The oral history method of culling and recording memories of and reflections on the past has increased dramatically during recent years. Generally, this historical method utilizes electronic equipment to secure raw data but employs more conventional means to print its findings.

In 1977 Dr. Cooper Kirk, Broward County Historian, interviewed Betty Mae Jumper, a Seminole Indian. Pat Cunningham accompanied and assisted Dr. Kirk. Joe Dan Osceola, another Seminole, attended and offered his comments.

The interview lasted approximately 105 minutes. The following transcription has been edited for purposes of clarity and fluency.

INTRODUCTION

Today is June 23, 1977. The site is the Seminole Indian Reservation at S.W. 64 Avenue, Hollywood, Florida. The location on the reservation is the Administration Building for Health Services. Present at this interview are Betty Mae Jumper, Joe Dan Osceola, Cooper Kirk, and Pat Cunningham.

The results of this interview will be two-fold. First, a copy of this taped interview will be deposited in the archives of the Broward County Historical Commission. Second, material for an article about Mrs. Jumper will be acquired for publication. Articles will be included in the Broward Legacy, in the Broward County 1977 "Pioneer Days" printed program and/or in the Indian newspaper, "Alligator Times.”

Q. Mrs. Jumper, do you want me to address you as Mrs. Jumper, Betty Mae, or . . . how shall I address you?
A. It doesn’t make any difference.

Q. Well, I’ll call you Chief, Betty Mae, please tell us where you were born.
A. I was born in Indiantown, Florida.

Q. Indiantown? That’s up near Lake Okeechobee, on the eastern side of the lake. Are there any Indians living there now?
A. No.

Q. The nearest Indian reservation from there . . . would it be the Brighton Reservation on the west side of the lake?
A. Yes.

Q. Do you recall when you came to this area, which used to be called the Dania Indian Reservation?
A. I came here in 1928.

Q. That means that you came here before this was officially recognized as an Indian reservation?
A. Yes. I was just a little girl when my family moved here.

Q. In reading the United States government documents, I noted that this reservation was founded primarily for the treatment of sick Indians, not that this is the reason why Indians moved here but, rather, the reason why the government began the reservation and erected offices here. Do you recall anything about this?
A. No, I don’t think so. I believe the government was just moving the Indians from Fort Lauderdale because the town was growing and they wanted the Indians to move on the reservation where they would be secure.

Q. Did you live over near New River in Fort Lauderdale before you moved out here?
A. No, I didn’t.

Q. You came directly here from Indiantown?
A. Yes.

Q. What caused your family to come down here? Do you recall? Was it financial, sickness, health reasons, or just wanting to get away from the people up there?
A. Yes. My grandfather wanted us to move on account of personal problems.

Q. What was your grandfather’s name?
A. Jimmie Gopher.

Q. And your father’s name?
A. My father was a white man named Bartner.

Q. And your mother’s name?
A. Ada.

Q. Ada Jumper?
A. Ada Tiger. I married into the Jumper family.

Q. Were the Jumpers here before you came, or did they arrive after you came?
A. They were already here.

Q. Now, the Indians used to live along New River; they lived at various spots along New River. Do you recall any of the places where they lived?
A. I was too small to remember. They had already moved here before we came. But they lived across from where the city jail is now.

Q. Across from where the city jail is now? That would be out on what is now Broward Boulevard.

A. Yes. My mother used to tell me how they used to swim in that canal.

Q. That would be the North Fork of New River, right? Of course, that river is still there but it is now connected with the Everglades drainage system like all the other rivers in Southeast Florida. What kind of land was it when you came down? Was it dry, wet, or filled with palmettoes?

A. There were a lot of palmettoes. Near State Road 7, the government had about ten little houses built around a circle facing the old Indian agency building on State Road 7 and Stirling Road.

Q. Do you remember the names of any white government employees who worked with the Indian agency around 1930-1931?

A. Mr. Jack Marshall.

Q. From 1931 to 1935, Dr. James L. Glenn was here at the Dania Indian Reservation. Do you remember Dr. Glenn?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember anything specific about him? He was quite young then. He’s about 84 years old now, but that was over 40 years ago. Was he bossy, kind, or friendly?

A. He was a friendly man. He was nice; he was friendly.

Q. Do you believe that he had the best interests of the Indians at heart, that he wasn’t just working for a living, but that he really wanted to be of service to the Indians?

A. He was always helping the Indians. Lots of Indians couldn’t speak English too well in those days and some couldn’t understand him. So, he had to have an interpreter all the time.

Q. He’s written a book about his experiences while he was here. He’s written another book that deals with the history of the Indians. So, he’s written two different books.

A. Yes.

Q. In one of the books, he shows many pictures of those times in this area and out in the Big Cypress Swamp. Now, in the book he says that one of the biggest things he and the Indians had to contend with was illegal alcohol, illegal whiskey, moonshine. They had to keep whites from coming into the area and selling to the Indians. Is that familiar to you? Was that a problem?

A. I was too young to know of things like that. But, I have seen many of them drink on this reservation, like the Tommies, like Frank Tommie, Sam Tommie, and Ben Tommie. All of them I have seen drink and a lot of other young guys in those days. I have seen them drinking, but I didn’t know where they got it. I was too young then.

Q. Here is a picture showing some white men who had been arrested. They are being taken to Jacksonville to be tried because, at that time, it was illegal to sell whiskey that was untaxed. Are you pleased, in view of this, that your parents made the move down here from Indiantown? Was it the right thing to do?

A. At the time it was, I guess. My grandfather made us move, although we were comfortable up there. My mother had lots of cattle, over 500. We had lots of pigs and horses. My three uncles died in between. One of my uncles was killed out on the Miami River by the Ashley Gang, who took the furs and everything away from him.

Q. What was his name?

A. DeSoto Tiger.

Q. DeSoto Tiger was your uncle?

A. Yes, and they killed him.

Q. They took his hides away from him?

A. Everything. He had a boatload and he was going along the Miami River toward Miami to sell them, and he was killed up there.

Q. That was about 1914?

A. Somewhere around there. And he left a lot of cattle to my mother. I had two other uncles. One of them died in Oklahoma. He went out there in wintertime, caught pneumonia, and died out there. And the other uncle died, which left my mother all these animals. So, we were comfortable until we were kind of forced to move by some people. My mother sold all the animals she could but she couldn’t sell all of them, and we turned the rest aloose.
Q.Turned them aloose? She probably didn’t get the full value anyway from a forced sale. So, you really lost financially?
A. We lost financially. There were two different livings in Indiantown. We knew how to make a living. We had all the meat we wanted. All we had to raise was pumpkins, beans, potatoes and all of that. We had a good living. But when we moved, my mother, my grandmother and grandfather, it was new surroundings and a new way of living for us. We were close to town down here instead of way out in the Glades up there. So, they had to change their way of living. A Mr. Donne lived on Stirling Road and he had fields and groves. So, they started to work in these fields and groves. That’s the way we started to live on this reservation.

Q. So, that is the way you made a living, working for white men in the groves and on the farms?
A. Yes, on Stirling Road.

Q. Did you know the elder Mr. Stirling?
A. Oh yes. I played with his daughter all my life, and his daughter is still living on Stirling Road.

Q. Right. She’s told me about those days.
A. I lived mostly at the daughter’s house.

Q. She’s a member of the Davie Historical Society.
A. She is? I played all my younger days with her.

Q. Did you ever actually go hungry during this period? Or close to it? Or, did you have plenty?
A. Right close to it sometimes during the Depression of the 1930s. This was because it was a change in our way of living and sometimes it was hard. But, my mother was a hardworking woman. She fished in the many rivers we had in those days. An we had a lot of gophers, you know, turtles. She digged them out and we ate them.

Q. You ate the gophers, turtles which dig deep down in the ground?
A. Yes, we dug them out.

Q. Isn’t that a hard job? Years ago I dug and dug and dug but could never catch up with them.
A. But my mother caught up with them.

Q. Aren’t some Indians named Gopher, or were named Gopher?
A. Oh, yes. There was Jimmy Gopher, my grandfather. My grandfather is really my great uncle, but I called him my grandfather. He hunted and fished. A lot of times we had nothing but we ended up having something. But my grandfather was a great believer. He was an Indian medicine man. But he became a Christian before we left Indiantown.

Q. That was in 1928?
A. Yes, he had become a Christian before then.

Q. How long did he live? Do you know when he died?
A. I was in school then. It was sometime in the ‘40s.

Q. And your mother, is she still living?
A. No, she died in 1970. My grandmother died in 1947. She lived for over 104 years.

Q. And what was her name?
A. Mary Tiger.

Q. And where did she die, here?
A. Yes, here.

Q. Where is the Indian burial ground here?
A. Over there, west of U.S. 441. Q. Along Stirling Road?
A. No.

Q. Is the place secret?
A. No. It’s over where the trailer park is, the Escom Trailer Park. Q. That’s a big park, isn’t it?
A. Yes, that was our graveyard, but it’s now surrounded by trailers.

Q. Do you still have land there that you can bury on?
A. Well, they made a new graveyard west of where we are now.

Q. Are only Indians buried there?
A. Yes.

Q. Do you use tombstones?
A. No. Some Indians do and some of them don’t.

Q. But there is some way used to mark the burial sites, isn’t there?
A. Yes, it is surrounded by a rock wall and fence over here.

Q. But each individual grave, isn’t there some way to tell that someone is buried there?
A. Yes.

Q. Is it some kind of marker?
A. Some Indians use markers and others don’t.

Q. Would you say that most Indians are now Christians? Or would it be half-and-half?
A. The great majority of us are.

Q. There are some who are still not Christians?
A. Yes, on the Tamiami Trail mostly.

Q. That would be the Micasukies?
A. Yes.

Q. So, most of the Seminoles in Florida are Christians?
A. The great majority.

Q. Are most of them of the Baptist denomination?
A. Yes.

Q. How do you account for the fact most are Baptists? Did the Baptists take the most interest in the Indians?
A. Well, before I was born the Oklahoma Indians started sending their Indians to us as missionaries. Willie King was the first Oklahoma Baptist missionary to come among us. He was here before I was born and he lived until sometime in the 1950s when he died as an old man. He talked our language and he taught here for a great many years.

Q. That’s interesting. Have the Oklahoma Seminoles modified or changed your language any?
A. They are losing their language. Q. They’re losing it? But, Willie King, for example, did he speak the same language . . . ?
A. The Creek language, Creek.

Q. He spoke the Creek language? Is that the same as the Seminole?
A. Yes, the same as that spoken out on the Brighton Reservation. Micasuky talk Micasuky language. We’ve got a lot of Micasukies.

Q. Can you understand the Micasuky language?
A. I talk both languages. My grandmother was a full-blooded Micasuky, and my mother’s father was
a full-blooded Creek, and she made us speak Creek. Therefore, my mother took after her father Tom Tiger who was killed by lightning. His name and picture are in some of the history books I have seen.

Q. When was he killed, do you know?
A. I don't know, but it was back in 1900, I guess.

Q. What relation was he to you?
A. My grandfather, my mother's father.

Q. Well, in about 1880, near here on Pine Island, an Indian chief was killed by lightning and his name was Tiger. The reason why we know this is that Dr. Henshall came to this area between 1879 and 1880 and he wrote a book in which he speaks of Tiger's death.

A. Yes, that is where I saw the story about my grandfather. My grandfather Tiger was a medicine man.

Q. He was a medicine man? What does a medicine man do?
A. Well, back in those days it seems like he controlled the villages. He doctored people, and many Indians looked up to him as a real doctor. They took sick people to medicine men.

Q. Did the medicine man have any influence with something you could see, hear, taste or smell? Besides being a doctor, did he have the ability to be in touch with spirits who could give him power to heal? Did the Indians believe something like this?
A. The Indians believed in him. He mixed herbs and things and gave it to the people.

Q. Did he have any special power with God?
A. No, I don't know.

Q. The present Green Corn Dance,
is it mostly a ceremonial dance?

A. It is a ceremonial dance where a lot of people get together and get reacquainted. It used to be something the Indians looked up to. It was real sacred in those days. But my grandmother told me it’s like everything else, it is dying out. Today we still have the Green Corn Dance and all that, but it’s not as sacred as it was in those days when the medicine man prescribed the medicine and the Indians followed his lead and used the same medicine in the dance. Today, at the dance, a lot of drinking and stuff like that goes on. Right now, it’s just a place to have a good time just like any other place.

Q. Does the dance now have a kind of carnival atmosphere?

A. Yes.

Q. Are Josie Billie and Ingram Billie the only medicine men you have out at Big Cypress?

A. No, we have some women medicine handlers here and out there.

Q. You mean you have medicine women?

A. Yes.

Q. Someone said that Ann Doctor is a pharmacist or did something in medical work. Does she?

A. No.

Q. Most Indians now, by and large, come to a health care center like this, don’t they?

A. Yes, quite a bit. But a few of them still go to the Indian medicine men. We’ve got two or three of them on the Big Cypress Reservation, that is, Indian women and men medicine persons. We still believe in that yet. They mix herbs. Some of the herbs work because I’ve seen them work. To tell you the truth, medicine is made out of herbs anyway.

Q. Of course, the medicine person just fixes the herbs in a different fashion than we do in a commercial operation.

A. Yes. But, we still use sacred medicine.

Q. As you know, General William J. Worth was the United States Army Commanding Officer in Florida when the Second Seminole War ended, which left only three hundred Indians in all of Florida. When he bargained with the remnant in 1844, he said one matter gave him more trouble than all the other matters the Indians wanted to discuss. They were on the south-west coast and they wanted permission to come to the New River and Miami River on the Southeast coast to gather coontie. At that time this was the greatest coontie preserve on the North American continent. The Indians wanted coontie or arrowroot above all else. Have you ever eaten coontie or arrowroot?

A. Oh, yes. Coontie is the plant the Indians call compte. That’s what their flour and soffkee comes from. My grandmother was a great believer in compte and used it a lot.

Q. Is it a kind of bread made from the plant?

A. Yes, the Indians make pancakes out of it. They also cook it into soffkee which they drink.

Q. Did you ever drink any soffkee?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. What does it taste like?

A. Kind of starchy-like. But you have to be raised on it to like it. Lots of people don’t like it. But I’ve used it all of my life. When you drink it, it serves as a kind of coffee or tea.

Q. It’s a beverage then?

A. Yes, a beverage.

Q. Does anyone ever use it now?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. Is there any compte or arrowroot left in this area?

A. I haven’t seen any.

Q. Has it about died out?

A. Yes, compte and arrowroot have both died out.

Q. They’re the same thing?

A. Arrowroot is the English name for it.

Q. The whites used to spell it co-o-o-n-t-i-e, c-o-m-p-t-e, and k-r-o-o-n-t-i-e. A lot of whites used to be involved in the coontie industry in South Florida.

A. What did they do with it?

Q. New River settlers back in the 1820s and 1830s used to get as high as sixteen cents a pound for it.

A. What did they do with it, that is, those who bought it?

Q. It was used commercially to make bread, particularly in the navy or aboard ships, because it was resistant to spoilage and worms. The last coontie factories in Miami closed around 1925. What’s the difference between the Seminole and Micasukey languages? Put another way, if you understood Seminole and someone spoke to you in Micasukey, could you understand them?

A. Oh, yes. But if I spoke Creek all my life and I heard a Micasukey speak, I couldn’t understand them. A lot of Creeks and Micasukies don’t understand each other. The Indians at Brighton Reservation near Lake Okeechobee can’t understand the Micasukies who live on Tamiami Trail.

Q. Now, the Indians on the Trail are . . . .?

A. Micasukey.

Q. The Indians at Brighton are . . . ?

A. Creeks.

Q. What is the difference between these two groups besides language?

A. Those at Brighton are called the Cow Creek Indians. Actually, they are two different tribes.

Q. Do you know where the Creeks came from?

A. Well, there’s a lot of different stories.

Q. Did they come from Georgia and Alabama?

A. They came from up the states somewhere.

Q. The Micasukies fought with the Seminoles during the Indian Wars. They were allies, although they didn’t always agree. Have you ever heard of Sam Jones or Arpiaka?

A. I have heard of him, but that’s all.

Q. You don’t know who he was?

A. Not too much.

Q. Well, when the Second Seminole War broke out in 1835 Sam Jones, or Arpiaka, lived near where Ocala is now located but was then known as Fort King. He fished
around this area and the army personnel called him Sam Jones rather than by his Indian name "Arpiaka." He was a leader of the Micasukey Indians. He had a spare frame, white hair, and was a great whiskey drinker. After Osceola was captured in 1837, Jones became the leader of the Micasukey and he and his people were driven down to New River in 1838 by the army. There's a group of islands near here named Sam Jones Islands. Here's a map which shows all of the seven islands, the largest of which is Pine Island. Here's the Everglades and here are the seven islands. Jones died in the 1850s at an age reputed to be between 105 and 115 years. Very, very little is known of him. Unlike some other Indians, he refused to be interviewed by the army or newspaper correspondents because he didn't trust the white man. Now, with this background, if you accept my word that he was the kind of man I've said he was, and the leader of the Indians left in Florida after the Indian War, would you say that he had an influence on the Indians' attitude toward the white people for maybe a hundred years? He wanted to stay away from whites because they were like a disease to him. Then, would he or would he not have influenced the way Indians looked at white people? A.I don't know, but he probably would have had a great influence. Q. Just as if we had someone influential on the white side who hated the Indians, couldn't their influence make whites hate Indians? A. Yes.

Q. Do you see any antagonism or ill-feeling now between Indians and whites, and whites toward Indians? Is there any evidence of this? A. Some feel this way.

Q. Which way, Indians toward whites, or whites toward Indians? Or both ways? A. Both ways.

Q. You think there is still some ill-feeling?

A. Yes. When you live on the reservation, you see some whites who see Indians as trashy-like. That's the way they take you.

Q. Like it used to be said that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian?" A. Yes. I've seen that attitude quite a bit, because as an Indian I live on the reservation and can see such things. You can sense it, you know. And we have Indians who feel the same way about whites.

Q. They feel like they've been cheated or taken advantage of by the whites? Like they work for too low wages or have been discriminated against. Or, they can't go to this place or that and are not welcomed by whites? Whites look down on them as a lesser breed of human beings?

A. Yes. On the other hand, some Indians want to go back to the old ways of living. But there is no way to go back to the old way of living because there is no money there, or even any place to go back to.

Q. Would you be in favor of going back to the old ways? A. No, because there is nothing to go back to. If we had a wild garden or wild life where there was a lot of game and a lot of fish, or a place where the land has been untouched, I might think twice.

Q. Would you want to give up your car, television set, modern medicine and schools and go back and live in the forest? A. No, because we have learned to live with this modern life and it would be too inconvenient to go back.

Q. Do you think the Indians are divided in their feelings? Would any say, "I would like to go back, that was the noble way of living, and although that was the best way to live, I know I can't go back to..."
you ever live that way?
A. Yes, back in Indiantown, like I told you. We had mosquito nets which we put up. That’s the way we lived until we moved to the Dania Reservation.
Q. But you didn’t live that way down here?
A. No. We had real houses that the government built.
Q. Mr. Glenn has pictures of these houses in his book. When you first went up to the Cherokee school in North Carolina how did it affect you? Why was the local Indian school closed?
A. The school on this reservation . . . Our parents didn’t believe in making us go to school.
Q. Was the Indian school on this reservation?
A. Yes, on the reservation.
Q. Do you remember the school teacher’s name?
A. Mrs. Duvall. The first teacher was Mrs. Marshall, wife of the Indian agent, the second Mrs. Duvall, who was the teacher when the school closed. We wouldn’t go to school and our parents wouldn’t make us go. They finally closed the school. Then things kind of dragged for a while. Then, a bunch of us went to Oklahoma. Some church people came here to take us out to see how they lived and we stayed with the church organization there.
Q. Where was this in Oklahoma?
A. Saksakwa. It means goose in the Creek language. While I was out there I ran into a girl named Juani-ta Tiger. She had a lot of funny or comic books which she used to read to me. I started thinking, “Why can’t I read them?” She said to me, “The funny book talks to you like a person talks to you, but you have to read it.” She said a lot of things I didn’t understand. Anyway, when I came back to this reservation I asked Mr. Scott, the Indian agent, if I could go to school. He asked, “Do your parents want you to go to school?” I said “I just want to go to school, get me into school.” Well, he tried. We couldn’t get into the Dania public school because we were Indians. For school purposes, I was considered either a colored person or an Indian.
Q. How old were you then?
A. I was about thirteen years old.
Q. Would the school authorities permit you to go to a colored or Negro school?
A. Yes. I had two colored girl friends that I played with out here on a farm where their parents worked. I was kind of afraid to go to school.
Q. About what year was this?
A. About 1937. So, I told Mr. Scott, “I just want to go to school.”
Q. Could you then speak English?
A. Not too good.
Q. You would have had language difficulty in school wouldn’t you?
A. I didn’t talk too good. Somewhere around Jupiter, Florida, there was a school which offered to take me. But I didn’t want to go there.
Q. Do you remember why?
A. I just didn’t feel like going there and living with whites. A lot of whites in Indiantown knew me and they were willing to take me in. But I didn’t feel like going there. Mr. Scott told me to come back in two or three weeks. Afterwards, he called for me. In his office he said “I have a school for you to go to, either in Oklahoma or in Cherokee, North Carolina.”
Q. What was the name of the school?
A. Cherokee Indian School, Cherokee, North Carolina.
Q. Did you have to pay to go to school there?
A. No, it was a government school. Mr. Scott said I could go to Bacone, Oklahoma, which had an Indian grade school, now a college. But I thought about it for sometime and decided that if I went to Cherokee I could learn faster because the Cherokees talked a different language.
Q. You could learn faster because the Cherokees talked a different language than you?
A. Yes. They would have to talk to me in English and I would have to talk to them in English. I figured
I could learn English faster that way. If they talked Cherokee I couldn’t understand them.

Q. Did you ever learn to understand the Cherokee language?
A. Only a few words. But to convince my grandmother was another thing. She didn’t want me to go away. But my mother said I could go. Then, I went back and told Mr. Scott I could go to Cherokee.

Q. Were you the first Seminole to go up there to school?
A. Yes, me and Mary Bowers. I convinced Mary to go with me.

Q. Was she about your age?
A. Yes, about a year younger.

Q. Is she still living here?
A. Yes, about two and a half years younger than me, cried and cried to go with us. Then, my mother said I had to take him if I went. We ended up with the three of us going to Cherokee.

Q. What was your brother’s name?
A. Howard Tiger. He died in 1967 after a tractor ran over him. He was working at a muckpit, which was an Indian operation, when it happened.

Q. Did the tractor turn over on him?
A. A truck loading the muck got stuck. Howard got on his tractor to pull it out. Then, the chain broke, so he put the tractor gear in park position and began to repair the chain. Somehow the gear slipped into operation. He was crushed against the truck. He was tall, so he reached over to push the gear back into park position. He didn’t know his leg was broken and he slipped and fell. Then, the tractor crushed him.

Q. Is he buried here in your cemetery?
A. Yes.

Q. How long did you remain at the Cherokee school?
A. I stayed eight and a half years and graduated.

Q. Was any part of your schooling gotten here on this reservation?
A. As I told you, I went in and out of the reservation school before I went to Cherokee.

Q. Did anyone from this reservation graduate with you?
A. No. But, every year additional Indians from here went to Cherokee. When I graduated there were twenty-one Seminoles from here attending the Cherokee school.

Q. There’s a picture in the local archives which shows you and other Indians getting off a bus. Mrs. O.H. Abbey from Fort Lauderdale is greeting each of you. What part did she play in your schooling?
A. She bought clothing for us. A lot of times she sent us fruit and spending money.

Q. Do you remember the 1973 Broward County Pioneer Days celebration held in Wilton Manors when you stood alongside Mrs. Abbey as she received her certificate of honor as a Broward County pioneer? Do you remember Mrs. Abbey’s daughter Jean?
A. Yes. I used to wear Jean Abbey’s clothes.

Q. Mrs. Abbey was honored particularly for her work in behalf of the Seminoles. She was very sick at the time and Jean Abbey said that her mother put forth a great effort to live so that she could be honored in the presence of her beloved Seminoles. You and Bill Osceola have been selected by the Seminole Tribe to be honored at the 1977 Pioneer Days celebration. If you were called upon at Pioneer Days to speak a few words in the Seminole language, would you do it for the benefit of those present?
A. I guess so.

Q. Remember, most of those who will be present at Pioneer Days have never heard so much as a word in the Seminole language. Is the use of the Seminole language dying out?
A. Well, in a way. Lots of our kids are learning to talk English and they’re losing their native language.

Q. Are there any Seminole spoken here on the reservation?
A. Oh, yes. There’s quite a bit yet. But this younger generation is losing it.

Q. Are there any books published in the Seminole language? Has the Seminole alphabet been put into written form?
A. A man named David West has been working on the phonetics of the Seminole language. But it’s so difficult to read the Seminole language in written form.

Q. You and Joe Dan Osceola speak Seminole, don’t you?
A. Yes, both of us.

Q. Has anyone ever written a Seminole dictionary? Has anyone even suggested such a thing?
A. I think what’s happening now is that the Seminoles who can speak and write the Seminole language are so busy on their own money projects to keep their family going. . .

Q. Has the Seminole Indian council ever drawn up a grant proposal to the federal government for this?
A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Would that, or would that not, be feasible?
A. I think it would be feasible. You wouldn’t know until it was tried.

Q. I understand that there is a Seminole tribal law which forbids Seminoles from imparting their language to whites, but that it has not been rigidly enforced for some time. Is this right?
A. Why it was even forbidden Seminoles to even speak to the white people. There’s a story here. The reason Indians were not permitted to fraternalyze with white people was that the Indians relied upon secrecy about where they were camping out. This was especially true of the Seminoles who guarded themselves this way, the way of keeping their language from the whites so they would not again be defeated by them. We’re speaking about the Second and Third Seminole Wars lasting from 1835 to 1857, off and on. The Seminoles didn’t have any real contact with whites until after 1900, or about fifty years later. They lived out in the Everglades and the leaders told the tribe members not to fraternize with whites. If you do, the leaders threatened, we’ll punish or even kill you. That’s it. This was why Seminoles were forbidden to tell our language to our enemies, which to our forefathers were the white people.

Q. You would not, however, be pro-
hibited by the present Seminole Council from divulging your language to whites?
A. No.
Q. I'm surprised that nothing has been done on this subject. Has anyone tried to write down the Seminole language in the form of words?
A. Not through the Seminole Council. Let's face it, the Council has tried to survive, but not on the language part. Unfortunately, the Council has neglected the language, but it can now see a value in preserving it. That's something that probably will be coming up before too long. Thus far, the Council has opted for economics.
Q. I'm surprised that some whites have not proposed the language matter. Have you heard of any whites proposing this subject?
A. Not on the language part. The church group has done something on the language matter. It had a missionary named David West that lived on the Big Cypress Reservation about fifteen years ago. This white man taught the Micasukey language.
Q. Did he do anything about drawing up a dictionary?
A. He's with the Wycliffe Bible Translators.
Q. If he translated a part of the Bible, would this be a way to preserve the language?
A. It would be. Try to read this portion of the Bible translation. I can't read it.
Q. You can't read it, Joe Dan? Can you read it Betty Mae?
A. No.
Q. Then, your Seminole language is a vocal, or spoken, rather than a written language.
A. Right. But if you studied this translation you could learn to read it. David West has a system by which to read it.
Q. Then, to read this Micasukey translation of the Bible you would have to be educated according to David West's system?
A. Absolutely right.
Q. That follows, for if the language has never been taught to you in a written form then you could not understand the words. For there's a lot of difference between the way a word looks and the way it sounds.
A. To begin with, we Seminoles have many words which, if you put an accent on either the first, second or third part, the word changes meaning completely.
Q. The English are probably the wordiest people going. They have a word for everything and many words for the same thing. Do you have many words which have the same meaning?
A. Yes, many words stand for the same thing. But where you put the accent, the resulting pronunciation determines the meaning of the word.
Q. Do you have any idea how many English words would be required to translate the entire Seminole language?
A. No, I don't know. I've never thought about that.
Q. During World War II, Winston Churchill advocated that the English-speaking people use a basic language, as he termed it, which would consist of no more than 800 words. Do you think that the Seminole language could be compressed into eight hundred words?
A. I doubt it. I seriously doubt it.
Q. Let me get some names and dates straight for they're mixed in this interview up to this point. Betty Mae, your grandfather was named John Gopher?
A. Jim Gopher.
Q. What was his wife named?
A. I don't know, for she died before my time. This was on my mother's side, her uncle.
Q. How about on your father's side, do you know his parents' first names?
A. I don't know.
Q. Your mother's name was Ada Tiger. Was she Jimmie Gopher's daughter?
A. No. Jimmie Gopher was my grandmother's brother. He was not my grandfather. I just called him grandfather. He was actually my great uncle.
Q. Who was your grandfather?
A. Tom Tiger, my mother's father.
Q. Betty Mae Tiger was your name and you married . . .
A. Moses Jumper.
Q. Is he still living?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you know when your grandfather was born or when he died?
A. No, he was hit by lightning.
Q. In his book, Dr. Henshall said he was hit about 1880. Do you know when your mother Ada Tiger was born?
A. No, but she died in 1970.
Q. Do you know her age at her death?
A. She was 87 years old.
Q. What was the year of your birth?
A. 1922.
Q. You came to the Dania Reservation in 1928. What year did you marry Mr. Moses Jumper?
A. 1946.
Q. How many children do you have?
A. I have three.
Q. Would you state their names, please?
A. Moses Jumper, Jr., Boettner Jumper (named for Dr. Boettner, our doctor) and Scarlett Marie Jumper.
Q. Do they all live on this reservation?
A. No. Scarlett is in Oklahoma taking nurses training. Moses is the recreation director on this and two other reservations and Boettner works with him.
Q. How many Indians live on the Dania Reservation at present?
A. About four hundred men, women and children.
Q. How large is the Dania Reservation?
A. 467 acres.
Q. When was the Dania Reservation set aside as a reservation?
A. About 1920 or 1922.
Q. How many Indians live on the Brighton & Big Cypress reservations?
A. About 400 on each reservation.
Q. That means there are about 1200 Seminoles living in Florida. How many Micasukey Indians are there in Florida?
A. Roughly three to four hundred.
Q. The black drink used in the Green Corn Dance, is that the same
black drink used by the Seminoles 150 years ago? The name of your famous war leader, Osceola, is reported to mean black drink. A. I don’t know about that.

Q. A widely reported account states that the Indians vomited the black drink and the one who could vomit the farthest was considered a person of distinction. An Indian friend has stated that the black drink was very difficult to vomit because it was so delicious. Regurgitation does not destroy its fine taste. Would this be the same drink the Indians have used through all the years?

A. I don’t know what they used.

Q. It’s been described as a black tea-like substance gathered from the woods.

A. The medicine men fix different types of medicines for different kinds of sicknesses, for whatever purposes they wanted to use it.

Q. Our Indian friend just called it a black drink.

A. Most roots and herbs turn black whenever they’re boiled. I really don’t know the answer. Just because someone used a black drink in the past doesn’t mean it was the same as that used today. Because I’ve consumed some of the medicinal drinks used today and they’re not really sweet. That is, they weren’t sweet tasting to me. I don’t know what your Indian friend drank. But the purpose of the black drink is to purify your body.

Q. Have you read any books which describe Seminole customs before and during the Seminole wars. That is, books written by whites?

A. I’ve read some of them.

Q. Well, there are some of these books around which describe Seminole customs. There were travelers among the Indian nations and some of them later wrote books about what they observed. So, from the white man’s viewpoint, we have a bit of information about how the Seminoles lived. At present, do the Seminoles live any different than whites, except that you live on the reservation? Do you live any different than whites except for your traditions and color?

A. I don’t think there’s too much difference between the two today. Hardly any difference.

Q. Then, you could live exactly like the whites without much change in your lifestyle?

A. Well, I don’t think that because we’re Indians, that we have to be different from you or, that you being white, that you have to be different from us. Because nowadays, the most important thing is that the federal government has been trying to get the Indians into the mainstream.

Q. Isn’t it confusing that the government changes its policy? From about 1884 until the 1930s the government wanted the Indians to integrate with the whites. Then in the 1930s it urged Indians to do their own thing, preserve their own customs. Now you say that, today, the government wants to mainstream you.

A. Yes, for the last ten years. The government in the 1930s said the Indians could make their own decisions, but it didn’t practice this until ten years ago. That was when we started having a good contact with the people on the Washington level. For a long time, the white people made all the policy, rules, and regulations for us and the tribal leaders were only token Indians. They were there just so people could say, “Hey, he’s a chief.” And yet, a chief could not himself implement the things his people wanted him to. Now, we can demand and receive a little attention. Whereas, before, the government didn’t even hear anything from us. Now, the politicians throughout the country believe in a bloc vote. Yet, you have one million Indians in the United States and half of them don’t vote, saying they are too old, or what’s the use to vote when Indians have been criticized all their lives for some thing. So, we’re talking about a new ball game because some laws have helped us, such as the Indian Preference Law, which affects the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its health service. Although an Indian may not be as qualified as a white man with an advanced college degree, if an Indian has a bachelor’s degree he can become an administrator in the Bureau. In this position he may do a better job than a white because, as an Indian, he may have a better knowledge of the needs of American Indians. Partially, the fault is that few, if any, white schools offer training in Indian life and customs.

Q. You don’t have a separate Indian school on the reservation? A. No. Our children go to the public schools from the first grade up.

Q. Do most Indians complete high school, or do they drop out?

A. If anybody has a hard time finishing school, it’s the American Indians, yet it can be done. My parents, especially my mother, could not speak English and, yet, I finished school.

Q. Joe Dan, you have given us an interesting commentary on the state of the American Indians, particularly in education. Did you go to the local schools?

A. No, I went to school in Okeechobee. But, we have some students now in the local high schools. The problem is that their parents can’t speak English, maybe the mother, and the father is busy trying to earn a living for the family. If anybody has two strikes against
him to begin with, it's the Indian. 

Q. Do you see any Indians going into the professions like medicine, law and engineering? Or, what are Indians concentrating on now? 
A. I'll tell you what they're concentrating on. It's various throughout the tribes. In some tribes, not the Seminoles, some Indians are doctors, dentists, and attorneys. 

Q. Are you referring in any way to the Seminoles? 
A. No, I'm talking about the tribes in the west. Here, in Broward County, we couldn't even go to the public schools until 1948 or 1949, only about 30 years ago. So, what kind of education are you going to have? You can't expect this treatment to produce attorneys or doctors. 

Q. But what about from the present onward? 
A. Yes, from now on. 

Q. Do you expect that the Seminoles in Florida are going to enter the professions? 
A. Yes, they will. As a matter of fact, my next door neighbor has a Ph.D. in literature, which is unheard of in any other tribe. 

Q. Is he a teacher? 
A. He's in charge of education in the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) here. 
Q. What's his name? 
A. Billie Cypress. 
Q. Does he have a connection with the public school system? 
A. I don't think so. His duty is to work with Indian children on the reservation. This means he's interested in advancing the education, health, and welfare of Indian children. Welfare means to advance the interest of Indians, not standing in line to receive a handout. This is something which has not been done for the Indians for 160 years. 

Q. What does he do, specifically? Does he live here on the reservation? 
A. Let me finish the former question. We find that the Indians who were qualified educationally to work in BIA positions up to the 1940s could not find work on the very reservations they were from. At that time, the whites made the laws and regulations for us. Now, recently, we've been getting full employment from the tribal government. Due to Billie Cypress' ability to work with the BIA, he has contact with Indians on the three reservations. It's the students I am talking about. 

Q. Then, Billie Cypress lives here on the reservation. What effect does he have on Joe Dan Osceola's four children? Does he visit them or does he have them in the classroom for instruction? 
A. Although he's my next door neighbor, he doesn't have direct contact with my children. He does with children who are having problems in school. There is one family with three children who flunked this year. These are the ones he's concentrating on. 

Q. He's concentrating then on the low achievers, those needing specific assistance? 
A. Right, those who need help. Why should he spend his very limited time on others? He works the three reservations. He may spend two to three hours going from Brighton to another reservation. 

Q. I understand now. He's working in what whites call compensatory education. 
A. Yes. Also, he seeks financial assistance for the students. 
Q. Betty Mae, would you like to go to college, say Broward Community College, Florida Atlantic University, or Florida International University? 
A. No. 
Q. I don't know how much education you have. Maybe you already have a degree. What about it, Joe Dan? 
A. She has more than a degree in experience. 
Q. Oh, you have a Ph.D. in the field of experience. Let's get some more names and dates if we can. The first date was 1920 or 1922 when this land was made a reservation. Then Betty Mae came in 1928. Who was the first Indian agent? 

Q. Are you sure? 
A. Well, Mr. Spencer was the first agent, but I didn't know him. 
Q. Then Mr. Jack Marshall, then Mr. Glenn. Do you remember who followed him? 
A. Mr. Scott. 
Q. Who followed Mr. Scott? 
A. Mr. Gordine came somewhere. 
Q. Who else? You have to leave for another engagement, Joe Dan? 

Thank you for contributing to this interview. 
A. Mr. Marmom. 
Q. Who followed Mr. Marmom? 
A. Mr. Harrington. 
Q. Who followed him? 
A. There was another agent whose name I've forgotten. Our present agent is Mr. Maxson. 
Q. The Seminole Tribal Council was founded in 1957. What part does the Council play? Can you give me the names of the tribal council heads in order? Are they elected every four years? 
A. Yes, the chairman is elected every four years. The first chairman was Billie Osceola, and I was his vice-chairman. The second chairman was myself, Betty Mae Jumper. 
Q. That means that you served from when to when? 
A. Billie Osceola served two terms or eight years from 1959 to 1967. I served from 1967 to 1971. From 1971 to 1975 Howard Tommie was chairman. He was reelected in 1975 for four years. 
Q. Is this a paying position or does the chairman get paid? 
A. Now it is, but it wasn't in the beginning. 
Q. What does the Seminole Tribal Council do? 
A. It's the main governing body of the Seminole Tribe. 
Q. Of course, it's under the laws of the United States. Just what can the council do? Can it punish any one? 
A. No. The council deals with health, welfare and the long-term leasing of tribal land. 
Q. Does the council intervene in family quarrels? 
A. Sometimes.
Q. Is there divorce among the Seminoles?
A. Yes, they have divorces.
Q. Is there as much divorce as among whites?
A. Now there is.
Q. Does the council have anything to say about divorces?
A. No, that is an individual affair.
Q. Does the council decide what Indians can do economically?
A. It’s concerned with new homes, jobs and new developments.
Q. Then, the council negotiates with the federal government about these?
A. Yes. It gets grants so that Indians can secure jobs on the reservation. It watches over education. It tries to better Indians’ lives and homes.
Q. How is it possible for the council to better Indian life?
A. It sees that you get a new home and surroundings. It supervises who moves into new homes.
Q. Does the council determine what Indians can do in reference to whites?
A. No.
Q. It doesn’t say that an Indian can or can’t work for a white person?
A. No.
Q. Does it say to Indians: “You can’t perform a specifically Indian function unless you get tribal permission?”
A. No. The council lets Indians live like any other person. Its main interest is to assist the Indian’s self-improvement. For example, it sees that the young people have a recreation hall and facilities to enjoy themselves.
Q. Do you have police protection on this reservation?
A. That’s one thing we don’t have.
Q. Do you need police protection?
A. We need it.
Q. Is the council doing anything
Q. Does the sheriff's department constantly patrol this reservation?
A. No. They only come when we call. The department says it doesn’t patrol here because we’re on a reservation and they don’t have any jurisdiction here. That’s what they tell us.

Q. You don’t have any Indian policemen on the reservation?
A. No, but there are Indian policemen on the other two reservations because there is no other law enforcement out there. The problem is paying them to do it. But here we’re close to town and we can call the sheriff.

Q. Do you ever have to call the sheriff?
A. Yes, sometimes.

Q. Does the Seminole Tribal Council act on behalf of all South Florida Seminoles, or only for this reservation?
A. For all Seminoles in South Florida.

Q. Does this include the Micasuky Indians?
A. No, the Micasukies have their own tribal council.

Q. What is the main project the Seminole Council is working on now?
A. It is trying to get new homes built on this reservation and to get more federal grants.

Q. Would you be in favor of leveling all the houses on this reservation and replacing them with new houses?
A. I don’t know. Some Indians have paid off their homes and now own them.

Q. Do the Seminoles have to buy the new homes built?
A. Yes, we buy them. There is nothing given to us. Some Indians have paid for their homes, others are half paid up and some have just started paying for their homes.

Q. Do you receive free automobile licenses?
A. Yes. Also, we get free medical services, including the care of doctors, on the reservation.

Q. Do you have Indian or white doctors on the reservation?
A. We have white nurses and two Cuban doctors.

Q. Do the doctors operate on patients on the reservation?
A. No, we go into hospitals like Plantation, Memorial, or Broward. If Indians need special care, they get specialists to do it.

Q. Does the government cover the cost?
A. Yes, through the health program.

Q. Do you have to pay your own electric bills?
A. Oh, yes, and water too.

Q. Bill Osceola is president of the Board of Directors. How does he function?
A. He functions under the council as the business manager for the tribe.

Q. Is the president elected by the council?
A. No. He is elected by the Indian people.

Q. How many council members are there?
A. There are three members, one from Brighton, one from Big Cypress, and one from the Dania Reservation, elected from the three reservations. All the Seminoles elect the chairman of the council. So, this makes four members of the council. Then, the chairman of the council automatically becomes the vice-president of the Board of Directors who are the business managers of the tribe. And the president of the Board of Directors automatically becomes the vice-chairman of the tribal council and so, both council and the board each have five members.

Q. Do the five members of the Board of Directors, then, run the business affairs of the South Florida Seminoles, like the Okalee craft shop here?
A. Yes. The board tries to bring more business to the reservations. Also, it oversees the cattle enterprise.

Q. Then, how does the board differ from the council?
A. The council is the governing body of the tribe. It furnishes health and welfare services.

Q. Does this mean that the council is the body that deals with the government?
A. Yes, the board is the business arm of the Indian people.

Q. This discussion has clarified the relation of the council and the board. But, who is the top person among the Seminoles?
A. The chairman of the council, presently is Howard Tommie, not Bill Osceola, as you mentioned before. Bill Osceola is vice-chairman of the council and president of the Board of Directors, of which Howard Tommie is the vice-president.

Q. That means, does it, that two people serve on both the council and the board? Then, there are four persons on the council who have only one job and four persons on the board that have only one job.
A. Yes.

Q. Who was vice-chairman when you were chairman of the council?
A. Joe Dan Osceola. We worked together.

Q. How old are his children?
A. Some are around 12 years old. There are three boys and one girl. Here’s a picture of them.

Q. Was Joe Dan ever chairman of the council?
A. No, but he was president of the Board of Directors when I was Chairman of the council and vice-president of the board. That was from 1967 to 1971.

Q. When was the board formed?
A. In 1957, but the officers did not function then the way they do now. Then the board had its own president and vice-president and consisted of eight members, the same as the council. At that time, the board and council had nothing to do with each other.

Q. Do you see the council today as having more, less, or the same importance as when it was first organized?
A. About the same.
A. About the same. Not much had been done until I became chairman of the council and Joe Dan became president of the board. Then we started bringing a lot of things here.

Q. Can you give an example of what you brought here?
A. Well, we started working for federal grants which, before, we hadn’t done. The first grant was for the Head Start program for Indian education. Then, we started leasing reservation land to bring in money.

Q. Did you lease reservation land to whites?
A. Yes. The Escom Company is an example.

Q. You mean that the land occupied along Highway 441 by Escom Trailer Park is Indian reservation land?
A. Yes.

Q. Can you sell reservation land?
A. No, but we can lease it.

Q. What is the status of your Seminole suit filed against the federal government relative to the ownership of all the land in Florida which the latter deprived you of before, during, and after the Seminole Wars? Some time ago, the newspapers stated that the courts had awarded the Seminole tribe twelve million dollars.
A. It’s sixteen million dollars now.

Q. Inflation cause the raise?
A. No. But now we’re fighting the Seminoles in Oklahoma.

Q. Do they want part of the sixteen million dollars?
A. Yes. They want to take two-thirds of it, so we would only get one-third. It’s unfair. The federal government gave them land in Oklahoma and they sold it, but we held onto our Florida land.

Q. So, you don’t actually own any land?
A. No, the reservation land is entrusted to us.

Q. Do you know Annie Tiger? We understand she has children attending the public schools and that she has begun to learn English through them. She has now enrolled in adult education. Are there still some Indians in Florida who cannot speak English?
A. Yes, but Indians are beginning to help each other with language. Mrs. Jimmie is a 78 year old woman who is doing fourth grade work and she couldn’t speak a word of English before she started to study.

Q. Do you remember when Brownie Tommie was honored at the first Broward County Pioneer Days in 1973 held in Wilton Manors? He was about 75 years old then. Is he still living?
A. Yes, he’s about 80 years old now. He knew Mrs. Stranahan in his younger days.

Q. Did you ever have contact with Mrs. Frank (Ivy) Stranahan?
A. Yes. She was the first person to buy me a dress so that I could go off to the Cherokee school. She helped me much of my life.

Q. She had a great influence upon you, then?
A. Yes.

Q. I hate to ask this question, but I am going to do it anyway. It may be an embarrassment, so you can answer or not answer it as you please. Which rendered the greatest service to the Seminoles, Mrs. Stranahan or Mrs. Abbey, or was it someone else among the whites?
A. Mrs. Stranahan and Mrs. Abbey both served. Of course, Mrs. Abbey was right there with the clothes for the Seminoles. So, you can’t say that one did more than the other. Much of the time they worked together.

Q. Did any other white person have a particular influence, or was very helpful to the Seminoles, that you remember?
A. They were the only two outstanding ones. Others came in and out.

Q. Mrs. Ann Sheldon has given the Broward County Historical Commission her scrapbooks which show the work of the Friends of the Seminoles and other whites among the Indians.
A. Some were on the sidelines, like her. Different ones came in and out to help us. But Mrs. Stranahan was there in the beginning.

Q. Did Mr. Stranahan ever do anything to help the Seminoles?
A. Yes. I think he was associated with Brownie Tommie and his generation. I didn’t know him personally.

Q. That’s understandable, for he killed himself in 1929. Do you know Mary Jane Storm?
A. Yes, she’s about 42 or 43 years old.

Q. Was her brother drowned on the reservation recently?
A. It was her husband George. George Storm seemed to be quite talented. I have been informed that he used to attend the meetings of the Broward County Archaeological Society where he was known as a good speaker.

Q. Did he drown here on the reservation?
A. In a rockpit behind the home of Reverend Crenshaw.

Q. When did the Seminoles stop going up to the Cherokee Indian school in North Carolina?
A. Actually, the Seminoles have not stopped going to some boys’ schools. Some go out to Sequoyah, Oklahoma, and Tellequah and all around.

Q. Where is Tellequah?
A. In Oklahoma. It’s an Oklahoma boarding school.

Q. The Indian boys from here still go out there to a boarding school?
A. A lot of them. That’s what the government does, send them out.

Q. Does anyone still go to the Cherokee school?
A. No. That boarding school has been done away with. If it was still operating, the Indians from here would go up there. But, there are some that go to the Choctaw boarding school in Mississippi.

Q. Weren’t the ones of Judybill Osceola’s age, who went to the Cherokee school, the first Seminoles to enter the public school in Dania?
A. Yes, Priscilla Sayen and Eugene Bowers and that group were the first ones to enter the public school in Dania. Mrs. Abbey gets credit for that. She fought the school board in behalf of the Seminoles.
Q. Judybill speaks of the old Dania school building, that some people are trying to save, as historical a structure as her old homestead.
A. Mrs. Abbey fought to get the Indians into the Dania School. That was around 1948. I served under President Richard Nixon for two years as a member of the National Congress of American Indians. That’s progress for the Seminoles.

Q. The National Congress of American Indians?
A. On Indian opportunity. There were eight of us serving on it from all over the United States. Of these, two were women from national extremes, one from Alaska, and one from Florida.

Q. Where did the congress meet?
A. We met in Washington and went all over the United States. We went to Alaska twice.

Q. Did you work with President Nixon?
A. We worked with Vice-President Spiro Agnew and met him frequently. I met with President Nixon and we sat around and drank coffee together.

Q. Has anyone else in the Seminole Tribe achieved national distinction? Hanging here on the wall is Joe Dan Osceola’s certificate which states that he and his family beg an Apostolic blessing from the Pope. Here’s another certificate which proclaims Joe Dan’s appointment to the Florida Governor’s Council on Indian Affairs.

A. Howard Tommie was also a member of this council. This was in 1974 under Governor Reuben Askew. I was elected to the Florida Bicentennial Commission and our normal meeting place was in Tallahassee.

Q. You, Betty Mae, was chosen as one of the outstanding figures in the Bicentennial Year. Do you know who chose you?
A. The Florida Bicentennial Commission selected me. The Micasukey Tribe sent in my name or nominated me.

Q. You have good relations with the Micasukies, then?
A. Yes, I work well with their chairman.

Q. Who is their chairman?
A. Buffalo Tiger. Together we began Busek, which is a council of Indian tribes in the Southeastern United States. Emmett York, a Choctaw Indian, was chairman. There were really four organizers: York, Buffalo Tiger, the Cherokee chairman, and myself. It still operates.

Q. What tribes are included in this council?
A. There are now six or seven since New York and Louisiana came in, but, in the beginning, there were four tribes: Cherokee, Choctaw, Seminole, and Micukey.

Q. No Creeks? 
A. No.

Q. Who was your representative from the Cherokees?
A. Walter Jackson, a former schoolmate of mine.

Q. Are there any Chickasaw Indians left?
A. Yes.

Q. This means, then, that all the five civilized tribes still exist: the Seminoles, Creeks, Choctaws, Cherokees, and Chickasaws?
A. Yes. Let me present this document to the Broward County Historical Commission on behalf of the Seminoles.

Q. Thank you, Betty Mae. I see that it’s a copy of the Treaty of Fort Gibson, Arkansas Territory, signed March 28, 1833. Are you familiar with the terms of this treaty or agreement signed by representatives of the Seminole tribes and representatives of the United States government?
A. I’m not very familiar with the terms.

Q. The Seminole representative or delegation included John Hicks, Holata Emathla, Coa-Hado, Charley Emathla, Yahadjo, Nehathoclo, and Chief Jumper. The latter was one of your ancestors, Betty Mae. These representatives of the Seminoles had gone from Florida to the Arkansas Territory to inspect federal government land. By signing this agreement they agreed that Arkansas land was acceptable to the Seminoles in exchange for their land in Florida.

But the Seminoles didn’t follow the terms of this agreement because, later, these same representatives stated they had not signed the agreement, that someone else signed in their stead, or made “X’s” opposite their names. This copy of the agreement simply shows, for example, John Hicks “his mark,” Jumper “his mark,” Charley Emathla “his mark,” etc. The Seminole representatives later said they did not put their “X” or “their mark” beside their names.

Back in Florida many of the Seminoles said that, if their representatives had, in fact, signed the agreement, their signatures alone did not make the agreement binding on the Seminole nation. The representatives should have submitted the agreement to the nation in council and all the Seminoles should have been given the opportunity to vote the agreement up or down. This historic document was one of a series of events which brought on the memorable Second Seminole War from 1835 to 1842.

Thank you, again, Betty Mae, for this gift to the Historical Commission. We also appreciate your participation in this oral history interview.

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CORRECTION:

In Volume 3, Numbers 3 & 4, a factual error was made on page 35. The caption for the map “Lewis Settlement In 1793” should have stated that the property was surveyed in 1845 rather than 1825.