

ALICE HENRY JACKSON

Interviewed by:
Rob Moore

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ALICE HENRY JACKSON

Lapwai; b. 1885

.7 hours

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00	1	Grandparents were Jonah and Elizabeth Huger. Nez Perces fought Snakes. Mother pounded meat. Chief Joseph was a close relative; he went to the Wallowas with them. In early days people lived together without formal marriage. Len Henry, her father, met mother in Asotin. His brother was Nob Henry.
08	15	Her Nez Perce name. Nez Perce greetings for morning, noon and night.

(12 minutes)

with Rob Moore

Februray 5, 1974

II. Transcript

At the time this tape was made, Alice Henry Jackson was 89 years old. She grew up on a Nez Perce Indian Reservation near Lapwai, Idaho and talks of her life growing up with the tribe. She talks of salmon fishing trips to the Wallowas, camas and cous gathering, hunting and tanning and she sings some Christian hymns in the language of the Nez Perce. (Note: The Nez Perce songs do not appear in print. Please refer to tape.) The interviewer on this tape is Rob Moore.

RM: Was your grandfather Johah Hayes?

AHJ: Uh huh. His name was Jonah Hayes. He was Indian.

RM: Was he a preacher?

AHJ: He was a preacher and he used to preach.

RM: Did you learn some of these songs from him?

AHJ: Yeah, Indian church songs.

RM: Why don't you sing one for me?

AHJ: You gonna catch it?

RM: Yeah.

AHJ: Okay. You ready?

RM: We're ready. Just go ahead.

AHJ: Which one shall I sing for you? (Sings) Is that all right?

RM: Sure.

AHJ: SINGS

RM: That's very nice. What does that...

AHJ: That is "When the Roll is Called Up Yo nder."

RM: What do the words mean?

AHJ: Indian?

RM: Yes.

AHJ: That means when the man comes and sings. The preacher. SINGS.

RM: What does it mean, what have you said so far when you sing that much?

AHJ: When the roll is called up yonder, there will be no more living.

RM: What comes next?

AHJ: Next is, they calling them people across then they call them from there.

That's the way it is.

RM: Do you know others?

AHJ: Songs? SINGS. Can you catch that?

RM: What does that one mean?

AHJ: That's Down At the Cross.

RM: Who wrote the Nez Perce words for these? A lot of these are hymns in English too, aren't they?

AHJ: Yeah.

RM: Do you know who wrote the Nez Perce words for them?

AHJ: I don't know. I can't tell you that. See, we used to be Catholic first.

AHJ: But I don't know what kind of a trouble they had so we... I go to Church of God now. Do you know Church of God church?

RM: Yes.

AHJ: That's where I go to now. Uh huh.

RM: When you sued to see Father Cataldo, did he used to sing in Nez Perce too?

AHJ: Oh, just what we learned him.(laughs)But he didn't sing very good. They used to make me start, sing first. That's the way they do down there at the Church of God. They make me sing. Uh huh.

RM: What other songs do you sing?

AHJ: Oh, I got quite a few songs. This is another one.SINGS On the Other Side. That's where we'll be then.

RM: What's that one called?

AHJ: When the Roll is Called Up Yonder.

RM: That's the same one you sang the first time, I think.

AHJ: Uh huh.

RM: Did they teach you songs like Rock of Ages and things like that in Nez Perce?

AHJ: No.

RM: What else did they teach you?

AHJ: SINGS

RM: Which one is that?

AHJ: What did they call it now?

RM: What do the words mean in Nez Perce.

AHJ: Jesus Christ.

RM: What does that mean?

AHJ: That means we do good to Jesus Christ. Uh huh.

RM: What's the next line?

AHJ: SINGS. Jesus Christ was our... He was part Nez Perce.

RM: What?

AHJ: He was part Nez Perce. And he made himself go into Mary's stomach. And he was born from there. That song I...

RM: Do you know any songs from the early days of the Nez Perce tribes, songs that maybe weren't hymns but were songs that the Nez Perce used to sing?

AHJ: Catholic, they don't sing no Nez Perce songs. I used to be Catholic. When we married, we quit. My husband quit. So we both quit.

RM: What was...

AHJ: His name was Paul Jackson.

RM: Paul Jackson was your husband's name.

AHJ: Uh huh. He died. My father's name was Len Henry.

RM: Len Henry.

AHJ: And he died. And my mamma's name was Agnes. And my grandmother...

RM: What was her Nez Perce name?

AHJ: Whose?

RM: Your mother's?

AHJ: What was her name? It's been so long.

RM: Yeah. What were the early days like when you were just a child? Was the tribe on the reservation all the time then?

AHJ: Uh huh. Used to always have church. Like when I got married with Paul and we come to Catholic Church... But I don't know what got into him, then he quit.

RM: Well, what about when...

AHJ: Then he quit with the Church of God Church.

RM: In the early days with the tribe when you were young, did the men still do a lot of hunting and did you still go gathering camas and everything?

AHJ: Yeah. We used to get camas and deers. Go out hunting and have deer meat and have dry deer meat and eat that.

RM: What kind of housing did you live in then?

AHJ: Now?

RM: No, when you were a little girl.

AHJ: Oh, we had a tipi. When we had that tipi, then my grandfather, my father it was, went and built a house. So he built a house, we built a pretty good house and daddy helped him. See daddy was a white man and he helped him. So when they got through there was upstairs to it. My sons live in that house now.

RM: Where would you go to gather, would you pack up the tipi and everything when you'd go and gather camas and everything?

AHJ: Long time ago?

RM: Yeah, long time ago.

AHJ: Yeah, we used to take the tipi with us.

RM: Where would you go?

AHJ: Oh, anyplace up in the mountains, hunting or something like that. We used to go. My husband used to be great hunter.

RM: With a rifle?

AHJ: We had a rifle already. I used to dry meat. Oh, that dry meat's good.

RM: How would you dry the meat?

AHJ: You just take it and take a knife and cut it. If it's about this size and cut it and open it this way.

RM: Just kind of make little strips out of it?

AHJ: Yeah, not strips, wide ones. About this wide.

RM: About a foot wide or so.

AHJ: Yeah, about this long and you put it on, we used to dry it on smoke. Uh huh. We used to build a fire underneath.

RM: How long would it take to dry it?

AHJ: Oh, it took not too long to dry it. See fire, smoke.

RM: Did you use to tan the hides?

AHJ: Right. And Mamma used to tan the hides.

RM: Was that very hard to do?

AHJ: We used to eat that deer meat and she used to tan the hides.

RM: Was that hard, to tan hides?

AHJ: It's hard. See, you're first gonna soak it, and you soak it when you

get the deer meat, you just take it and get a knife and cut it, sew it about this long. Then you take it and soak it. When you get soaking it then you can... well we have some kind of a iron take that...

RM: To scrape the fat with?

AHJ: Scrape it. Yeah. Uh huh. Scrape it this way.

RM: Up and down.

AHJ: Uh huh. That's the way we used to do with the meat, I mean, skin.

RM: Then what would you do? How would you make it so it was tanned?

AHJ: Well, we used to get some kind of... when they used to hunt like that, we'd get the brains from the deer and we'd mix that brains with a little water. And then we'd soak it in that.

RM: That tans it?

AHJ: Uh huh. Then you take it and you, we used to take a stick and put it over a pole or something, turn it, dry it up and we go pin it up. And we...

RM: Oh you twist the skin around the stick so it got real tight and all the water ran out.

AHJ: No. Just a little bit.

RM: You just put it on a stick and let it hang.

AHJ: Yeah. It hang down and all the water would go out, you know. And you can tan it quick. I know how to tan it.

RM: Then would you make clothing and things out of it?

AHJ: Well, we used to have clothes. Out of the deer hide. Yeah, they used to make dresses and things out of that.

RM: I imagine they were pretty nice.

AHJ: Uh huh. We used to use it when we had war dances or something. We'd wear it then.

RM: When you had what kind of a dance?

AHJ: War dances.

RM: Did they Nez Perce have war dances?

AHJ: Yeah, they have war dances. They used to have war dances.

RM: Uh huh. What were they like?

AHJ: You mean that dress?

RM: No, the dances.

AHJ: Oh, they used to dance, I don't know how I can tell you.

RM: (Laughs) What kind of songs, did they sing songs at the war dances?

AHJ: See, the war dance, see, go up and down.

RM: Would there be somebody playing a drum or something?

AHJ: Yeah, they played a drum. They play a drum and they war danced.

RM: Was there a song they sang?

AHJ: Yeah.

RM: Do you know that song?

AHJ: I'm getting too old. I've forgot.

RM: Okay. What other kind of dances did they have?

AHJ: Well, they used to have Indian dance. Well, people used to send the kids out and themselves too. They'd get some kind of a dream or something from something. Some kind of animal or something. And that animal would give them a song. That's what they used to sing.

RM: Did both the boys and girls go out to have medicine dreams?

AHJ: Yeah.

RM: Did you do that when you were young, too?

AHJ: Yeah, they sent me up in the mountains

RM: How long did you stay?

AHJ: We went up Upper Bear. That's where they sent me up, just one night.

RM: Were you by yourself?

AHJ: Huhuh. And my song and everything.

RM: What animal or being gave you your song?

AHJ: Well, if it's a deer or any kind of animal, uh huh, if it's a deer or elk or sheep or anything...

RM: What animal gave you yours? Or can't you tell me that?

AHJ: Mine was a deer.

RM: A deer. Do you remember the song of the deer?

AHJ: I used to sing it, but I don't sing it no more.

I used to sing it when we used to have a dance. I don't ...

RM: What would happen when you came back from the mountain with your song, what would you do then?

AHJ: Nothing.

RM: Would there be a dance or something then when you got back?

AHJ: No. Dance at wintertime. We used to dance at wintertime all the time, uh huh. Mamma used to dance and grandma used to dance and grandfather and me. The boys never danced. I had three brothers, and one sister. But she never went anyplace.

RM: Would there be big dances with a lot of people there?

AHJ: Y eah. Yeah, we used to have long tent. Built like this, see. Tent poles would be just like that, see. Real long tent.

RM: Real long with the poles locking together.

AHJ: Uh huh. And we used to have dances in there.

RM: Would there be a lot of people there?

AHJ: Yeah, there used to be lots of people come to dance. You'd see lots of old people, the one's that's old there for some kind of doctoring. Yeah, they doctor a person that was sick. Yeah, grandfather was like that.

RM: How would he do that? What kind of things would he do to doctor somebody?

AHJ: Well they sing. When they're dancing they talk. When they're taking care of the sick people you just sing and you just blow on them.

RM: Blow on the person?

AHJ: UH huh. Blow on a person.

RM: Would they use plants and things too, to help doctor with?

AHJ: No. They just(makes blowing sound) like that.

RM: How did that help?

AHJ: They used to help them. See first he, when he's going to doctor then he'd talk, talk his dream, what he dreamt about, them songs. Then he'd talk about that and when he'd get through, then he can blow onto them.

RM: I see. And he would get his power through that dream?

AHJ: Yeah. Then he can take your head this way. He'd go up, hold you up. They used to, my grandfather was like that. He used to doctor and he was to doctor even pretty sick people. He'd get them well. That's the way it it.

RM: What did, when you were a girl with the Nez Perce, did the tribe move around quite a bit?

AHJ: We used to go out in the mountains. Get deer meat, kill deer and we'd dry it. We used to have dry meat.

RM: What would you eat all winter, dry meat and what else?

AHJ: Yeah, you could eat dry meat or else the boys would go out and hunt again, uh huh. Deer meat's pretty good. Have you ever eaten it?

RM: Yeah.

AHJ: Deer meat's pretty good.

RM: Would you eat the camas too?

AHJ: Camas, cous.

RM: Cous?

AHJ: Yeah. They was different. Cous is different. When you cook camas it turns black. When they cook cous they don't cook it under the ground, but this other one they could cook it under the ground. This other one they don't, they just dry it up. Just take the top off and wash it clean and dry it up. That's cous.

RM: What does cous look like?

AHJ: White. They're white and...

RM: Did they have a white flower?

AHJ: Yeah, kind of a pret'near yellow. They grow all over the hillsides.

RM: How would you dig camas?

AHJ: Oh we used to have a digger.

RM: What did it look like?

AHJ: Toucas we called it. About this long, iron.

RM: What did you call it?

AHJ: Toucas. And it's just about like this.

RM: A little bit of a bend.

AHJ: My mamma used to put a piece of wood, clean it good and put that under it like this.

RM: On the end of the toucas.

AHJ: Yeah. See, they used to make a hole in that thing and put it on the tourcas.

RM: I see. Then you just dig that under the plants.

AHJ: Yeah, and dig the cous out and camas.

RM: How would you make the camas so it wouldn't spoil?

AJ: Well, its just the same, but see, we have to cook it first. We used to do that, cooks used to do that. Mamma. They dig up ground.

RM: Dig a big hole in the ground?

AHJ: Dig a big hole in the ground, oh, about this deep.

RM: Couple, three feet deep.

AHJ: They put wood on top of it like this.

RM: Uh huh. Overlapping pieces of wood.

AHJ: Yeah. Then they put rocks on top of it, on top, then they put in that.

RM: The camas would be under the wood?

AHJ: No, it's gonna be on top. And then when they burn that wood they fall, you know. They take all pieces of wood out and just have hot rocks. They'd take rocks and put it on top. And that rocks get hot, they fall in, then they take grass and they kind of sprinkle the rock. And they put the grass on top of it. And they put the camas, that's camas, it turn black. They take it... mamma used to do it, put it in a gunny sack and put it on this way.

RM: What do you mean this way?

AHJ: This way, stand like this. Like this, see.

RM: The gunny sacks would stand up against each other.

AHJ: Yeah.

RM: I see.

AHJ: Then she'd burn it then. And it'll get ripe.

RM: Then how, what do you do to eat it?

AHJ: To eat it? Well, we take it out and we take it and dry it out. Mamma used to take the ones that's small and she'd take that and pound it. To make soup out of it. Sure good soup.

RM: I've never eaten camas.

AHJ: You never eat camas?

RM: No.

AHJ: Oh, you never eat eous too?

RM: No. How would you prepare cous?

AHJ: Well you have to dry it on the sun. My mamma used to take it and put it on top of the house like this. Just a cloth or something and put it on that. And dry it up. When it's dry it's good to eat.

RM: Just like that?

AHJ: Uh huh. If you want to cook it, you can cook it, but if you want to eat it dry, it's dry.

RM: How would you cook it if you wanted to cook it?

AHJ: Boil it, boil it and you can put little grease or something in it. And it tastes good. Same way with camas. Camas is black, when they get ripe they turn black.

RM: They're black all the way through.

AHJ: Uh huh. We used to take it and pound some of it. They take it, they make it, oh, about this long.

RM: About a foot long or so.

AJ: About this long. Dry it up like that. It used to be good to eat.

RM: When you were traveling along, would you eat dry meat and camas and things like that?

AHJ: Yeah.

RM: How did you pull the tipi and things, how did you move all that stuff when you moved somewhere?

AHJ: Yeah, we used to take our tipi with us.

RM: How would you do it?

AHJ: Pack it.

RM: On a horse?

AHJ: On a horse. We used to go from here clean to Wallowa and then coming back we'd go up in the mountain. And that's where the boys used to hunt.

RM: Up on Moscow Mountain, what they call Moscow Mountain?

AHJ: On this side of Wallowa. On this side of Wallowa, that's where it was. And we used to come clear down to Lapwai when we get home. That's how we used to do it. We used to get salmon in Wallowa. Salmon, we used to get salmon. We used to dip it with a dipnet.

RM: Did you smoke the salmon or dry the salmon?

AHJ: We just dry it. Not smoke it, but dry it. It's good if you eat it dry. It's alright. If you cook it, it's alright. Uh huh. We used to eat eels too.

RM: From where? Did you get them out of Wallowa Lake?

AHJ: We used to get eels and dry it just the same. We have to have sticks to string them up. And dry good. Just put it across like this. And dry it. If its in the fall time, then we used to put fire under it. Mamma used to do that. In the summertime you can dry it on the sun, with the sun. It's good. I used to like it.

RM: How much time would you spend down in Wallowa each year?

AHJ: We used to after July, we'd go over there and stay over there about two weeks then we'd come back.

RM: In two weeks you managed to get enough fish and everything?

AHJ: Folks used to. My grandfather used to get dipnet. Dip it with a dipnet, salmon. And we used to have dried salmon.

RM: How many people were there in those times? How many Nez Perce were there when you were making those big moves down from Wallowa and back to here when you were moving, how big a tribe would be moving?

AHJ: There was lots of people that used to go to Wallowa.

RM: Would you all go in one bunch?

RM: No, some went up on the other side and some down. We used to be down

all the time. We used to get salmon about this long.

RM: Those are big fish, a couple feet long.

AHJ: Uh huh. We used to get, they used to even dry salmon. You can eat it dry.

It's good. You don't have to cook it, but sometimes this backbone and the head...

(End of side A)

AHJ: We had no tipi for that. We just used to go over there and camp.

RM: Do you remember who any of the elders or old people were who...

AHJ: Grandma, grandfather, and my grandmother.

RM: What were their names?

AHJ: Jonah Hayes, my father's grandfather's name was. And my grandmother's was Elizabeth.

RM: This was all after the war, wasn't it?

AHJ: Yeah. It was after the war. After they had this war that they had.

RM: What did the Nez Perce say about that war?

AHJ: Well, I don't know(chuckles). I don't know very much about it.

RM: Uh huh. Were the Nez Perce sorry that it happened or...

AHJ: Yeah, they were sorry it happened that way. See, all kinds of, I don't know. I don't know what they call it. Snake Indian, I guess. They're the ones that used to come and fight the Nez Perce.

RM: What would the fights be about?

AHJ: Well, I don't know, just try to take the land away from us. I think that's what it was. Take the land away.

RM: The Nez Perce were really good horsemen weren't they?

AHJ: Yeah, uh huh. They're pretty good. We used to dry salmon, dry meat. Dry meat is awful good. And mamma used to take me when we dried and she'd take it and pound it. It would be just good.

RM: Why would she pound it?

AHJ: Well, to make it better. When we had salt she'd put in salt on it, when she starting to dry it. And we'd have salt in it. That's the way we used to do. That's over in Wallowa, that's why we used to go to Wallowa.

RM: Were there some people who stayed all the time in Wallowa or did everybody have to come back to Lapwai?

AHJ: Nobody stayed there Oregon people will go in and us will go in too.

RM: Didn't Chief Joseph want to stay there?

AHJ: Joseph? He was the boss. Yeah, he was, what do they call it, chief. He was the chief.

RM: Didn't he want to stay in Wallowa all the time?

AJK: No, we all go over and come back. When we got our land in Asotin, that's why we're here. We stayed there. That's where I was born, in Asotin.

Boys were born there too.

RM: Is Asotin an Indian word?

AHJ: Asote.

RM: What does it mean in Nez Perce?

AHJ: That's Asote. I don't know what that means. Asote. Asotin. White people call it Asotin. Indians call it Asote. It's like Lapwai here too. Summertime we used to go and fish. Dip net.

RM: Did you know Joseph, Chief Joseph?

AHJ: He was close relative to us. Yes, he was colse relative, but he stayed, what did they call that place now...

RM: Over in Washington?

AHJ: Yeah, he used to stay there. But when we all go to Wallowa, we all be together.

RM: Would there be a big celebration then when you got there because the tribe is back together again?

AHJ: Oh no, nothing like that. They would just fish. They had dipnets to fish with.

RM: Would there be any dances at that time or any marriages from the different tribes?

AHJ: No, nothing.

RM: What was a Nez Perce marriage like in the early days?

AHJ: They usually just get married. They never get married someplace else.

They just lived together, I think that's what you call it. Live together.

RM: Wouldn't there be any sort of ceremony so the tribe would know that those two people...

AHJ: Oh no. Just lived together. Never had troubles. (chuckles) But my father was white.

RM: How did he happen to come an marry a Nez Perce waman?

AHJ: We was living in Asotin when they come.

RM: Your mother was living in Asotin.

AHJ: Nobe Henry's brother, my father was Nobe Henry's brother. And he had a Indian woman. That's way why my mother married him.

RM: And your father's name was...

AHJ: Len Henry.

RM: And what was his brother's name?

AJ: Nobe Henry. He's living yet. He's just like this. (holding up crooked finger.)

RM: What do you mean?

AHJ: Getting old. Living this side of Lapwai. That's where he's living. He's got kids and everything.

RM: That was your father's brother?

AHJ: That was my father's brother. Uh huh. Nobe Henry.

RM: Was your father a trapper or what did he do? How did he happen to come to this part of the country and marry your mother?

AHJ: I don't know. I can't tell you that. I don't know how they come to marry. See, it was Nobe Henry's brother. And he was staying with Nobe and them. That's why...

RM: Was Nobe an old fur trapper or something like that?

AHJ: Yeah. Nobe Henry was my uncle. He was, but he's dead now.

RM: Nobe Henry's dead now?

AHJ: No, I think he's living yet. Yeah, they told me he's getting so old he walks...

RM: All bent over.

AHJ: But my father died. His name was Len Henry. He died. My mamma's name was

A Agnes Henry.

RM: Do you have a Nez Perce name?

AHJ: Me?

RM: Yes.

AHJ: Well my name is, I can't remember. It's different. Oh, I can't remember it.

RM: Do you remember what it means?

AJ: Nobody hardly calls me.

RM: Do you remember what it means in English?

AHJ: I don't know. I don't know what it means.

RM: Would you like to sing me another song?

AHJ: Ip-na-tzo. That's what my name was. Ip-na-tzo.

RM: Did your parents give you that name?

AHJ: Uh huh. My parents give me that name. My grandfather. Jonah was my grandfather.

RM: What is it again?

AHJ: Ip-na-tzo. Ip-na-tzo.

RM: Do you know what it means in Nez Perce?

AHJ: I don't know.

RM: Do you still speak much Nez Perce?

AHJ: Yeah, I speak Nez Perce.

RM: If you were to say hello to me, how would you that in Nez Perce?

AHJ: (The dialogue in part here is spoken in the Nez Perce language and does not appear in print. Please refer to tape)

In the afternoon its

. And the morning its

. And in the evening it's

. If they meet you

in the morning

. If you meet in the afternoon its

. If you meet in the evening its

.

See.

RM: What would I say back? Would I say the same thing back or would I say something different?

AHJ: I don't know. (laughs) I don't know if you tell them anything. Maybe you can...

RM: No, if I knew how to speak Nez Perce, what would I say back? Would I say the same thing?

AHJ: Two of them, two of them. Two of you, you tell them .

RM: I see. Would you like to sing me another song?

AHJ: What kind of song?

RM: You sang me the one about, He's Callin Us, and you sang me At The Cross. Do you know any others besides those two?

AHJ: At The Cross.

RM: You sang that one already. Do you know any other ones?

AHJ: Let's see. I can't remember the old songs.

RM: Do you know any more hymns in Nez Perce? Not necessarily the old songs, but any other Nez Perce hymns.

AHJ: SINGS. Could you understand that?

RM: No.

AHJ: That's Cross.

RM: Oh.

AHJ: Whe We Meet at the Cross.

RM: Thank you very much.