

(photo)

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Age (about) 89 yrs.  
Tulsa, Okla.

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"What yo' gwine do when de meat give out?  
What yo' gwine do when de meat give out?  
Set in de corner wid my lips pooched out!  
Lawsy!

What yo' gwine do when de meat come in?  
What yo' gwine do when de meat come in?  
Set in de corner wid a greasy chin!  
Lawsy!"

Dat's about de only little nigger song I know, less'n it be de one about:

"Great big nigger, laying 'hind de log -  
Finger on de trigger and eye on the hawg!  
Click go de trigger and bang go de gun!  
Here come de owner and de buck nigger run!"

And I think I learn both of dem long after I been grown, 'cause I belong to a full-blood Creek Indian and I didn't know nothing but Creek talk long after de Civil War. My mistress was part white and knowed English talk, but she never did talk it because none of de people talked it. I heard it sometime, but it sound like whole lot of wild shoat in de cedar brake scared at something when I do hear it. Dat was when I was little girl in time of de War.

I don't know where I been born. Nobody never did tell me. But my mammy and pappy git me after de War and I know den whose child I is. De men at de Creek Agency help 'em git me, I reckon, maybe.

First thing I remember is when I was a little girl, and I belong to old Tuskaya-hiniha. He was big man in de Upper Creek, and we have a purty good size farm, jest a little bit to de north of de wagon depot houses on de old road at Honey Springs. Dat place was about twenty-five mile south of Fort Gibson, but I don't know nothing about whar de fort is when I was a little girl

at dat time. I know de Elk River 'bout two mile north of whar we live, 'cause I been there many de time.

I don't know if old Master have a white name. Lots de Upper Creek didn't have no white name. Maybe he have another Indian name, too, because Tuskayahiniha mean "head man warrior" in Creek, but dat what everybody call him and dat what de family call him too.

My Mistress' name was Nancy, and she was a Lott before she marry old man Tuskaya-hiniha. Her pappy name was Lott and he was purty near white. Maybe so all white. Dey have two chillun, I think, but only one stayed on de place. She was name Luwina, and her husband was dead. His name was Walker, and Luwina bring Mr. Walker's little sister, Nancy, to live at de place too.

Luwina had a little baby boy and dat de reason old Master buy me, to look after de little baby boy. He didn't have no name cause he wasn't big enough when I was with dem, but he git a name later on, I reckon. We all call him "Istidji." Dat mean "little man."

When I first remember, before de War, old Master had 'bout as many slave as I got fingers, I reckon. I can think dem off on my fingers like dis, but I can't recollect de names.

Dey call all de slaves "Istilusti." Dat mean "Black man."

Old man Tuskaya-hiniha was near 'bout blind before de War, and 'bout time of de War he go plumb blind and have to set on de long seat under de bresh shelter of de house all de time. Sometime I lead him around de yard a little, but not very much. Dat about de time all de slave begin to slip out and run off.

My own pappy was name Stephany. I think he take dat name 'cause when he little his mammy call him "Istifani." Dat mean a skeleton, and he was a skinny man. He belong to de Grayson family and I think his master name

George, but I don't know. Dey big people in de Creek, and with de white folks took my mammy name was Serena and she belong to some of de Gouge family. Dey was big people in de Upper Creek, and one de biggest men of the Gouge was name Hopoethleyoholo for his Creek name. He was a big man and went to de North in de War and died up in Kansas, I think. Dey say when he was a little boy he was called Hopoethli, which mean "good little boy", and when he git grown he make big speeches and dey stick on de "yoholo." Dat mean "loud whooper."

Dat de way de Creek made de name for young boys when I was a little girl. When de boy git old enough de big men in de town give him a name, and sometime later on when he git to going round wid de grown men dey stick on some more name. If he a good talker dey sometime stick on "yoholo", and iffen he make lots of jokes dey call him "Hadjo." If he is a good leader dey call him "Imala" and if he kind of mean dey sometime call him "fixigo."

My mammy and pappy belong to two masters, but dey live together on a place. Dat de way de Creek slaves do lots of times. Dey work patches and give de masters most all dey make, but dey have some for demselves. Dey didn't have to stay on de master's place and work like I hear de slaves of de white people and de Cherokee and Choctaw people say dey had to do.

Maybe my pappy and mammy run off and git free, or maybeso dey buy demselves out, but anyway dey move away some time and my mammy's master sell me to old man Tuskaya-hiniha when I was jest a little gal. All I have to do is stay at de house and mind de baby.

Master had a good log house and a bresh shelter out in front like all de houses had. Like a gallery, only it had de dirt for de flo' and bresh for de roof. Dey cook everything out in de yard in big pots, and dey eat out in de yard too.

Dat was sho' good stuff to eat, and it make you fat too! Roast de

green corn on de ears in de ashes, and scrape off some and fry it! Grind de dry corn or pound it up and make ash cake. Den bile de greens -- all kinds of greens from out in de woods -- and chop up de pork and de deer meat, or de wild turkey meat; maybe all of dem, in de big pot at de same time! Fish too, and de big turtle dat lay out on de bank!

Dey always have a pot full of sofki settin right inside de house, and anybody eat when dey feel hungry. Anybody come on a visit, always give 'em some of de sofki. Ef dey don't take none de old man git mad, too!

When you make de sofki you pound up de corn real fine, den pour in de water an dreen it off to git all de little skin from off'n de grain. Den you let de grits soak and den bile it and let it stand. Sometime you put in some pounded hickory nut meats. Dat make it real good.

I don't know whar old Master git de cloth for de clothes, less'n he buy it. Befo' I can remember I think he had some slaves dat weave de cloth, but when I was dar he git it at de wagon depot at Honey Springs, I think. He go dar all de time to sell his corn, and he raise lots of corn, too.

Dat place was on de big road, what we called de road to Texas, but it go all de way up to de North, too. De traders stop at Honey Springs and old Master trade corn for what he want. He git some purty checkedy cloth one time, and everybody git a dress or a shirt made off'n it. I have dat dress 'till I git too big for it.

Everybody dress up fine when dey is a funeral. Dey take me along to mind de baby at two-three funerals, but I don't know who it is dat die. De Creek sho' take on when somebody die!

Long in de night you wake up and hear a gun go off, way off yonder somewhar. Den it go again, and den again, jest as fast as dey can ram de load in. Dat mean somebody dead. When somebody die de men go out in de yard and

let de people know dat way. Den dey jest go back in de house and let de fire go out, and don't even tech de dead person till somebody git dar what has de right to tech de dead.

When somebody had sick dey build a fire in de house, even in de summer, and don't let it die down till dat person git well or die. When dey die dey let de fire go out.

In de morning everybody dress up fine and go to de house whar de dead is and stand around in de yard outside de house and don't go in. Pretty soon along come somebody what got a right to tech and handle de dead and dey go in. I don't know what give dem de right, but I think dey has to go through some kind of medicine to git de right, and I know dey has to drink de red root and purge good before dey tech de body. When dey git de body ready dey come out and all go to de graveyard, mostly de family graveyard, right on de place or at some of the kinfolkses.

When dey git to de grave somebody shoots a gun at de north, den de west, den de south, and den de east. Iffen dey had four guns dey used 'em.

Den dey put de body down in de grave and put some extra clothes in with it and some food and a cup of coffee, maybe. Den dey takes strips of elm bark and lays over de body till it all covered up, and den throw in de dirt.

When de last dirt throwed on, everybody must clap dey hands and smile, but you sho hadn't better step on any of de new dirt around de grave, because it bring sickness right along wid you back to your own house. Dat what dey said, anyways.

Jest soon as de grave filled up dey built a little shelter over it wid poles like a pig pen and kiver it over wid elm bark to keep de rain from soaking down in de new dirt.

Den everybody go back to de house and de family go in and scatter

some kind of medicine 'round de place and build a new fire. Sometime dey feed everybody befo' dey all leave for home.

Every time dey have a funeral dey always a lot of de people say, "Didn't you hear de stikini squalling in de night?" "I hear dat stikini all de night!" De "stikini" is de screech owl, and he suppose to tell when anybody going to die right soon. I hear lots of Creek people say dey hear de screech owl close to de house, and sho' nuff somebody in de family die soon.

When de big battle come at our place at Honey Springs dey jest git through having de green corn "busk." De green corn was just ripened enough to eat. It must of been along in July.

Dat busk was jest a little busk. Dey wasn't enough men around to have a good one. But I seen lots of big ones. Ones whar dey had all de different kinds of "banga." Dey call all de dances some kind of banga. De chicken dance is de "Tolosabanga", and de "Istifanibanga" is de one whar dey make lak dey is skeletons and raw heads coming to git you.

De "Hadjobanga" is de crazy dance, and dat is a funny one. Dey all dance crazy and make up funny songs to go wid de dance. Everybody think up funny songs to sing and everybody whoop and laugh all de time.

But de worse one was de drunk dance. Dey jest dance ever whichaway, de men and de women together, and dey wrassle and hug and carry on awful! De good people don't dance dat one. Everybody sing about going to somebody elses house and sleeping wid dem, and shout, "We is all drunk and we don't know what we doing and we ain't doing wrong 'cause we is all drunk" and things like dat. Sometime de bad ones leave and go to de woods, too!

Dat kind of doing make de good people mad, and sometime dey have killings about it. When a man catch one his women -- maybeso his wife or one of his daughters -- been to de woods he catch her and beat her and cut off de rim of her ears!

People think maybeso dat ain't so, but I know it is!

I was combing somebody's hair one time -- I ain't going tell who-- and when I lift it up off'n her ears I nearly drap dead! Dar de rims cut right off'n 'em! But she was a married woman, and I think maybeso it happen when she was a young gal and got into it at one of dem drunk dances.

Dem Upper Creek took de marrying kind of light anyways. Iffen de younguns wanted to be man and wife and de old ones didn't care dey jest went ahead and dat was about all, 'cepting some presents maybe. But de Baptists changed dat a lot amongst de young ones.

I never forgit de day dat battle of de Civil War happen at Honey Springs! Old Master jest had de green corn all in, and us had been having a time gitting it in, too. Jest de women was all dat was left, 'cause de men slaves had all slipped off and left out. My uncle Abe done got up a bunch and gone to de North wid dem to fight, but I didn't know den whar he went. He was in dat same battle, and after de War dey called him Abe Colonel. Most all de slaves 'round dat place done gone off a long time before dat wid dey masters when dey go wid old man Gouge and a man named McDaniel.

We had a big tree in de yard, and a grape vine swing in it for de little baby "Istidji", and I was swinging him real early in de morning befo' de sun up. De house set in a little patch of woods wid de field in de back, but all out on de north side was a little open space, like a kind of prairie. I was swinging de baby, and all at once I seen somebody riding dis way 'cross dat prairie -- jest coming a-kiting and a-laying flat out on his hoss. When he see de house he begin to give de war whoop, "Eya-a-a-a-he-ah!" When he git close to de house he holler to git out de way 'cause dey gwine be a big fight, and old Master start rapping wid his cane and yelling to git some grub and blankets in de wagon right now!

We jest leave everything setting right whar it is, 'cepting putting out de fire and grabbing all de pots and kettles. Some de nigger women run to git de mules and de wagon and some start gitting meat and corn out of de place whar we done hid it to keep de scouters from finding it befo' now. All de time we gitting ready to travel we hear dat boy on dat horse going on down de big Texas road hollering. "Eya-a-a-he-he-hah!"

Den jest as we starting to leave here come something across dat little prairie sho' nuff! We know dey is Indians de way dey is riding, and de way dey is all strung out. Dey had a flag, and it was all red and had a big criss-cross on it dat look lak a saw horse. De man carry it and rear back on it when de wind whip it, but it flap all 'round de horse's head and de horse pitch and rear lak he know something going happen, sho!

'Bout dat time it turn kind of dark and begin to rain a little, and we git out to de big road and de rain come down hard. It rain so hard for a little while dat we jest have to stop de wagon and set dar, and den long come more soldiers dan I ever see befo'. Dey all white men, I think, and dey have on dat brown clothes dyed wid walnut and butternut, and old Master say dey de Confederate soldiers. Dey dragging some big guns on wheels and most de men slopping 'long in de rain on foot.

Den we hear de fighting up to de north 'long about what de river is, and de guns sound lak hosses loping 'cross a plank bridge way off somewhar. De head men start hollering and some de hosses start rearing and de soldiers start trotting faster up de road. We can't git out on de road so we jest strike off through de prairie and make for a creek dat got high banks and a place on it we call Rocky Cliff.

We git in a big cave in dat cliff, and spend de whole day and dat night in dar, and listen to de battle going on.

Dat place was about half-a-mile from de wagon depot at Honey Springs, and a little east of it. We can hear de guns going all day, and along in de evening here come de South side making for a ~~get~~<sup>e a</sup>away. Dey come riding and running by whar we is, and it don't make no difference how much de head men hollers at 'em dey can't make dat bunch slow up and stop.

After while here come de Yankees, right after 'em, and dey goes on into Honey Springs and pretty soon we see de blaze whar dey is burning de wagon depot and de houses.

De next morning we goes back to de house and find de soldiers ain't hurt nothing much. De hogs is whar dey is in de pen and de chickens come cackling 'round too. Dem soldiers going so fast dey didn't have no time to stop and take nothing, I reckon.

Den long come lots of de Yankee soldiers going back to de North, and dey looks purty wore out, but dey is laughing and joshing and going on.

Old Master pack up de wagon wid everything he can carry den, and we strike out down de big road to git out de way of any more war, is dey going be any.

Dat old Texas road jest crowded wid wagons! Everybody doing de same thing we is, and de rains done made de road so muddy and de soldiers done tromp up de mud so bad dat de wagons git stuck all de time.

De people all moving along in bunches, and every little while one bunch of wagons come up wid another bunch all stuck in de mud, and dey put all de hosses and mules on together and pull em out, and den dey go on together awhile.

At night dey camp, and de women and what few niggers dey is have to git de supper in de big pots, and de men so tired dey eat everything up from de women and de niggers, purty nigh.

After while we come to de Canadian town. Dat whar old man Gouge been and took a whole lot de folks up north wid him, and de South soldiers got in dar ahead of us and took up all de houses to sleep in.

Dey was some of de white soldiers camped dar, and dey was singing at de camp. I couldn't understand what dey sing, and I asked a Creek man what dey say and he tell me dey sing, "I wish I was in Dixie, look away -- look away."

I ask him whar dat is, and he laugh and talk to de soldiers and dey all laugh, and make me mad.

De next morning we leave dat town and git to de big river. De rain make de river rise, and I never see so much water! Jest look out dar and dar all dat water!

Dey got some boats we put de stuff on, and float de wagons and swim de mules and finally git across, but it look lak we gwine all drown.

Most de folks say dey going to Boggy Depot and around Fort Washita, but old Master strike off by hisself and go way down in de bottom somewhar to live.

I don't know whar it was, but dey been some kind of fighting all around dar, 'cause we camp in houses and cabins all de time and nobody live in any of 'em.

Look like de people all git away quick, 'cause all de stuff was in de houses, but you better scout up around de house before you go up to it. Liable to be some scouters already in it!

Dem Indian soldiers jest quit de army and lots went scouting in little bunches and took everything dey find. Iffen somebody try to stop dem dey git killed.

Sometime we find graves in de yard whar somebody jest been buried

fresh, and one house had some dead people in it when old Mistress poke her head in it. We git away from dar, and no mistake!

By and by we find a little cabin and stop and stay all de time. I was de only slave by dat time. All de others done slip out and run off. We stay dar two year I reckon, 'cause we make two little crop of corn. For meat a man name Mr. Walker wid us jest went out in de woods and shoot de wild hogs. De woods was full of dem wild hogs, and lots of fish in de holes whar he could sicken 'em wid buck root and catch 'em wid his hands, all we wanted.

I don't know when de War quit off, and when I git free, but I stayed wid old man Tuskaya-hiniha long time after I was free, I reckon. I was jest a little girl, and he didn't know whar to send me to, anyways.

One day three men rid up and talk to de old man awhile in English talk. Den he called me and tell me to go wid dem to find my own family. He jest laugh and slap my behind and set me up on de hoss in front of one de men and dey take me off and leave my good checkedy dress at de house!

Before long we git to dat Canadian river again, and de men tie me on de hoss so I can't fall off. Dar was all dat water, and dey ain't no boat, and dey ain't no bridge, and we jest swim de hosses. I knowed sho' I was going to be gone dat time, but we git across.

When we come to de Creek Agency dar is my pappy and my mammy to claim me, and I live wid dem in de Verdigris bottom above Fort Gibson till I was grown and dey is both dead. Den I marries Anderson Davis at Gibson Station, and we git our allotments on de Verdigris east of Tulsa -- kind of south too, close to de Broken Arrow town.

I knowed old man Jim McHenry at dat Broken Arrow town. He done some preaching and was a good old man, I think.

I knowed when dey started dat Wealaka school across de river from de Broken Arrow town. Dey name it for de Wilaki town, but dat town was way down in de Upper Creek country close to whar I lived when I was a girl.

I had lots of children, but only two is alive now. My boy Anderson got in a mess and went to dat McAlester prison, but he got to be a trusty and dey let him marry a good woman dat got lots of property dar, and dey living all right now.

When my old man die I come to live here wid Josephine, but I'se blind and can't see nothing and all de noises pesters me a lot in de town. And de children is all so ill mannered, too. Dey jest holler at you all de time! Dey don't mind you neither!

When I could see and had my own younguns I could jest set in de corner and tell 'em what to do, and iffen dey didn't do it right I could whack 'em on de head, 'cause dey was raised de old Creek way, and dey know de old folks know de best!