Isaac McGhee and Magdalene Rolin

Poarch Creek Project

CRK-003

Interview by:

Dr. J. Anthony Paredes
March 15, 1972

One Community, Many Voices.
Samuel Proctor
Oral History
Program

University of Florida • Samuel Proctor Oral History Program • Paul Ortiz, Director
P.O. Box 115215, 241 Pugh Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-5215
(352) 392-7168 www.clas.ufl.edu/history/oral

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Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Program Director: Dr. Paul Ortiz

241 Pugh Hall
PO Box 115215
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 392-7168
https://oral.history.ufl.edu

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Interviewed by J. Anthony Paredes on March 15, 1972
41 minutes | 35 pages

Abstract: Isaac McGhee, who was born in 1884, describes the few families who were originally in the area and how people cooked. He discusses the history of trying to get land or land money back from the government, and recalls a preacher who tried to do so. He and Magdalene Rolin discuss how Calvin McGhee raised funds to go to Washington. They describe how people lost their land, sold for little money or traded for animals. They discuss how people began claiming to be Indian once Calvin started signing people up. They describe how the children of White and Indian parents can have lighter or darker skin. They describe aspects of what life was like when they were young, including cooking, Indian herb doctors, and hunting practices.

Keywords: [Poarch Band of Creek Indians; Chief Calvin McGhee; Alabama--Poarch; Activism; Tribal history]

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M: When I was born?

P: Yeah. Who you are, and when you were born.

M: Isaac McGhee. Born October the first, 1884.

P: Why don't you just start out what you were just going to tell me about when you were a boy? Just go ahead and start.

M: When I was a boy, growing up, there weren't nobody living in this country but just four family beside the Indian folk. That was Old Man John Parker, Old Man **Fred Cruitt** and Old Man Tom Hadley.

P: How many Indian families were there?

M: It was just us and Papa's folk and brothers and sisters.

P: How did the Indian families make their living back in those days?

M: Farmed a little. Killed wild hogs.

P: They did what?

M: Yeah. [Laughter]

P: Just go ahead and keep talking. [Laughter]

M: They farmed a little. Killed wild hogs, deer, turkey, one thing another like that. Done their own cooking, cleaning. Ate one thing or another.

P: Did you say that you had known Lynne McGhee?

M: Yeah. No, I didn't know him; I know where his grave is. I never did get to see him.

P: Did you know some of his children?

M: Yeah. Papa was his grandson. My daddy—

P: Your father was his grandson, though?

M: Mm-hmm.

P: Maybe you could remember from listening to stories when you were a boy, how it is that there came to be a lot of Indians living around this area? How did that come to be in the first place? The first ones that came here when you was Lynne McGhee and them.

M: Yeah. There's Old Man Lynne McGhee and his sister. One of his sisters come with him. That's Old Man John Steadham's wife.

P: You told me something about Lynne McGhee piloted Andrew Jackson?

M: That's right, Andrew Jackson through an Alabama swamp over here.

P: Oh?

M: We was cutting crossties over there in the Alabama River, a swamp. Come to a trail, and the fella we was cutting them ties for told us that's the trail that Old Man Lynne McGhee and them soldier boys piloted him from Montgomery into Mobile.

On top of the little hill out there, we find something with a marker and we thought there's money buried there. We got a money machine and went back there to see and one of them soldiers died there, they just got up on top of the hill.

P: Well, maybe in a general way, you could just talk about, in your lifetime, how have things changed and gotten different over the years. Why don't you start with when you were a boy and just talk about things that have happened?

M: Happened then.

P: Yeah, and right on up to the present time, and how things have changed.

M: Well, we didn't have nothing to do. We didn't have nothing to do, only going with Papa to clean up land. And I know you see all this land cleaned up round here from when we go help our daddy clean up that land up just about. We didn't, nothing for us here we could do.

P: And people just farmed, or…?

M: Yeah. We all just farmed.

P: What about turpentine?

M: Yeah, had turpentine. Right down here in Atmore, had a little turpentine still. And Papa leased his timber to that turpentine man.

P: He did what with his timber?

M: Huh?

P: He did what with his timber?

M: Leased it to the turpentine man. In Atmore. Weren't nothing out there but a little turpentine still and stilling company in Atmore.

P: You were, when I met you the first time, you were telling me about some of the ways people used to do things before they had modern conveniences.

M: That's right.

P: Things they would make. Could you tell some of that again, about how they fix their rice and their corn and all of that?

M: [laughter] They had a, what I call, went out a mortar out of a big pine, you know, and they'd whip the rice off, you know, and beat it in that mortar and eat it, cook it and eat it. Boil the meat on a little old stick, you know, like that, we been working on fixing meat on our little stick, Papa go cut some little ole stick, you know, it sticks on that. Hold it over that fire and broil it. [Laughter]

P: What kind of houses did people live in?

M: Log houses. Log houses, yes, yes.

P: Log houses? Did people have wood stoves, or how did they cook?

M: On the fireplace.

P: Right on the fireplace?

M: Just like you see that. Sometimes, I don't see how they'd cook; the fire'd be so hot. But after they'd get it like that, you know, in coal—why, take them coals in and prop them up on that lid and bake biscuits, sweet potatoes, something like that. Meat, anything that they wanted to bake, well they put them coals up on that lid. They had made a, what we call, mashed together just like a tire, when you pick up them coal that things…

P: And that's how people cooked.

M: That's right. That's right. That's right.

P: What did people do for recreation back in those days? If they had any.

M: [laughter] I went to day school ten days in my life. I was crippled, you see, I walk crippled on account of that foot.

P: What kind of schools did they have when you were a boy?

M: It was school just like they got now. We had to go through here about four or five mile walk.

P: Was it just Indians in the school?

M: No, white and Indian.

P: White and Indian.

M: That's right, Indian.

P: I heard that at one time there was a school that just mainly Indians went to over here.

M: Yeah, it's up here now.

P: That was after your time?

M: Yeah. You heard about Chief McGhee. He kept wrangling on with them till he got his schoolhouse built up there, and then after he got it, well, he somehow or another, quit going there to this, on what the little teenagers going up there now.

P: But when you were a boy, Indians, whites, didn't matter, you went to the same school.

M: Same school, same school.

P: Was that located right around here, or what?

M: About three or four miles in.

P: Oh. No school buses back then, huh?

M: No. [Laughter] Walk about five miles, that's the reason I had to quit.

P: Oh.

M: See that foot and how I walk crippled? Well, I had to walk down here from Papa's old homestead slam up there to the school. Couldn't make it.

P: Oh, okay. How long have people been talking about Indian money and land money?

M: Oh, that. Ever since I been big enough to know what the Indians was. That's it. I reckon some, the first old darkies come to this country went onto our wagon one time going to town. Mister, say, don't you know this is your own land here? They said, this here belongs to the Indian folk. Which, after I got up some size, well, that's what they commence to teaching, but you knowed to give us, that land belongs to us. Indian folk.

P: But you didn't know that.

M: No.

P: Well, how long have people been trying to get some money for all that land? Has that just been since Calvin McGhee's time, or before?

M: No, no, no. A preacher come through here one time, preach for us I think about fifteen- or twenty-year-old fellow by the name of John Beck, Baptist preacher. He used to take about ten. He wrote us up for our bill was a dollar and a half for a form. When Calvin and them started, they found some of his work right there in Washington. All right, there come another man through here, big Indian fellow.

P: Big Indian fellow, you say?

M: Yeah, had a lawyer with him. He charged five dollars to write us up. Not a work going on, I had a breach-loaded shotgun. I had to sell that to him to get my five dollars and that signed slip and ain't no money yet.

P: So in the past, there have been people who came through getting money from the Indians to say they were going to get land with that, or land money with it?

M: That’s right, that’s right.

P: And the first one you knew of was John Beck, a Baptist preacher?

M: John Beck, John Beck, yeah.

P: About what years were those, do you remember?

M: No, I can’t remember that. Preached out there to Bell Creek, I reckon, for the Indian folk twenty or twenty-five years, to the best of my knowledge. Then it come to splitting the church and he got another ‘cause he was preached like a Holiness. Mama’s brother didn’t like it ‘cause he preached like a Holiness. And back then, we didn’t even know what holiness was in them days. He even sat on the step with his shotgun and wouldn’t let him preach. [Laughter] Right today, is on account of that, one got a little church and one got a little church way there.

P: Was this before the Episcopalians came in?

M: Huh?

P: Was this before the Episcopalians came in?

M: That’s right. That’s right. They checked right up there, the Episcopalians did.

P: Are all the people around here descendents of the Creek Indian tribe?

M: That’s right, that’s right.

P: I think maybe it was you, that when I first met you, said something about people trying to get in as Cherokees or something. How did that go?

M: That’s what they wrote up when they first came through here.

P: When Beck came through?

M: That’s right. Didn’t know no one know better. But when Cal[vin] and them went back to Washington, I don’t know if George got down there or not, they got a little book, he had to get two hundred and fifty dollars for that book. They see where they was created from then, found out they were Creek Indians.

P: Do you remember some of those old timers, when you were a boy, talking in the Indian language at all?

M: Papa could. Papa could. He tried to learn us boys, but we never could get it.

P: You never learned a word of it?

M: Not a word.

P: Not even how to count in it or anything?

M: Huh? Huh?

P: You never learned how to count in it or anything like that?

M: No, not this and that. He tried his best with us, but he said things now we didn’t understand. [laughter] That’s right.

P: Well, he must have, when you were little tiny kids, they must have started out talking in English to you, I guess. It was later on he tried to get you to learn it.

M: That’s right.

P: Well—

M: ‘Course, his neighbor was up there, old man, John Parker, like I tell you. We didn’t know what one was, hardly, that once till every Saturday evening, we’d go from our house and then out to Mama’s brother. He had some children out there, we’d go out there, play till Sunday evening and come back home.

P: John Parker was a white man?

M: Yeah, he was a white man.

P: All right, something else along these lines. Oh, I know what I was going to ask you. As I think you are the oldest man in the community, how do you feel about things that have happened over recent years with the land claims and all that and what advice do you have for younger people as an older man in the community?

M: Well, I think if there’s anything for it they ought to give to us, but we too old now to ever reach any benefit if they don’t pay us off right quick. But this young generation ought to have something, the money, the land, what. I’d hate to go to judgment on that, knowing that it belongs to us and we couldn’t get it.

R: You got it.

M: You got it. That’s right, that’s fine.

R: We worked hard for it all our lives.

P: Have, in this latest land claims thing, have people had to pay money for their forms and papers like they did before?

M: They homesteaded. Papa homesteaded down there where he's buried at. And so when he mortgaged it and couldn't find no work, he owned just a little farm, never could make nothing on it. Cotton five cents a pound or something like that. So he had to let the man have that mortgage, and he told him that when he take the mortgage, says, I want you to give me a acre here for me a graveyard, see here where I want to be buried. Said, all right, Uncle Joe says, you can have it. So he done it. Said, take it to them out there and deed it off. I toted the line and I deeded the thing.

P: What I was asking about was in this working for the money that had been going on since Calvin McGhee came along, have people had to pay money for their forms and papers for this?

M: Indian folk?

P: Yeah.

M: No, they work for the other man. They didn't hire any fella. Near about every fella in here 'bout worked for the other…

P: For the forms, you know you said, John Beck charged a dollar and a half, somebody else charged five dollars.

R: I know Calvin, we paid Calvin.

M: Oh, yeah, we paid Calvin every time. He was a poor man, just like I was, but when he went to Washington to get this thing straightened out, we had to make up money along to help him go. He didn't have it. But we made up—what's that?

P: He was a poor man, too?

M: Yeah, just like we was. There's no telling how many times we made up money for Calvin to go to Washington and all. Just cause he had started that thing, he was gonna run it to the bitter end, see if there's anything to it. Well, he got it that far and he died. We'd a done had that money, I believe, if Calvin had lived.

P: How did people around here manage to get the money together? What did they do to get money together for Calvin?

M: Work. Most of it was working, but now—

R: They'd have a check and have a supper.

M: Yeah, some of them had a supper, and some of them they brought a little, a little check from the welfare check. I gave them a many a dollar out of what little welfare I got out of the welfare. Wasn't able to do nothing hardly, though.

R: We had a hard time all our life.

M: All our life, that's what I said.

R: Never was nothing given to us.

M: If there ever was a fella that ought to do right, it's the man sitting in the government's office, the president's office, should give us that money. That man has to go to judgment. He knows it belongs to us. If he don't pay that off, I'd hate to meet the judgment with that on me. That's right. According to the Bible, he's gotta repent. That's right.

R: Said the old people, that I got it, the old people with they maybe want a mule or a horse, they'd give that land for that horse. Back in them days, my mama told me about it.

M: Papa had that, thank God. Homestead down there and Old Man Emmons, he's a white man, come in there, wanted to buy thirty acres. Papa sold it to him for thirty dollars an acre—a dollar and a quarter an acre, and taking a wagon for part of it. [laughter]

P: So the people around here in your lifetime have lost a lot of land.

M: I reckon we have lost a lot.

R: There's one more led the mule or horse. Which one of it, with that whole war was going to leave the house?

M: That was Aunt Polly Rolin. This here woman, a grandma, great-grandma—well, what Papa was, he was fighting the Yankees. They come to this country from Mobile up Pensacola, going in back there to Montgomery. Her mother had a little, her great-grandma had a place up there what called Red Hill and see'd them coming and she went and got that old horse and colt and sat in the gallery with them. And Papa said one of them fellows wanted to kill that horse. And the captain said, no, don't you bother old lady's horse, just go on and let her keep it. [laughter]

P: That's when the Yankees were coming through here from Mobile? You say your father was in that war?

M: That’s right, that’s right, absolutely.

P: Through the years, have a lot of young men among the Indians here fought in different wars or things?

M: Oh, yeah. I had—what more kin was I that know the name?

R: The second one?

M: Nick. There was four of us in that first war. I went and had, but I never did go across. I never did fightnin’, but I had to go to the training camp, and there’s three beside me. First cousin, I know beside my uncle, Noah, Riley, and Nick. And that’s War One, number one. They fought all the way through too.

P: Were you drafted or did you join up?

M: I was drafted.

P: You were drafted.

M: They volunteered, Noah and Nick and Riley.

P: One thing, another thing I’m interested in is, in the past, have the Indian people around here been much for voting in elections?

M: Yes. Every one of them gets big enough to vote, well, register to vote.

P: There’s never been any problem with Indians having the right to vote or anything?

M: No.

P: No, never have?

M: No.

R: Ever knock you on the ground with it, you'd have the scrappiest fight you ever saw. Because they don't think you better let an Indian alone [laughter].

Unidentified man: Only thing they have trouble with them is about going to school.

R: About that school thing.

Unidentified man: With the whites.

R: If Jack Daughtry didn't sit down in that road to stop that bus, then my children wouldn't be put on that bus.

P: And after that time, they bussed them in to school?

R: They all bussed them back over to school, used to. My husband, he could have got finished, but, you see, all those been put off up here to this the old school up here with old Ms. Bates and Preacher Edwards. Seeing as they couldn't get the high school education back in them days, like they is now, 'cause we had Indian in us. Had to put us aside, that's it. Had us down where we couldn't get out—the white people. But if they wanted Indians to do something, they knowed where to come. They wanted help, they knew where to come. I mean want to get help they knowed where to come. They would use them.

P: Through the years, Uncle Isaac, how have Indians been treated in stores around here, in Atmore, and places like that?

M: Well, I couldn't really tell you that. Only go down and pay for what they got and come out and get what they want and come out…

P: Was there ever a time when Indians couldn't go in restaurants in town or anything like that?

M: Yeah, they tried to do it, but they'd get mad and they'd go in anyhow.

P: They wouldn't, Indians wouldn't put up with it.

M: No, sir, they wouldn't.

P: Well, you think that in time—maybe not in the near future but sometime—do you think that people from around here will stand up and be proud of being Indian, or have they always been proud of being Indian?

M: That's right.

P: I've heard some people say that—

M: I've met a lot of people since I got this—since this here thing got started—I'm glad I'm part Indian. Figure they're gonna get something out of it, but before they get started they'd sooner cuss you then look at you and never bother with it but now since that money's comin'—

P: Now all of a sudden they're Indians.

M: I'm Indian. I'm Indian. I'm glad I've got that Indian blood in me.

R: All Atmore's half-Indian. [laughter]

M: Some come down there, the Calvin brothers. Now, listen, Calvin told this for a fact. He wanted to shut the door, kept looking out there, said, what are you looking out there for? Said, ‘cause we knowed them all our lives and we didn’t want these white folks catching me, Calvin, signing up down there. That’s how bad it was.

R: Two-facing, that’s what it’s called, two-facing.

P: So there was some people who wanted to sign up for the money but did it on the sly?

M: Yeah. [laughter]

P: Have there been any colored folks that have claimed to be Indian?

M: No, sir, not a one.

R: We don’t fool with colored folks. We’re Indian and we know we’re Indian.

M: There’s what the trouble is, you see, all them claimed they didn’t have no Indian in them till they get this started. They’re as much into it as I am, yet about as much as Indian as I am, but because they’re a little white, they want to kick out. I know, I know.

R: You’ll see a lot of dark ones, but you got to be Indian and white, it ain’t no nigger connected to it.

P: Well, I was just wondering if any of the coloreds that tried to claim that they were part Indian? Yeah. ‘Cause I know that—

R: I know what you mean for a fact around here, but they never bother me 'cause we treats everybody right, if you talking about—you know what I mean.

P: Mm-hmm.

M: Before, you know, when the white man first come to this country, didn't find no women here but the Indian folk. Jumped on these women and went to marrying them, and so they been marrying them ever since. But after a while, they come out darker, sometimes white. But that older generation just about dying out. Everything near about now is white. You can't hardly tell them from a white person, but you go back to the old stump, he's an Indian. And that's where Cal[vin] had them blowed up. A lot of them claim it, you know, call you white, didn't prove up and, but when Calvin throwed the book on them, he had about as much Indian as I do. That's right, that's right. [Laughter] Now, you look at that lady right there, don't look like she's hardly got a drop in her, don't she? All right.

P: That's true. Are you saying that through the years, there's been more and more of whites and Indians getting together?

M: That's right, that's right.

P: But when you were a boy, there just weren't many white people around?

M: No, no. No.

R: Now just for instance. Do you think this girl and that girl are sisters?

P: Which of the two over here?

R: The one's got the baby. Do you think they are sisters?

P: I wouldn't guess if they were sisters. Are they?

R: They are.

P: Well, it's just like what you were saying. [laughter]

R: Did you see the boy, the dark-complected boy that went out? They brother and sisters, they my two daughters and their brother.

M: Just like I told you before, you know, when the white man come over there, that was when Papa, back in they days, they didn't find nobody here but this, the Indian folk. Mighty few women, but they were just about full-blood. Well, they just kept on with the marrying.

P: I think I asked you before, maybe I didn't—when you were a boy, just about how many Indians were living in this area right around here?

M: Oh, a good many of them, but I'll have to, I reckon over a hundred.

P: Over a hundred?

M: Yeah.

P: Over a hundred, but only four families at once. How did Poarch get its name? Do you know how they started calling this area up here Poarch?

M: I don't know how come that, but it used be when my dad was growing up, went by the name Headapadida. And so after they got them school and things up there, and people moved from here to up there, called it Poarch. They had a Poarch train went right on out there, well it's there yet, went cross to Headapadida and came back down here to Hog Fork, they named it Poarch.

P: Now, you don't know why they named it Poarch?

M: Sure don't.

P: Was there ever a Poarch post office? Was there ever a post office out here?

M: No. Just a switch there, just a switch. And I loaded a many a car down, but nowadays, going back—I'll tell you, my old man John Parker? There's a post office sitting way back of his place back there in the woods, like a post office, just one little house. Post office.

P: What was Atmore like when you were a boy?

M: Nothing but a turpentine still and then just one or two houses. Me and Mama used to go down there and get grub for the children down there down there what's married off, on an old wagon. Weren't nothing there but where we go in, just like this house is built, come in here and get the stuff out of this end and the turpentine still was in that other end, the turpentine still.

P: Was it called Atmore in those days?

M: Yes, Atmore.

P: It was called Atmore, it was named Atmore?

M: That’s right. The man was stilling that turpentine was named Tidmore. He leased Papa’s timber down here on this homestead. He got big timber, you know. He come in there and leased it and tried to box it. A bunch of niggers came out and camped in Papa’s crib and cut them boxes with an old long knife about that long. Cut them about that deep. Holding that over a quart of gum where they would…

P: Over what?

M: He’d hold over a quart of gum when they’d go to dip them.

P: So you’ve seen a lot of changes in your life?

M: [laughter] Oh, I reckon I have. Had to work every day for a living. Wouldn’t get nothing out of it. When night come or payday would come, maybe something like that, but you could take a dollar and a half in them days, get more in them days than you can with ten dollars now.

P: Yeah. And it seems to get worse every year.

M: Every day, that’s right. That’s right, that’s right, that’s right.

[Break in recording]

P: Say your name, please.

R: My name is Magdalene Rolin. My grandmother was named Tildy McGhee and she went out there in the field to get us some corn to make corn *sofke* for us to eat.

P: Would you tell me how you make *sofke*?

R: Well, all she would do is go out there and clean the corn, get the corn off the cob, wash it good, and clean it, and put it on her griddle, and grit it, and then make it up, like you do your cornbread, and that's what's called sofke.

P: Was it fried cornbread?

R: No, she'd put it in a stove and bake it, it would be cornbread. New cornbread. But that's what they call it, call it *sofke*.

P: They call it *sofke*. Were there any other kinds of foods that people used to eat a lot of that folks haven't eaten much of lately?

R: Well, they used to grit sweet potatoes and they'd call it—what was that Granny'd call that? **Tater pone**. Tater pone. Used to, you know, grit the potatoes, sweet potatoes, and they'd wash it, and they'd call it tater pone.

P: Do people around here, or have they in the past, eaten a lot of wild berries and pokeweed and things like that?

R: No, none of our people have. No. They like wild stuff though. Deer and turkey and things, they love to hunt. Fishing—we love that hobby of fishing, all of us.

P: What kind of fishing?

R: Fishing. With a line. Reels, and lines. On Holly Creek we'd go fishing a lot.

P: I just thought of one other thing, maybe both of you could answer. Have there ever been any Indian doctors around here that you can remember?

R: Yeah, Frazier McGhee. Noah McGhee's brother was an Indian doctor. He'd go out in the woods to get herbs, but knowing what kind of herbs you'd get, Frasier would.

P: How did—

M: Now just let me stick a word in.

P: Okay. [laughter]

M: Now, don't pick that up and put it down till I tell you.

P: Okay. [laughter] How did people learn to be Indian doctors in the old days? How did they learn it? How did they learn about how to be an Indian doctor?

M: Papa's sister. I went out a many a night to the doctor to people. She'd be riding in a buggy, maybe see a little pieces of stuff yonder like some kind of vine or root. Stop, stop, stop, she says, yonder's something I need. Get medicine out of the woods, buddy, do you more good than any doctors right in Atmore right today. I can go out there and find you a dose of the medicine it'll work you just as quick as a dose of medicine you can get from any doctor. [laughter]

P: So you do know about some of the wild things?

M: Yeah, that's right, that's right, that's right.

R: Yes, that's right. Out in the woods, yep.

P: Herb doctor? Well, what do people, what's—

M: I didn’t mention my brother a while ago when she was talking. Now, he didn’t have no license. After they caught him and put him in jail and they did take one of them what was going with them. He had money for a brother, son going with him to sell it. Caught him and put him in Brewton jail. So me and **Agee**, that’s one of my brothers, and Old Man Will McGhee, that was my uncle’s brother, had to go up there and get him out. Cost about fifty dollars apiece to get him out.

P: For selling…?

M: For selling that medicine without a license and they couldn’t get no license in Alabama. So that’s why could’ve saved the money and got it for three hundred dollars for the license, but they didn’t know they’d get that much ahead.

P: Three hundred was a lot of money to get in those days.

M: That’s right. That was legal. But they coulda got that three hundred dollars and bought the lot, I say that’d a made it in less time than two weeks. I went with them…

P: What were these people—I said Indian doctor and you said herb doctor, what was it people usually called them? Did they just call them doctor, or—

M: No, called them herb doctor.

P: Herb doctor.

M: Old Indian herb doctor. [laughter]

P: Indian herb doctor. And a lot of colored folks liked the herb doctor.

M: That’s right. That’s what I started to tell you, I went with him over on the Alabama River twice. And every house he’d go to they advertise that medicine what the good for you, you know. All right, he comes on an old lady had a walking stick sitting on a porch, legs just all swelled up, where are you old, lady? Mister, say, I got the rheumatism! Y’all got something here, knock that rheumatism out. Made up a little watered down something to give her. Fine and all for that treatment. And we be back in here, I say, two weeks from today. Told one of them, said, you know me, says, I been coming in here a pretty good while. You had a march on the hill. But we didn’t go back that time, something happened and he didn’t go back. And he said when we went back, he said, this ridge is black with niggers and everybody who went back up there was checking, I bet they’d taken in over a thousand dollars. Said, that ridge is black. [Laughter] But, anyhow, he mixed up another dose of medicine and that cured that woman. I can show you some people around Atmore that he cured, but he doesn’t say anything about it.

P: Well, how is the knowledge about these herbs passed on? Just passed down from father to son, or what? How did you learn about it for yourself, how did you learn about which plants are good?

M: Papa’s sister. Papa’s sister, she got all her medicine got out of that woods.

P: She taught you, you learned from her.

M: That’s right, that’s right.

P: Did any of these old herb doctors, did they ever do anything besides make up herbs? Did they do laying on of hands, or—

M: Oh, yeah, yeah. Drive oxen, drive around these old camps here [laughter].

P: No, I mean for treating people. Do they ever do laying on of hands, or anything like that?

M: No.

P: Did you ever see anybody use a rattle or anything like that to do any kind of old-fashioned Indian kind of medicine?

M: No.

P: Just the herbs.

M: They'd go out in the woods, that's right. He got you, I can fix you up with a dose of medicine if you got any kind of fever. If it don't sweat you, there's something wrong with you.

R: Something bad's wrong.

M: Very wrong [laughter].

[Break in recording, repeats 31:03-31:47]

P: Would you tell that again? You practiced what, now? About the hives, yeah.

R: Well, when my babies was having the hives, well, I would go out there to the barn and get some shucks and I'd boil them and make them some shuck tea to give them for their hives.

P: How about kerosene and sugar? What is that good for? Besides…

M: If you have the croup, if you have a croup hoarsed up and you can't talk good, why, you need a little kerosene and sugar.

P: Pardon?

M: Kerosene and a little sugar.

P: Well, as I say, my mother used to give that to me, and I wondered if anybody else had ever heard of that in the world.

R: Yeah, tell them, yes sir, we hears about it.

[Break in recording]

P: This is Isaac McGhee again, and he's going to tell us about when his father used to shoot a bow and arrow.

M: That's right. He used to shoot a bow and arrow, and go squirrel hunting, then near about tack them to a tree with a bow and arrow. No telling how many he had killed with a bow and arrow.

P: Did he make his own bow and arrow?

M: Yes, sir. Made his own arrow.

P: What kind of wood did he use for the bow and arrow, do you know?

M: A flat lightered splinter, you know that's kind of heavy?

P: Uh-huh.

M: Then he'd check the feathers sometime, he'd show us how to make them, but he know we never did. And I know something, he'd drill a little hole, well, we bought it about that long. You stick feathers on that thing, on both sides. Now it's just as straight as you take your hand out there and stuck it in one.

P: What was the bow made out of?

M: Oh, I don't know what they called, **yeowood**. You don't know what that is, I don't suppose? It's a tree. Grows with these little red berries on in them in the fall of the year and get a limb off of that, and a stiff one and bend it down and put your strong string on and then get your flat lightered splinter. Oh, it'd be about that big, as it were. It'd oughta be about that bit to the butt. And just slick as glass. And an old fat lightered it gets slick just like a…

P: What would it be pointed with?

M: With one of these old flintheads, these flints. Few of these old flints way back in them days, they had flints.

P: Did your father make your own—he made his own flint?

M: That's right. Had these feathers go in there.

P: Do you remember how he made the flint point?

M: He had them, when they're fighting this old, you'll find them now around some places around here.

P: Do you remember, when you were a boy, anybody ever taking a cane and hollowing it out and making a blow gun? That you blow through like that?

M: Never did see that. But they used to take horns, cow horns. There used to be woods full of cattle in here, about that long. And one over right here, and the other by the Indian chief, an old man now. Dees, Old Man Bill Dees. But take one of them long horns there, and scrape that thing till you see how you could comb your hair in it. Take your name, put it on there. If you're a hunting men, put you a picture of a dog on there and your gun. Now make that the prettiest thing you ever looked at, out of a cow horn.

P: And what would you do, just to look…?

M: You could blow that thing, I'd bet you'd hear it five miles. Take your auger there, get it scraped over there, and salt just a little bit of the horn, and then you take that little drill…

P: Did your dad ever hunt deer with a bow and arrow?

M: Yes, yeah.

P: With a bow and arrow, he hunted deer?

M: That's right.

P: Did he use a bow and arrow because he didn't have a gun or because he liked—

M: He had a gun, going brought out of the army, an old musket. What they call an old musket.

P: Well, why did he use a bow and arrow? Rather than—

M: Just got it. Kept up the style.

P: Did you ever use a bow and arrow?

M: Mm-hmm, no, I didn't.

P: Even as a kid, did you ever play with bows and arrows?

M: Yeah, I played with them. We'd put a board up, right up over near that window [laughter].

P: Did people around here used to tan their own deer hides?

M: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

P: How did they do that?

M: They'd soak it a day in water, wracked them out, you let it stay there maybe about three days. Put salt in that water and that's stay in there till the hide big and slippery, just like a scalded hog. Had a pole put up on something, and maybe put that in the ground there, they wouldn't have to stoop to scrape that and scrape it off, and when they got through that thing it'd be just as white as that shirt yonder.

P: Did they ever soften them and make them real—

M: Yeah, of course. You'd take the white of an egg—

P: The white of an egg?

M: White of a egg, get enough of that white of that egg, and put them in there and wash them, just like washing clothes and stretch it there. Just to keep it stretchy and low and wash it just like that there, get it good and soft. You can even take it out and wring it. But then they set them by the fire, just like we're doing now. You put it there 'til it gets dry and it'll be white. Look 'round yonder, see how white that shirt is? Be just as white as that.

P: Once they made these, tanned these hides, what did they do with them after that?

M: Kept, make whip-poppers out of them then—

P: Make what?

M: Whip-poppers. Cow whips and one thing another. Mama's brother used a flat whip out of cowhide. He'd take some of that deerskin and put a tail on it with deerhide. Tan the string, you know. And that's what they done with it.

P: Did people ever sell deer hides around here?

M: No, didn't see it, not that I know. Some of them would take and bottom these chairs though with them.

P: Ah, do the bottom of chair. Do you remember if people ever made their own shoes out of deer hides?

M: No, never did see it, no.

P: Well, I—

M: I'll tell you what they do, they cut long strings out of it and shoe strings, and boy they'd last you a lifetime. I had a brother, he'd go out squirrel hunting, had one I reckon about that long, and you'd get one of them old big ones, you'd get a string about that long. Had a little dog that'd just trailed a squirrel, he'd hit the ground, he'd come back sometimes with high as eighteen tied on that string. Just like that, you see my fingers. I see him come in sometimes with eighteen.

P: Eighteen of them.

M: Squirrels.

P: Squirrels. While we're talking about real old Indian things, do you ever remember when you were a boy, people playing any kind of ball games of any kind?

M: We played marbles when we was growing up. Marbles.

P: Marbles?

M: Yeah, marbles. A bunch up to our house, down here on Papa's old homestead and play there some Sundays till pitch dark, couldn't see our own marbles. [Laughter]

P: Did you ever make your own marbles?

M: Yeah.

P: What'd you make them out of?

M: Out of clay dirt. Put them in the fire and burn them.

P: When you were a boy, did boys use slingshots and things?

M: Yeah.

P: What'd you use for the rubber? What did you use for the rubber?

M: Get the rubber, you go to town…the first drug store come in there, they went to selling them. Little old round—well, they'd be about that round, you'd cut it in two and make a slingshot of it. It'd be about that long after you cut it. I betcha I killed a thousand birds. Papa had two big mulberry trees and that's all I done just shot at one.

P: Did you kill the birds just to be killing them or did you ever kill some to eat?

M: We killed them to eat most of them, that's right.

P: What kind of birds would you kill to eat?

M: Redheads, yellow hammer, any kind. Some jaybirds.

P: Jaybirds? Did you eat jaybirds?

M: Yeah, I ate jaybirds.

P: How'd you cook them up? You'd just fry it like chicken?

M: Yeah, yeah.

P: How does it taste? How does a jaybird taste?

M: Tastes good.

P: Is it sweet, or . . . ?

M: Yes, sir. Jaybird better'n a dove. A lot of people like the dove, but I never did like a dove.

P: Over the years, what kind of equipment have people used for fishing?

M: Just an old line. Used to take the thread in them, back in our days, Mama'd twist it together the two of them, you know, take a piece of [inaudible], make it stick together.

P: Just ordinary sewing thread.

M: That's right, that's right. It was strong back in them days. You can't hardly find no thread now that's strong.

P: Did people ever make their own hooks?

M: Hmm?

P: You could buy those in town. Have you ever seen anybody around here or known of anybody around here who used nets for fishing for anything?

M: Huh?

P: Nets. You know, like a dip net or something like that for fishing? Never? It's always been pole fishing, cane pole-type fishing.

M: Well, these nets come in here way after a while, they'd use nets.

P: Is that commercial fishing, mainly?

M: Mm-hmm. Put it in, stretch your net, and then go up the creek or down the creek. Run them back and when that net, stretch that net cross the creek.

[Break in recording]

M: She used to make it, go get the corn outta the crib and shell it. Soak it in hot water, put a little lye in it and soak it, eat the husk off it. Well then she'd take it to our old block out there where there's a hole in it, take what you call a pestle made out of a gum, and beat it. If you make it just like chalk. Well, that's what you call sofke. She shifted that then, she'd get that husk over there, boil it 'till it get done, and you got something good to eat. That's what you call sofke.

P: When was the last time you had some?

M: Oh, it's been a long time [laughter]. Why, sometime I study about that thing, I wished I had a pot full of it right now. You can take good sweet milk and sofke, it's the goodest thing you'd even want eat.

P: Maybe you have to teach some of these young women how to make that. [Laughter]

M: They oughta learn for theyselves.

P: Yeah. [Laughter]

[End of interview]

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