceremonial grounds, the Tiger Clan, the Bird Clan, the Deer Clan, the Wind Clan, and the Snake Clan made camp at the ceremonial grounds, and were always on hand for anything that arose. Whatever clan the defendant was from, whether it was Tiger, Bird, Deer, etc., he knew that the Tiger and the Bird were the clans he would have to stand before.

When the crime had been committed, whether it was the defendant or a witness, it was their duty to look for and inform the uncle of the defendant's crime, unless, of course, the uncle was the witness. Whenever the uncle could not be located for one reason or another, the other clans would be informed, and they would help look for the uncle of the defendant until he was found. Whenever a crime had been committed, the offender was expected to contact his uncle immediately. But at times this was not feasible; then the defendant or witness went to the defendant's clan, or any clan, whichever was on hand. They were told what happened. Even so, the uncle still had to be located and informed of the incident, since he was the one who had the role of talking with him before the defendant must go before the council house.

Take for instance if you and I, or the three of us, were from the same clan, such as the Tiger, Deer, or Bird Clan, and we were witnesses to the act that was committed, or if we happened to be the ones who were approached by the defendant or a witness--since I am the man, I would be the messenger sent to find the uncle of the defendant. After the uncle has had an intimate talk with the defendant, and he has gone over even the most minute detail with him, if it is some act which cannot be resolved

by the talk they had, then the uncle decided if they needed to take the defendant before the council house. If so, the uncle would first go before the council house and explain what happened and what the defendant had told him. Then he would request they listen to the defendant and counsel with him.

The the uncle would ask when would be the best time for him to bring the defendant before them, whether it was to be the same day, the next morning, afternoon, evening, or whenever they would set the time to meet with the defendant. Depending on the crime, the council would tell the uncle where he should take the defendant, until his hearing takes place--to his home or elsewhere. The uncle was responsible for taking the defendant to the place the council designated, and to bring him before the council house at the chosen time.

In the past it was understood that the Bird Clan was the clan who acted as the judge. They never strayed from this setup. The Bird Clan consulted with the Tiger Clan, because they also served a function in the council house order of business. The Bird Clan would say to the Tiger Clan that the uncle has carried out his first duty of informing them of the crime. They tell the Tiger Clan that they have agreed to talk with the defendant. So with both clans of the council house knowing of the agreement to listen to the event, they will listen intently and counsel with the defendant when he comes before them. Although the Bird Clan decided in advance to hear the defendant, the Bird Clan asked the Tiger Clan for their approval of the Bird Clan's decision. The Tiger Clan usually agreed with the decision that the Bird Clan made. Therefore they made the necessary preparations for the hearing of the defendant.

After the preparations have been done and the time has arrived for the defendant to stand before the council house then the uncle brought the defendant to the council house. Then the time set aside for counselling began. First they listened to the defendant talk. Then they counselled with him. They pointed out to him why he should not have done the misdeed. There was no talk of any punishment, nor did any punishment take place at that time. The first time he has been brought before them was set for talking in detail about what happened and the reasons why he committed the crime. The Bird Clan stressed why he shouldn't have committed the crime. In most cases the crime involved the defendant hurting someone's feelings or pride. Just hurting someone's feelings or pride was a crime! They told him reasons he should not have hurt anyone's feelings.

C: (The Rev. Billy Osceola is interrupted by visitors coming into his trading post. He greets them. He says, "Howdy." The visitor asks,

"How are you doing, Bill?" He mentions to me that visitors came in. This was his way of telling me why he was momentarily diverted from what he was saying.)

O: After all the talking and counselling had taken place, the defendant was free to leave. Again I would like to emphasize it was a crime to hurt someone's feelings. Anyway, the defendant left the council house.

However, if he had to be brought to the council by his uncle for the second time because he did the same thing over again or committed another crime, they reminded him of the counselling they had with him the very first time. Then he would be whipped. Again they talked with him before releasing him, and told him not to ever do that act again. They told him what the consequences would be should he decide to try it again. Then they would send him on his way.

If there was a third time, the uncle had to bring the defendant before the council, the defendant's ear was cut off. Once again he was reprimanded and counselled. Once more he was told of the consequence if he continued to commit a crime.

The fourth time he committed this crime was the final time the crime could be committed, because when his uncle brought him before the council, the penalty was to have his head cut off. This is what I have heard. I was born after this law was made void, but my elders have told me since my childhood that this was the way the law was enforced by the council house just prior to my birth.

C: Do you mean that his whole head was cut off?

O: Yes. After his head was cut off he was dead.

C: In the past did the Seminoles bury their dead in graves?

O: No. They did not used to bury their dead in graves. They would make something like a table or bed elevated a few feet from the ground and place the dead person on this structure. Then they covered him.

C: Do you mean to say it looked somewhat like a table?

O: Yes, that is how they made it. Whatever he had with him, they would place these things on this structure with the dead person.

C: Have you heard the story about the Indian and the white man talking with one another about differences in the burial of the Indian way and the white way? One of the things that

the Indians would do was to prepare the favorite foods of the deceased and place it with the dead person. The white man thought this was ridiculous, and laughed when the Indian was telling him about it. He ask the Indian when he expected the dead person to wake up and eat the food. The Indian's reply was whenever the white man gets up and smells his flowers.

- O: I did not hear that story until Stanley Smith told it. He told how the Indians placed the favorite foods of the deceased with him, while the white man placed the sweetest smelling flowers or roses on top of the deceased's grave. Out of curiosity the white man asked the Indian when he thought the dead Indian would get up and eat the food that was left for him. The Indian said that when the white man buried their dead, they placed the beautiful flowers on top of their graves. So whenever the dead white person gets up to smell his flowers, the Indian will get up and eat his food.
- C: (Then Osceola told of a humorous incident. He did not say if this was true or not:
 One time an Indian went into a bank. He saw a man with a handkerchief across his face go up to the teller and ask for all the money. The Indian told the robber that seemed to be a good way of getting a lot of money. He then asked the white man that since he--the Indian-- had a checkbook, could he write a check and get all the money out of the bank just as well? Rev. Osceola thought this was pretty funny.)
 Did the Seminoles have cemeteries?
- O: No, they did not have cemeteries. Wherever the person was going, whether in the north or south direction, his body was laid to rest facing west at the place his life expired.
- C: The reason for facing west was symbolic, wasn't it?
- O: To the Seminole, when the sun began to fade in the west, they felt as though the sun was slumbering. Therefore the belief was like the sun--when death comes, we too went into deep slumber, so when the Seminole died they were placed facing west.
- C: Did the Seminoles lay their dead facing east?
- O: No, they laid their dead facing west.
- C: Why did they face west?
- O: I am not familiar with the old story which might have given

the reason, but the most recent reason which I have heard is because when we die, our spirits go toward the west. After they have lain the body facing west, fire is lit. After four days the people return and again light a fire. Then four shots are fired with a rifle. After the shots are fired, they say the spirit leaves the body, rises, and goes to the happy hunting ground.

C: Is the happy hunting ground and what the white man calls heaven the same place?

O: It is about the same. However, when the Indian is talking about the happy hunting ground, this is an English literal translation which in fact meant a great place for good hunting.

There are some blind women living on the reservation. They are very happy, and their attitude to life is a good example of their feeling toward their condition. They feel that their blindness is only temporary. They believe the very instant their spirit leaves their bodies, they will no longer be blind, and they will experience the sights of a real and lasting beauty.

The ladies talk about the need for the Seminoles to go through a ceremony which includes having the arms burned in designated places. When this is done it ensures the person for his journey into the happy hunting ground. They warned that if a Seminole does not have these markings, they will not be able to go there. These burns will light the way when it is time for the Seminole who is going to the happy hunting ground. On his way he will have to cross a bridge which is as narrow as the sole of one's foot and it is dark. The light will come from the burns on the arms so the person can see where to step, and the way will be made easy for him. However, if the Seminole did not receive these burns on the arms, when this person attempts to cross the bridge he will not have any light to help him. Below is nothing but boiling water. He will not fall in it, but he will be given this boiling water to drink for always. He will spend eternity looking for death. During his lifetime, if he had committed crimes such as lying or stealing, etc., he will have to suffer eternally for his misdeeds. The elderly women told me that they did not want me to go through this torture, so that is why they wanted me to take part in the burning ceremony. As far as I know all the Seminoles still go through this ceremony.

C: (Osceola looked at one of the young women who was sitting and listening to him talk. He asked her if she went through this ceremony. She said, "Yes," and showed him her scars she received from the burning ceremony. Christians and non-Christians as well, to my knowledge, have gone through this ceremony.)

Do you gather sassafras to make sassafras tea?

O: Yes.

C: What about sumac berry juice? A long time ago the Seminoles used to drink this kind of berry juice, especially in the north. If I showed you what kind of berry I am talking about, you would recognize it immediately.

O: I probably would. I am not quite sure if this is the same kind of berry that the elderly ladies would pick, and put it in water, and boil it to make a drink. Sometimes the women would mix it with food.

C: Before I forget, this is something I want to talk with you about. During wartime, when our warriors were on the run, did they have pouches which they carried with them which contained dried foods such as deer meat, beef, etc.? (Pouches made from cowhides. Osceola agreed with me that the Seminoles did have such things as food pouches.)

C: (I wasn't quite sure how the Seminole said "berries" in Seminole, so I asked Osceola. He told me "berries" is bathgo. I learned that there were various ways to say it. I mentioned that in the past, the Seminoles used to dry berries and cabbage.)

They also had containers for drinks such as water and sofkee when they were fleeing. During wartime these containers filled with some beverage were hidden in certain places for the warriors. When they needed the drink they knew where to find them. Have you heard about this before?

O: I don't recall hearing about how they kept their drinks. I have heard and saw people carry pouches which contained dried foods, such as dried beef and dried deer. Just as you were saying. They did then. Since they did not have any refrigeration or cooling devices, they dried their food, and whenever they were hungry they would get food from their pouches. These dried meats were ground with a corn grinder. If this ground dried meat is mixed with grease and heated it makes a tasty meal. I have eaten it. Even now we often eat it.

C: I really think the Seminoles were highly intelligent. When they were forced to engage in war and to defend their homeland, they had to have some means of feeding themselves. This is why some of the warriors went ahead of the others--so they could hide the food and drinks where they would be readily accessible. So whether

they were on the run, or just even going hunting, they buried and hid the food they needed. I am really happy to know that our people were so intelligent and used this method of having food available. How did they prevent getting mosquito bites?

O: I am not sure.

C: Did they use some kind of grease to put on their bodies?

O: Yes, I heard that they used some kind of grease to put on their bodies to prevent insect bites.

LEGEND OF THE TURTLE AND THE BLOOD CLOT

The turtle had been on a hunt with the other hunters. After they had made a killing, each of the hunters took all of the deer meat. The only thing left of the deer was a blood clot. The turtle began thinking that he spent all that time on the hunt, and when he returns home his wife and children will be expecting some food and some meat from the game the hunters had killed. He thought about how disappointed everyone would be if he didn't bring home anything. So he took the blood clot of the deer, and wrapped it with yards and yards of Spanish moss, and made it look like a big bundle of meat.

When he returned home, his wife marvelled at how he expected his family would be able to eat so much meat. He didn't say anything as she began unwrapping the meat. She unwrapped, unwrapped, and unwrapped, until she came to a little blood clot. Was she ever angry! She picked up the blood clot and threw it at him, hitting him in the eyes. That is why he has red eyes to this day.

Exactly how she broke his shell, I am not quite sure, but in her anger she had broken his shell on his back. As he was lying there and unable to get up, a opossum happened to pass by. The opossum asked if he had been hurt. The turtle told him what had happened to him, and said that his family left him there in that condition, and went away without him. He told that opossum that he did not think it was right for her to beat him and leave him there.

He asked the opossum if he would be able to help him, or if not, could he get a medicine man to help him? It just so happened that the opossum knew the medicine chants and knew what herbs to use. He gathered the herbs, and sung the chant which

would heal the turtle. The opossum told the turtle what the words to the chant were, and that the turtle would have to sing the chant. He told the turtle that he must sing the chant repeatedly until his back comes together again. So the turtle followed the instructions, and his shell was healed. So even today, whenever you notice a turtle's back, you can see where seemingly it had been broken in several different places.

The story you have told me is a slightly different version. The one that I have told you is the one I used to hear. So this story I heard was about the turtle who brought home with him a blood clot.

- C: A little earlier there was a word you said that I would like to know what you meant by that.
- O: Ah go la lee jeet means "to go around."
- C: Is that all--just going around?
- O: (Referring to an earlier story, he tries to explain what he meant and how he used it in the previous story: "They rounded up the turkeys and chased them back into one area. They told them to chant which included saying, 'Get the biggest and fattest turkey.' So the panther looked over the flock of turkeys and chose the one he thought would be the best, so he sprang upon it and got it.")
- C: I asked him how to say "southwest" in Seminole, since the Creek-speaking people in Oklahoma says the direction a little differently. He told me. Then I asked him how to say the four directions.