

TALES BY THE FIRE

*A Collection of Hunting and Fishing Stories, Tall Tales, Mountain Lore, and Legends
from the Cherokee and Other Various American Indian Tribes*



**RECORDED BY NUTIKET SACHGAGUNUMMEN Klamachpin, MATTHEW
WATSON, "GUARD WHO LEADS QUIETLY"**

AS TOLD BY TEWEKAGA, E.W. "DOC" RABON, "MAKER"

PREFACE

In commemoration of the 90th anniversary of Camp Old Indian, this book is dedicated to Dr. E.W. "Doc" Rabon. A monumental leader who has given a lifetime of leadership and guidance to those who sought to learn more about the American Indian culture in the Blue Ridge Council and beyond.

As I reflect on my time in Scouting, some of my fondest memories are on campouts with my troop sitting around a campfire. Whether it was watching the other Scouts perform a skit or hearing war-stories and legends from the Scouters or "Fossils" as we call them in Troop 159, it was the best entertainment you could find anywhere. For as long as Scouting has been around, stories shared around a campfire have always energized the movement. This year, Camp Old Indian celebrates its 90th anniversary and we can be proud of the legacy Camp Old Indian has left in the lives of countless Scouts and Scouters. This book has been compiled in commemoration of the anniversary to highlight some of the best stories shared around fires at Camp Old Indian.



Whenever a storyteller tells a story he heard any other storyteller tell, he usually gives credit to that individual. Doc Rabon would like to acknowledge all of the great Southern storytellers that he has known and studied with:

Richard Chase
Goingback Chiltoskey
Mary Ulmer Chiltoskey
Ray Hicks
Doc McConnell
Jackie Torrence

We have a great future ahead for Camp Old Indian and it is now our responsibility to carry on these stories to the next generation of Scouts who sit around the fire.

With excitement for the trail ahead,

Matthew Watson

Matthew Watson
2016-2017 SR-5 Section Chief
Wood Badge S5-551-15

THE LEGEND OF OLD INDIAN

Provided to COI Staff Member John Thompson in about 1961 or 1962 by an adult leader named Billy Williams who died a few years after providing the Legend. The early History of the Atta Kulla Kulla Lodge, typed in 1946 was also presented at the same time. We can only assume the Legend of Old Indian was written by a COI staff member – probably in about the 1950's.

1 From the valleys of these mountains
With their tribes of peaceful Indians
Come I, the Spirit of their Chieftain
 With the Story of our Tribe.
In this valley set between the hills
 We lived in peace and plenty.
 Buried was the bloody hatchet
 Buried was the dreadful war club,

2 Buried were all warlike weapons,
 And the war cry was forgotten.
There was peace among the Nations.
 Unmolested roved my hunters,
 Caught the fish in the lake and river
 Shot the deer and trapped the beaver.
 All around the happy village
 Stood the corn fields, green and shining.

3 Then one day the peace was ended.
For from yonder valley, across the hill
 As a signal to all nations
 Smoke rose slowly, slowly
Through the tranquil air of morning
 Called the tribes of men together
 Called the warriors into council
 For the peace that we enjoyed
 Was disturbed by envious tribes.

4 Forth into the valley
 In the early morning
 Forth onto the field of battle
With their weapons and their war gear
 Painted like the leaves in autumn
 Came our enemies from afar.
 All that day the battle raged,
 And the tide of battle changed,
From favor with my people to the tribe that came to kill.
 My warriors fought with arrows,



5 And with mighty war clubs,
But slowly in the heat of noon time
We retreated through this valley.
Then as night drew nigh
And many of my warriors were slain
We stopped on yon mountain to take stock of the day's fight.
There were but three of us remaining,
There were two young warriors and the old Chief.
These young warriors were the bravest.

6 And the fastest of our tribe,
But I was old and slow.
So I sent them on before me
To the place where our women,
Our children and treasure were hidden
To protect and shield those that remained
From the onslaught of the conqueror.
This place was yet afar
And its secret was hidden to all but few.

7 So alone I stood on yon mountain
On the rock above this camp
Alone, but not yet beaten
Alone, as the sun began to set.
Saw the warriors of my enemies
Up the hill behind the trees
Advance to where I stood and waited
Saw that the cliff prevented further passage
Knew that I was soon to die.

8 There at sunset stood I wounded, weary, but unbeaten
With my mighty tribe broken
With my people torn and scattered
And with three arrows only,
Then their Chief called unto me
Called so loud that all could hear,
"You the leader of these people,
You the great warrior of many battles,
You Old Indian, I will make

9 Great among my nation
I will give you power and wealth
I will give you honor next only to mine
If you will but tell us where your women and your treasures are hidden."
To my bow I whispered, "Fail Not!"
To my arrow I whispered, "Swerve Not!"



And for an answer to his offer
My arrow leaped to kill a brave!
Ah! The singing of the fatal arrow.

10 Like a wasp, buzzed and stung him.

Dead he lay in the forest.

Again their Chief called unto me,

This time with angry words, "Old Indian, you will surely die
If you do not tell me where you have your treasure hidden."

Again I answered with an arrow

Deep into the heart of a brave.

11 And with the last remaining arrow

Plunged it deep into my heart.

Wounded by my last arrow,

Staining the rocks with crimson

With the crimson of my life-blood

I staggered back and fell over the rock into this valley.

12 With me died the secrets of my tribe,

My treasures and women were never discovered.

So to you here tonight

I leave with a message:

A request to keep this Great Valley Full of Spirit of Peace and Fellowship of boyhood that my
warriors knew before you!



AN INTRODUCTION TO MOUNTAIN TALES

Many of the oldest stories were brought over from Europe. Most of the mountains surrounding the South were settled by Scotch-Irish people. They came down across the great “wagon-road” by the Appalachian Trail. Most were Presbyterian and settled down in the mountains. The Native Americans were here also and today, we have many of their myths and legends. If you lived in Williamsburg, you had to be English and a member of the English Anglican Church. There were sheltered areas everywhere restricted to certain types of people. Many Irish went down to Charleston, SC. Catholics and French Hugonants often settled in Charleston. Soon after they got settled, the slave market arrived. All of these different cultures brought their stories and the South Carolina cultural history quickly became rich. Richard Chase went into the Appalachian Mountains in the 1940's and collected stories from the people settled in the mountains. He used to come to Camp Old Indian to speak at camp fires. Back in the 30's and 40's, there was no electricity in the mountains. No telephones, no radios. The mountain people used to have parties in the communities and they would share their old stories.

Poinsett Bridge

Joel Poinsett once brought a red flower back from Mexico. For a while, he was the highway commissioner. He wanted to build a road that stretched from Greenville to the mountains. Today, you know it as Poinsett Highway. Now, old Chief Attakullakulla was up in the mountains. He had three sons: “Running Deer”, “Standing Bear”, and “Falling Rocks”. Old AKK was getting really, really old. The Chief said if Poinsett ever wanted to buy land, they shouldn't sell unless they all agree as brothers. Well, not long after, old AKK died. Each son split up into their own villages. The first village Poinsett came to was Running Deer's village. There was a big powwow going on and Poinsett explained the new road to Running Deer. Poinsett said there would be better trade on wagons instead of pack mules. Running Deer replied, “Well, that sounds like a good idea. Can't agree though until my brothers agree. They're up in the mountains further.”

So Poinsett traveled further to see Standing Bear. There was a big powwow going on and Poinsett explained the new road to Standing Bear. Poinsett said there would be better trade on wagons instead of pack mules. Standing Bear agreed but said, “My brothers have to agree. Go up in the mountains even higher.”

Poinsett finally went up to see Falling Rocks but as he looked for him, he couldn't find that third village. Well, he went ahead and built the road anyway. To this day, the highway department is still looking for that third brother. Now there's signs along that highway that read, “Look out for falling rocks.”



Soldier Jack

Some of the best mountain stories Doc ever heard were from Ray Hicks who lived in the NC Mountains. Here is one of them:

Jack had grown up on a farm with his two brothers. Eventually, he decided to leave, join the army, and seek his fortune. Well, he spent several years there and eventually got out of the army. He was given two loaves of bread to get him home. On the road back, he met an old beggar.

"Howdy, Jack." For some reason, everyone knew Jack.

"Jack, I've been on this road a long time and I'm sure hungry.
Can I have a bite of bread?"

Jack said, "Go ahead – take a whole loaf. It's just getting mashed up under my arm."



The beggar replied, "Thank you! You sure are nice to me. Let me do something for you. Let me give you this magic sack. Anything you point this sac at and say 'wakety wac – into my sac', it will jump into the sac."

Astonished, Jack said, "Well, thank you old man."

Soon, Jack walked over to another beggar.

"Howdy Jack", he said. See...everyone knew Jack. "I ain't doing too well. Can I have a bite of that loaf of bread?"

Jack said, "Take the whole loaf. Take it."

The beggar said, "Thank you, Jack. I'm going to give you this clear, crystal glass. It's a magic glass. If you fill it with fresh spring water and peer through it, you can see the death angel if it's anywhere around." Soon after that, Jack went to an inn.

Jack said, "Just came out of the army."

The inn-keeper asked, "You got any money?"

"No, just had two loaves of bread and I gave them away."

"Sorry, can't help you."

With that, Jack stayed in the woods. He was used to it with his experience in the army. Well, it got real quiet and he heard a strange noise in the tree. Gobble gobble gobble. 7 fat wild turkeys!

You know 7 is the magic number? Jack pulled the sac out and pointed it up the tree to the turkeys. He said, "wackety wac, into my sack." All seven whooshed inside. Jack then travels back to the inn.

The lady said, "Jack, whad'ya want?!"

“Will you trade these seven fat turkeys for a warm bed and a good meal?”

Those turkeys fed the whole boarding house and Jack slept in a nice feather bed that night. Well, next morning, he bid the lady farewell. Jack was walking down the road and came upon a huge old mansion that appeared deserted. The grass was growing up with windows broken all over.

Jack saw a boy and said, “Hey boy, who’s living in this house?”

“Nobody, it’s hainted (haunted).”

“Who owns it?”

“This man down the road.”

Jack asked to the man, “What’s wrong with this house?”

The man replied, “Can’t even get anyone to live there. Tell you what...if you stay the night, I’ll let you have the house. But you might not make it till morning.”

Jack said, “I’m not afraid of haints.”

About sunset, he went into the house and started a big fire in the fireplace. Lit up his pipe and ate the sandwiches. Then, he heard “boom boom boom” from the second floor. Jack looked around at the stairs. There were 7 green haints coming down the stairs. Each one had a sac on its back.

“What’ya got in those sacks?”

“Gold!”

“How would you like to play cards?”

Haints said, “Yeah if you teach us how.”

They put their sacs of gold down. They had never played poker before, but see, Jack learned to play cards in the army. Jack won the first hand and a sack of gold. Then the haints won a hand and the gold back. Back and forth. All night long. Before the rooster crowed, the haints planned to get Jack. Just before that, Jack picked up the sack, said “wakety wack, into my sack”, and pulled them in – all 7. Well, the man comes up expecting to see Jack’s cold dead body.

Jack says, “Told ya I wasn’t afraid of no haints.”

“Take this sack down to the river and drown the haints. Then bring back the sack once they’re drown-ded. All 7. Well, you’ve got the house.”

Jack became a rich man with a big house, land and 7 sacks of gold. Soon after, he hired some hands for the farm. Then, he starts to court the King’s daughter. One day, the daughter gets sick. No doctors could cure her. She took to her bed. Jack went up to see her one day. She was lyin’ in her death bed.

“Go bring me some spring water”, Jack said.

Jack reached into his coat pocket, grabbed the glass, filled it with that clear spring water, and panned the room with it. He looked throughout the room with that water and standing at the foot of the bed was the death angel. He pulled out the sac and said “wakety wack, into my sac”. Jack tied the death angel up and climbed up in a tall oak tree and tied it up in the limbs. Later, the daughter got well and they got married and had a ton of kids. Jack must have lived 120 years.

One day, he met an old woman. Warts, scraggly hair, cane, no teeth.

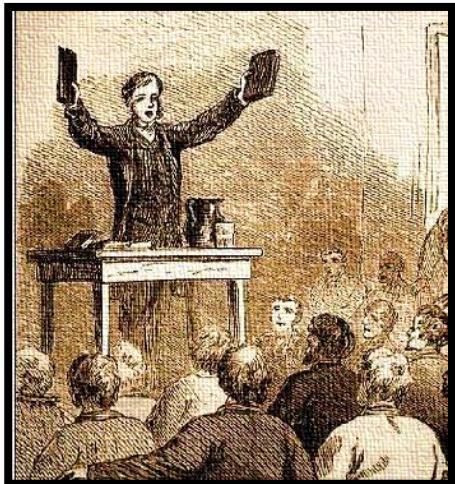
“Howdy, mama! What’s wrong?”

The woman said, “Howdy Jack!” See, everyone knew Jack. “I can’t die.”

The lady must have been 150 years old.

She said, “Well somebody hijacked the death angel – ain’t nobody died in years.”

He remembered where he tied the death angel up in that tree. He went back and got one of his younger boys to climb that tree and open up the sac. The death angel flew out and Jack was the first one to die.



Scots-Irish Tale – “Old Dry Frye”

He was a preacher back in the day. Went from one community to another. Many different denominations and often in the same building. They all gathered around – Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, you name it. Old Dry Frye was long winded. His sermons were dry. He loved fried chicken. Someone always had to take him home and feed him. He really loved fried chicken. He went home one summer and he had already had two pieces.

Threw another piece in and started choking. No Heimlich maneuver back then. Old Dry Frye choked to death right there at the table. Death by chicken wing.

The host said, “I killed old Dry Frye with a chicken wing. I’ll be hung for murder for sure. I’m going to have to do something about the body.”

Soon after, his body was getting stiff. The host took him to a nearby farmhouse and leaned him against the front door. That farmer and wife came down for breakfast and were curious about the plowing weather. She slammed the door open and Dry Frye’s body fell on her feet.

“OH MY GOODNESS, that’s old Dry Frye! I killed him with the door. I’ll be hung for murder for sure! I need to do something with the body. Well tonight, I’ll drag his body to the river for the baptism tomorrow. When they all get there, they’ll all think he had a heart attack.”

There’s a big ol’ rock on the side of the bank and she props the body against it like he’s sitting there thinking. She left him there. In the morning, a little boy shows up.

“Morning, Mr. Dry Frye!”

Nothing.

“Morning, Mr. Dry Frye!” Again nothing.

“Mr. Dry Frye, if you don’t say anything, I’ll hit you with my chunking rock.”

The boy hits Dry Frye in the head with his rock. Dry Frye’s body falls into the river. Dry Frye doesn’t come up. The poor boy thought he was just sleeping, so he jumps in the river and pulls him out.

“OH MY GOODNESS! I KILLED OLD DRY FRYE WITH MY CHUNKING ROCK! I’LL BE HUNG FOR MURDER FOR SURE! I’ve got to do something with the body.”

The boy starts dragging the body down the road. Still about sunrise. Two old rogues had been out robbing that night. They had two big ol’ sacks of ham. They see someone comin’ down the road dragging something, drop their sacs in the middle of the road, and hide out in the woods. Here comes up this little boy dragging the body and sees the two sacks. Sees a couple of big hams in each sack.

“My momma sure would love these.” The boy stuffs Old Dry Frye’s body in one sack and carries the ham back home. Soon after, the rogues come out of the woods and pick the two sacks back up. They go on into the ham house and later go to sleep. Not long after, the wife gets up to cut ham. She takes a big ol’ butcher knife and screams when she slices the sack. Old Dry Frye’s body drops out and terrified, she wakes up the two rogues.

“What to do? What to do? I killed old Dry Frye with my butcher knife. I’ll be hung for murder for sure! I’ve got to do something about the body.”

They take Dry Frye’s body and tie it to the horse. Then, they slap the horse on the rump and fire their guns.

They scream, “Stop horse thief! Stop horse thief!”

Sometimes nowadays late at night, you might hear a horse coming down the road and somebody yelling “stop horse thief”, but you know it’s just old Dry Frye’s body.

Wicked John and the Devil

Back in them days, the black smith was a very important part of the community. Horse shoes, wagon wheels, anything. All kinds of things. One was very mean and lived in the mountains – he was known as Wicked John. John had a shop across from his house. He was the only one around.

One day, a stranger came up. “Could you give me something to eat?”

“Sure!”

John was feeling in a good mood that day. John got a plate of food and some sweet milk.

“Since you did something good for me, I’m going to tell ya who I really am.”

He turned around 3 times and turned into St. Peter.

St. Peter said, “You may have three wishes.”

John said, "I don't need anything! I'm in good shape. I make good money."

"Oh don't you want something? A bag of gold? A big house?"

Well, John thought a few minutes. "You see this hammer. Sometimes when I go home, boys from town play with the hammer and leave it laying in the grass. I wish if anyone touches the hammer, they can't let go unless I say so."

"Second wish?"

"Well, see that rocking chair on my front porch? When I'm working and the boys sit on my porch and tear up my chair, I wish they couldn't get out until I said so."

"Third wish?"

"Well, let me think. Right outside, I've got a nice fire thorn-bush. These people always pull branches off to hit their horses. I wish if anyone touched the bush, it would hold them and stick them until I said let go."

With that, St. Peter turned around three times and he was gone. One morning after breakfast, he had an argument with his wife. She said, "John, sometimes, I wish the devil would just come and get you."

Someone soon came and knocked at the blacksmith shop. John saw a little devil outside with tiny horns and a pointy tail.

John says, "What d'you want?"

"Time to go, John."

"I ain't ready to go, right yet. I've got a lot of work to do still. Come on in here and let me finish. Why don't you help out? Fetch that hammer over yonder."

Well, that little devil picked up the hammer and he hammers and hammers and hammers. Eventually, he tries to drop the hammer but he can't let go! "John! Do something!"

"I'll let you go if you leave me alone."

The little devil says, "I can only leave you alone for 10 years."

The little devil is gone. Well, John worked for ten years. One day, he hears a knock. And it's a teenage devil.

"What you want?"

"Daddy sent me to get you, John."

"Well, I've got a lot of work."

He says, "I ain't gonna pick up no hammer."

"Why don't you sit over on the rocking chair then and wait."

He sits and rocks all day long. Eventually, he tries to get up to leave but he can't! "John, let me outta this chair!"

"Ten more years, OK?"

The devil jumps up and he's gone. One day he hears a knock. There's the old scratch himself with big horns and a long tail breathing fire and smoke.

"John, c'mon with me. Tired of what you did with my boys."

The devil drags John out of the shop, but John pushes the Devil into the fire thorn bush and the bush sticks him and grabs him. The devil YELLS! "OUCH, OUCH, OH! Let me go!"

"Not unless you leave me alone. Not for ten years. FOREVER."

Defeated, the devil says, "OK, I'll leave you alone."

BAM! John never saw him again. He lived 100 years and died. He went up to meet St. Peter at the pearly gates of heaven. "Hey St. Peter. Can I come in?"

"Let me check my book." Well, St. Peter doesn't find John's name in his book. "Sorry, not in here."

"Where am I going?"

"Take them steps down over there!"

Wicked John goes to the bottom and sees fiery gates. He sees two little devils swinging on the gates. So what'd they do, you ask? They slammed that gate shut and got their daddy. The Devil came out and said, "What'd you want John!"

"Well, St. Peter wouldn't let me in."

"Now we made an agreement John. I'm leaving you alone. You're not comin' in here."

"Well what am I goin' to do?"

The devil went to the big fire and picked up a big ol' coal glowing red hot. "Here John. You go start a Hell of your own."

Sometimes on the mountainside at night, you'll see a glow. Some call it a Jack-O-Latern but that orange glow is just John trying to start a Hell of his own somewhere.



The Secret to Telling Tall Tales

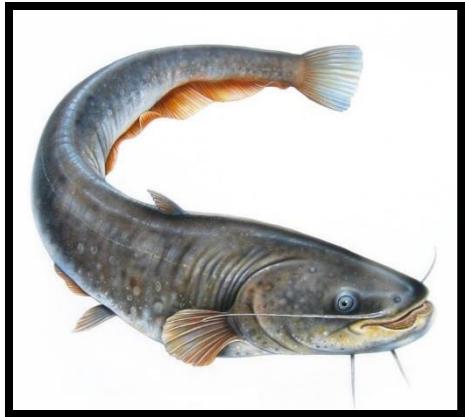
“You have to reel your audience in and then hit them with a ‘blast’. Then, they realize they’ve been taken. They should not know they’re being told a tall tale until the blast (just like ghost stories).” – Doc Rabon

The Bear Hunt

In college, my friends and I used to go bear hunting in the back country. We packed up all of the guns and got there to the cabin before dark. It was a small cabin with one door. I told my friends I was going to look around for a bit while they unpacked. I walked up the side of the mountain a good little-ways. I could still see the cabin. I heard a branch snap all of the sudden. There was a bear looking at me. I didn’t even have my gun. I took one easy step back. That bear took one step. I took two steps. He took two steps, just grinning. I knew I couldn’t keep this up. Well maybe, I can outrun him. I took off as fast as I could. I looked over my shoulder and he was after me. I tripped on a stump and fell right in front of the cabin door. The bear tripped over me and rolled through the cabin door where my friends were. I jumped up, slammed the door shut, and yelled, “Y’all skin that one and I’ll go get another one!”



Homer



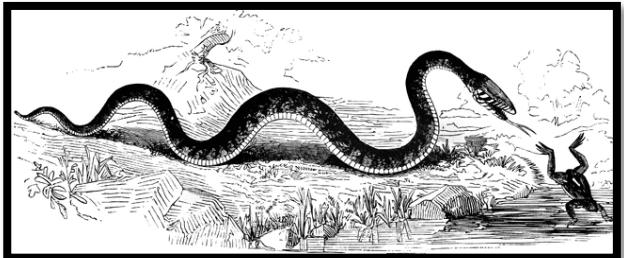
I went catfishing in the summer. Caught me a mess. Threw them in the bucket. It was time for supper and I emptied the bucket in the rain barrel. Later after supper, all of them were dead except one. I took the others out and fixed them. Well, the next morning, I came out and that one was STILL swimmin’ in the rain barrel. I took him out and played with him. Then, I put it back in. I would keep him out longer each day. After a while, I could keep him out all day. He followed me everywhere I went – just like a puppy dog. Even to the store! I named him Homer. He slept at the foot of my bed every night.

Anyway, that fall, I went to school and I told Homer he had to stay at home. He didn’t like that. Homer started following me. I turned around and yelled at him and threw rocks. When I got to the schoolhouse, Homer was nowhere to be found. I turned around back to the bridge I had crossed at the creek. A plank was missing. Homer had fallen down in the creek and there he was, drown-ded.

The Snake and the Frog

I was going fishing one day down to the creek. I stopped by this swampy area to dig up some worms.

Very swampy area. I heard something rattling behind me. This big ol' black snake had caught him a frog. He was trying to swallow and the frog was putting up a big fight. That frog would make great bait, I thought. I turned around and grabbed that big ol' frog by the legs and the snake by the other hand. I tried to pull that frog out of the snake's mouth. That snake wouldn't let go. My granddaddy had given me a bottle of white lightning which he said was good snake bite medicine. Always carry this in case you get snake bit, he said. I pulled it out. Pulled the cork with my teeth. Still holding on, I poured the medicine down the snake's throat. That frog popped right out. I threw the snake right into the swamp. Went on down the creek and put the frog on the hook. I sat there a while, everything REAL quiet. Felt something nudge. I turned around to see what it was. It's that same old black snake with another frog in its mouth!



Mountain Mike



So I'm coming up the backway to Camp Old Indian and went around a hairpin curve. This old mountain man hops in front of me.

He says, "How 'bout a little ride up the road, buddy?"

I couldn't refuse. Overalls, mud all over his shoes, long beard, floppy hat - he was a sight. Smelled terrible.

"What is your name?"

"They call me Mountain Mike."

We went up the road and didn't go too far when he pulled out this mason jar full of clear liquid.

He takes the top off and pushes it over to me saying, "Here, take a drink!"

Boy, it smelled terrible!

"I think I know what it is and I don't drink. Besides, I'm driving."

He then pulled a 45 hand gun stuck in right to my ribs. He insisted. I pulled the car to the side and took a sip. PEWWW...I went blind, steam came outta my ears, couldn't do or feel anything!

Finally, I got my voice back.

I told Mountain Mike, "I can't see how you people can drink that stuff."

Then he said, "We can't hardly. Here, hold the gun on me and make me take the drink!"

Brer Opossum and Brer Snake

Brer Opossum was a nosy little thing and snuck his nose into everything. Early one morning, he was snooping around looking for something to eat in the woods. He comes up to this big hole in the ground. And down in the bottom of the hole, he sees old Brer Snake with a brick on his back.

“Oh, that’s just trouble. Let me get out of here!”

So he turns around to get away from that hole. He hears something calling him real soft. And it sounds like, “BRER OPOSSUM... BRER OPOSSUM... BRER OPOSSUM.”

Brer Opossum turns back around and looks over the hole and says, “Brer Snake, is that you calling me?”

Brer Snake says, “Brer Opossum, I’ve been here all night long with this brick on my back. Would you get a stick and push this brick off of my back?”

Brer Opossum says, “I don’t know about that, Brer Snake. You’s mean, You’s green, and you might bite me.”

Brer Snake says, “Maybe not. Maybe not. M-a-yyyybbeeee nottt...”

Brer Opossum goes out and gets a long stick. Puts it down the hole and pushes the brick off Brer Snake’s back.

He drops the stick and starts running away.

He doesn’t get too far before he hears someone calling him again. “BRER OPOSSUM... BRER OPOSSUM... BRER OPOSSUM.”

He turns around, goes back to the hole, and looks at Brer Snake.

“Brer Snake, is that you calling me again?”

“Brer Opossum, I’ve been down in this hole all night long and I can’t get out. Will you take that stick and lift me out of this hole?”

Brer Opossum says, “Ummm I don’t know about that Brer Snake. You’s mean, You’s green, and you might bite me.”

Brer Snake says, “Maybe not. Maybe not. M-a-yyyybbeeee nottt...”

So Brer Opossum picks up this stick and lifts Brer Snake out of the hole, drops the stick, and takes off running.

He doesn’t get too far and he hears someone calling him again. “BRER OPOSSUM... BRER OPOSSUM... BRER OPOSSUM.”

“Brer Snake, is that you calling me again?”

“I’ve been down in that hole all night long and I’m cold. Will you put me in your pocket so I can warm up?”

At this point, explain that opossums have pouches just like kangaroos.

Brer Opossum says, “I don’t know about that Brer Snake. You’s mean, You’s green, and you might bite me.”

Brer Snake says, “Maybe not. Maybe not. M-a-yyyybbeeee nott...”

Brer Opossum rolls him up into a roll and puts him into his pocket.

Brer Opossum goes on about his business looking for something to eat. The sun comes up and
Brer Snake is feeling mighty good.

Old Brer Snake comes rising up out of the pocket and looks him right in the eye.

“I’m gonna bite you.”

Brer Opossum says, “Brer Snake, what you gonna do that for? Didn’t I get that brick off of your back? Didn’t I get you out of the hole? Didn’t I warm you up? What you want to bite me for?”

Brer Snake says, “You know’d I was a snake when you put me in your pocket.”

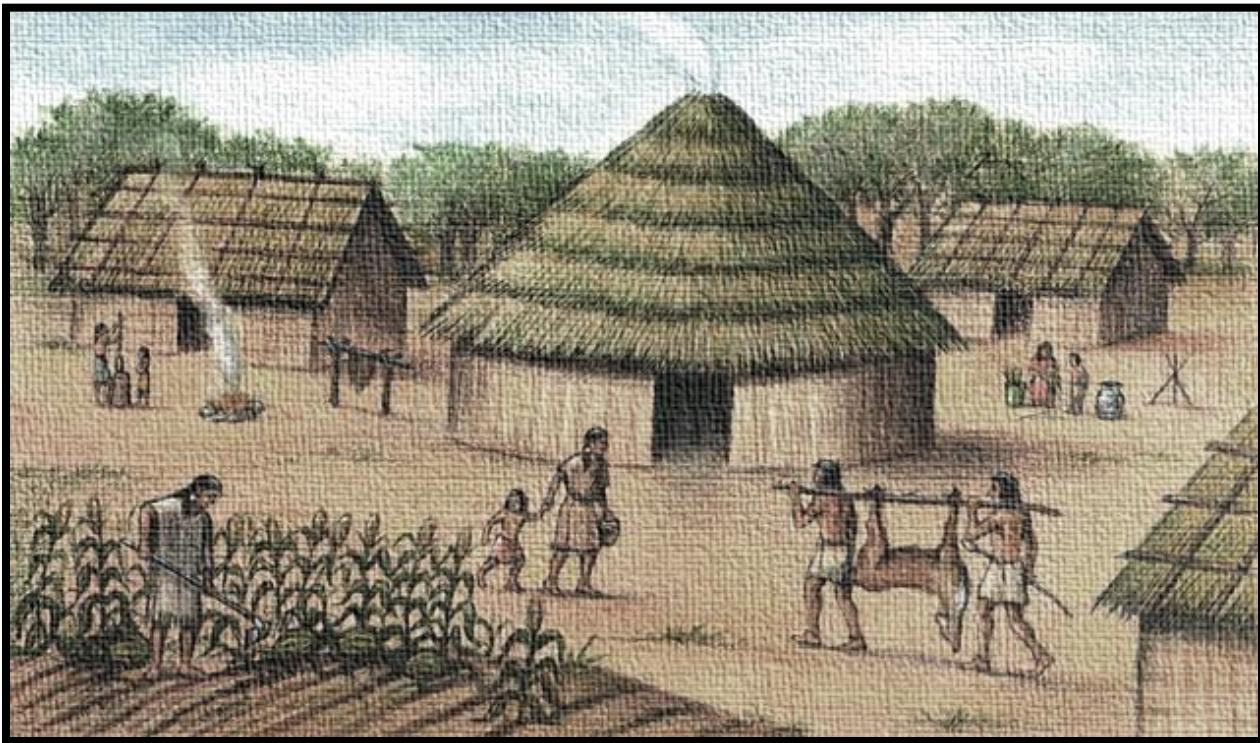
The moral to this story is “Don’t trouble trouble, till trouble troubles you.”



AN INTRODUCTION TO CHEROKEE LORE

The Cherokee who didn't move into Oklahoma hid in the mountains. In the late 1880's, James Mooney went up to the Cherokee people in North Carolina and recorded the stories of their culture. Another individual who helped pass on the oral tradition of the Cherokee was Mary Ulmer Chiltoskey. She was married to a full-blood Cherokee man, Going Back Chiltoskey. They lived along the river and Doc Rabon would take his Scouts to their house where they would share Cherokee lessons and stories with them until the boys all fell asleep. Today, all the old storytellers are gone.

Before you listen to a Cherokee story, you must understand the life of the Cherokee. Cherokees made their homes out of logs, mud, and woven reeds. In the winter, they had special homes. The earth was dug out two or three feet down, covered with a roof and a fire in the middle to provide heat. In this structure, you couldn't stand up straight – had to be stooped. Cherokees would tell stories in the winter home. They believed rattle snakes carried lightning on their back and if they heard you tell stories, they would create storms. When they were hibernating, they couldn't hear you tell the stories so many stories were told in the winter.



The Chunky Game

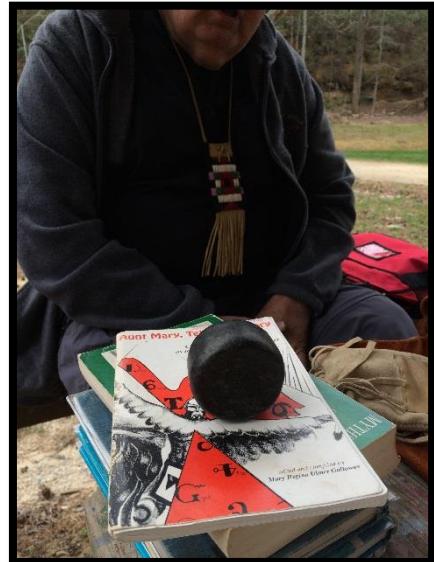
"Chunky" was a game American Indian boys played all over the Southeast. The stones were made in many different sizes. In the museum at Cherokee, there are several chunky stones there. The stones are concave on both sides. Boys would roll the stone and whoever hit it with a stick or got closest got the points. Overall, it was a very popular game. Often, the Council House was built in a flat area and was the favorite location for chunky games.

One day, the mothers got upset because the boys weren't coming in. When the boys got tired of playing chunky, they got a ladle of stew. The moms put rocks in the stew to teach them a lesson.

The rocks in the stew hurt their teeth.

They complained, "Our mom's don't love us - we'll just go back and play more chunky."

They kept on playing into the night. One mama looked out the door and the boys were floating up in the air. They were all out of reach except for the little one and she jerked him. She jerked him so fast and hard, he hit the ground and it buried him. All the others went up in the sky. The mother sat and cried all night long. The next morning, a little shoot came out of the ground and grew until it was a tall tree. This was the first pine tree. It was the boy reaching for his friends. There is a constellation the Cherokees called "little boys playing" or what we know as "Pleiades". Those boys are still playing in the heavens. Have you wondered why grass won't grow under pine trees? The salty tears from the mother poisoned the earth.



Old Man Flint

Many Cherokee stories were told to children about animals. Well, Old Man Flint loved to eat rabbit. One day, he was walking along the road and said, "Morning Rabbit". He said, "How would you like to come on over to my house for supper at sundown?"

The rabbit agreed and came on over to Old Man Flint's cave. The old man was preparing the stew and Rabbit sat down. They talked about the weather and how the crops were going. Rabbit looks in the pot and says, "I don't see anything in the pot. What's for supper?"

"We're having boiled rabbit stew."

Old Man Flint grabbed Rabbit fast and they tussled. Old Man Flint was pushed by Rabbit and he fell into the fire. As Old Man Flint was pushed into the fire, Rabbit ran for the door. All of the sudden, Old Man Flint exploded into a thousand pieces. A piece of exploding flint hit Rabbit in the tail and cut his tail clean off. That's why rabbits have a little puff of tail today. And then a piece of flint hit Rabbit in the lip as he turned to look at his tail. Rabbits have a hair lip to this very day.

Purpose: Tell kids that if you make a fire and use rocks, don't use flint. Use granite.

“Killing Deer” CD Walker

Most of the ones Doc likes to tell are ones he heard, not ones he read in a book. Cherokees had many superstitions. Any tree or creek had a spirit. CD didn’t believe in that. Many Cherokees believed in little people that lived in caves. CD’s cabin was just outside the village. In the middle of winter, he went out in the mountains to go hunting. A big blizzard came in. Back then, there was no Channel 4 weather. Not even the weather channel! Well, CD got caught in the mountains and couldn’t get back. He got himself a little fire going under an outcrop of rocks. That big blizzard was raging. CD went to sleep. Not long after, he woke up and his fire was out. He looked around and he was surrounded by little people. CD looked and they were looking straight at him.



“Where did y’all come from?”

They replied, “We came from the cave.”

CD noticed a little door to a cave in the outcrop. You see, temperature is the same year-round in a cave. The little people invited him inside. CD crawled into the hole and it opened up to a big room. The whole tribe was having a powwow with a big fire and feast. There was corn, venison – even bear meat. CD made himself comfortable and got full from eating. For dessert: a whole bowl of fresh strawberries. Now take note that this is in the middle of winter. There were no refrigerators back then. Strawberries were only harvested when they were ripe.

CD asked, “How is this possible?”

They said, “Grow them in the cave.”

“Boy! That’s something.”

Not long after, the village started to wonder what had happened to CD so they sent a search party. You see, they knew his hunting grounds. Well, they found him in the outcrop. CD was almost frozen to death so they made a stretcher and started a fire in the cabin. The villagers gave him some warm soup.

“Little people saved me!”

“You’re talking out of your head! You don’t even believe in that”

“Oh yeah, but they were there. Fed me. Had a powwow!”

Boy...they were heehawing and laughing at them.

“They brought me a bowl of fresh strawberries!”

Now they really laughed hard – they never heard about strawberries in winter. CD sat up and showed them his hand – a strawberry inside.

TAIL-E-POO: A CHEROKEE “JUMP TALE”

A man, woman, and boy lived in a cabin in the woods with a clearing. One afternoon, they went in the garden to pick beans for supper. Each one had a bucket. The boy was playing around a bit. The man and woman got the bucket filled.

The mother said, “You can stay out until you get done.”

The boy kept on messing around while the mother placed a bean pot on the stove. While the boy was out in the garden, he saw a log with a bushy tail sticking out.

Curious, he didn’t know what critter that was so he went out and got a hoe. The boy took the hoe and chopped off that tail. Then, he got in the cabin. The boy heard the man complaining that he didn’t have meat for the beans. After hearing this, the boy threw the tail into the pot. After waiting on the beans to finish cooking, one of them got a big bowl.



The man said, “Mmmm! Tastes like there’s meat in the beans!”

The mother said, “Yeah! It does taste like there’s meat in the beans!”

The boy said nothing. When they wrapped up, they all went to bed. In the middle of the night, they heard a strange noise. They first heard the sound out in the garden. They heard the garden gate open, "creeek", and then they heard something say, "Tail-e-poo, I want my tail-e-poo." After that, they heard something on the porch walking. BOOM BOOM BOOM. There was real low singing: "UUUmmmm tail-e-poo, I want my tail-e-poo."

Then, they heard the roof. "Tail-e-poo, I want my tail-e-poo." The fire had gone out. Soon, they heard rustling in the chimney. "Tail-e-poo, I want my tail-e-poo." The boy goes out to the chimney and looks up. Sitting up in the chimney, he could see it. It was a big, black, hairy Whang-Doodle.

“Mmmm, what big EARS do you have!”

The whang-doodle replied, “The better to hear you through, hear ya through, hear ya through....”

“Oh WHAT BIG EYES YOU HAVE!”

“Better to stare you down, stare you down, stare you down. (Very low)”

“OH WHAT LONG CLAWS YOU HAVE!”

“Better to gravel your grave, gravel your grave, gravel your grave....”

“And WHAT BIG TEETH YOU HAVE!”

“Better to....EAT YOU! ***JUMP AT YOUR AUDIENCE AND YELL***

SPEAKER: “Do you know what a Whang-Doodle is? Look up in a chimney late at night!”

The Dog and the Cornmeal



A man and woman grew a lot of corn, strawberries, blackberries, beans, and melons. They had mortar and pestle. Put dry corn in and beat it to make corn meal. She put it out in the evening and put a cloth over when she went to bed. One morning, she went out there to get the corn meal to make breakfast. "SOMEBODY STOLE OUR CORNMEAL!" He decided he would do something. Took a bunch of tin cans and hung them in the trees to hear trespassers. Next night, same process. Way late, they heard rustling in the cans. Looked out the door. On the porch, a GIANT dog was eating the cornmeal. He got some pans to clang together and made a LOT of noise. The dog took off right into the sky. Cornmeal fell out of his mouth. Today, that cornmeal is called by the Cherokees "where the dog ran" or we know it as the "Milky Way".

Strawberries

A man left his wife in the cabin while he went to pick corn in the garden. She was steaming from a past argument. She stomped out and the man called to her as she left. She paid no attention. He asked the Great One to help him. She got to the other side of the mountain. The Great One thought he would put blackberry briars down to stop her. She walked right through them and scraped her legs. The husband ran after her. At the next hill, the Great One put all sorts of trees in her way. These trees had all kinds of limbs that hit her in the face. She didn't even budge. The husband still ran after her. This time, the Great One put red berries all over the next hill. She started stepping on them and smelled something REAL good. She looked down and tasted one. Oh, that was sweet! She kept on eating. She lifted her apron and started collecting. As she picked up the berries, she thought of her husband. Soon, the husband caught up with her and they walked back to the cabin. She wanted to preserve them. She put the berries in a jug of honey. You see, these were the very first strawberry preserves. If you ever visit a Cherokee woman's house, she'll always have some strawberries. It brings good luck and helps keep their marriage together.

The Butterbean Game

Corn is used for counters. Butter beans are cut in half (dark and light side). Everyone gets 6-8 pieces of corn from the start. You win or lose the corn pieces (like poker chips). The rules are that you have a basket or paper plate. Butter beans are then shaken up in the plate - 3 butter beans (6 halves). In this game, you can play as an individual or in two teams.

Two points are given if only one of a color (5 whites/ one black). 4 points: all brown. 6 points: all white. 0 points for any other combination. Players sit on opposite sides of the table in teams. A pile of corn goes in the center (24 pieces). As you count your score, take corn from the pile. When corn is gone, take corn from the other team until the winning team has all of the corn. Take turns. Shake basket, pass, shake, etc.



Iktomi

Iktomi is a trickster character among the Sioux Indians. Iktomi translates to “Spider Man”. He had his lodge camped out by the river one day. Iktomi saw ducks and boy, he loved to eat duck. He goes and gets his blanket fills it up with dry leaves and walks down the trail to the ducks. The ducks say, “Hi! Hey Iktomi, what’s that in your pack?”

“I’m going to a powwow and carrying the songs.”

“Oh we love powwows! Can we see some of those songs?”

“I can let you hear them but not see them. Come on up to my lodge (teepee).”

All the ducks come inside the teepee with the fire in the center. All the ducks are sitting along the sides.

“Don’t open your eyes! I’m opening the pack.”

“Okay Iktomi, we got our eyes closed.”

Iktomi spreads out the blanket and starts to drum. Starts to sing. The ducks begin to dance around the tee-pee. Iktomi takes the drum beater, pops one little fat duck on the head, and throws him on his blanket. POW! Sings some more. AGAIN. POW! One duck hears the strange noise and wonders. Cracks open his eye. Sees the dead ducks.

He yells, “He’s killing us! Iktomi is killing us!”

All of the ducks open their eyes, take off, and fly up through the smoke hole. They get the smoke in their eyes. The smoke burns their eyes red. To this day, wood ducks have red eyes.



Spearfinger



She was a witch. In the summer, the children would play out in the fields near the village. Spearfinger would come up from the river and boy, did she had a lot of power. One long finger that if she pointed it, she could create a bridge of rocks out of the water. She would come up to where the children were on an old log as a bench. Sit over here with granny, she would say. A little girl would sit and let Spearfinger comb her hair - comb the hair with her fingers. Spearfinger then put a potion on the girl's neck that would make it numb. When the girl wasn't looking, she would stick her finger in her neck and pull out her liver. Once she got it out, she would let her go back to play. She would eat the raw liver - that's what she lived off of. Soon after, the girl got sick. Now, the Cherokees didn't call them medicine men. They were known as shamans. He would come in with his medicine bag and make tea out of some roots and herbs. He would get out his rattle and sing medicine songs. Before daybreak, that little girl died because you can't live without your liver. The next day, the kids were playing again. Spearfinger sang her song as she came up from the river:

“Livers I eat, Livers I eat
Here I come.”
(Repeat)

Soon, she called over another little girl. Started combing her hair, took her liver, and sent her back. The shaman was called in that night. He examined her and saw the scar from Spearfinger taking the little girl's liver. Well, that old shaman called in the men from the village. “Spearfinger's been killing the girls for their livers!” He asked children where they saw an old granny. They said she came from the river's path. The men dug a deep pit on the path and covered it with sticks and leaves. Then, they all hid out in the woods and the next day, let the children play. Spearfinger came singing her song. She stepped over the pit and fell in. OH, SHE WAS MAD. She waved her finger to reach someone. The whole village gathered around the pit that Spearfinger had fallen in. They had caught the witch but didn't know what to do with her. A little bird flew up into a tree and yelled down, “Shoot her in the heart, shoot her in the heart.” So they got a Bowman with a strong bow and arrow and the next time she turned around, he shot right at her chest. The arrow just bounced off. You see, Spearfinger's skin was made of solid stone. Another bird yelled, “Shoot her in the hand, shoot her in the hand!” Next time, an arrow was shot and she's falls over dead. You see, she carried her heart in her hand. The men made a big fire in the pit to burn her up. When the fire cooled, they scraped the ashes and found a crystal. All spearfinger's power was in the crystal. And that's why all Cherokee doctors to this day carry a crystal in their medicine bag. They caught the bird that told the lie. They cut its tongue off. The Cherokee's call that bird the tongue-tipped sparrow. We call it titmouse. Everyone knows they're liars, cheats, crooks, and you never believe anything they'll tell you. The other bird that told the truth, the Cherokees call it chickalili. We call it a chickadee. It's a friendly little bird that tells you when company is coming. You can believe anything that it tells you.

