

## Accounts of the "Cherokee Trail of Tears" With reference to "Princess Otahki"

"This is an interview, conducted at a dedication ceremony, of a monument to one of those lost on the 'Trail Of Tears'."

By Elizabeth Mulligan  
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"WE COULD rightfully use the name of Stuart in recognition of our proud Scot ancestor, but we choose to be known by the name given our family by the Cherokee Indians," James Butler Bushyhead said. He and his brother are members of a family whose name is associated with adventure, romance, achievement and suffering throughout more than 200 years of American Indian history. The St. Louisans are grandsons of a famous Cherokee Chief. The other grandson is Jack S. Bushyhead, of 12 Conway Springs Drive in Chesterfield, MO. He is an athletic director in the Parkway School District. James Butler Bushyhead and his family live at 31 Portland Drive in Frontenac, and he is executive vice president of Moog Industries, in St. Louis. James Butler served as a special agent with the FBI in World War II. Jack served in the Southwest Pacific theater.

Before the years of the American Revolution. Capt. John Stuart, a young Scot nobleman with the British army, came to the Colonies as an Indian agent. He married a Cherokee maiden and lived the rest of his life among her people.

[ACCORDING TO Indian custom of giving names based on physical characteristics, the young officer was called "Bushyhead" in recognition of his very large crop of curly red hair.]

A series of "broken peace pipes" brought the Bushyhead name into prominence during following generations - a period of unhonored treaties, exploitation, land grabbing, and finally the forced exile of an entire people. The Removal Act of 1830, signed by President Andrew Jackson argued that "no state could achieve proper culture, civilization, and progress, as long as Indians remained within its boundaries". Jackson

ordered that the Five Civilized Tribes, the Cherokees, Creek, Choctaws, Chickasaws and Seminoles, must move from the southern states to the Indian Territory, now known as Oklahoma - a word that means "red people". It was solemnly sworn in a "permanent treaty" to be the Indian's Promised Land "for as long as grass grows and water flows" - which turned out to mean until the white man wanted more land.

Jackson's attitude toward the Indians could be summed up in his words: "Humanity weeps over the fate of the Indians, but true philanthropy reconciles the mind to the extinction of one generation for another" .... so why not the extinction of Indian tribes to make room for other people?

THE CHEROKEES, about 16,000 in number, put up the greatest resistance and were the last to be evicted. They were not nomads, as were many other tribes. They loved their native hills and valleys, streams and forests, fields and herds. They enjoyed established houses and communities, and had learned to "talk on paper" like the white man. Many had accepted the white man's God, and they had translated the Bible into Cherokee language. The Cherokees had adopted a constitution asserting that they were a sovereign and free nation, and consequently were recognized by world powers.

A treaty with the United States preserved rights to their homeland in parts of Tennessee and Georgia, but when gold was discovered in Georgia, the state's proclamation that "all laws, orders, and regulations of any kind made with the Cherokee Indians are declared null and void" resulted in a horrendous land-grab and then in a death march which is one of the saddest and most disturbing events in America's so called manifest destiny. "One fourth of the Cherokees perished as they were first herded into stockades and then "set toward the setting sun" in cold, hunger, illness, and in complete desolation.

The Army commanded some of 13 separate groups, while others were hired out to contractors who were paid \$65 by the Government for food and medicines for each person in their care - money that was often not used for its intended purpose. Two of the detachments traveled by river while the others made their miserable way by land across Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri. One detachment was led by the Rev. Jesse Bushyhead, a grandson of the Scot captain and his Cherokee wife. Young

Jesse had been brought up within the culture of the Indians but at the same time subjected to the white man's civilization. He attended mission schools and then a theological seminary, where he was ordained a Baptist minister and served his own people as a missionary. He was also a gifted interpreter and became a leader among the Cherokees in their struggle against the white man's intrusion.

In late 1838, the Rev. Bushyhead gathered his family and followers together and started out "on the trail where they cried". Those who think Indians don't cry are not familiar with official reports of the "Great Removal". Although the six-month ordeal was extremely difficult, this group fared better than many others. The minister's party of about 1000 was strongly religious and maintained regular services throughout the long march. Arriving in the Oklahoma Indian Territory, the leader reported that "82 of our people were left by the side of the road - the others sustained by the white man's Great Spirit".

REPORTS FROM earlier groups making the 1000 mile march contained such starkly revealing messages as: "Cholera broke out and death was among us hourly" and: "489 persons from 800 arrived". The log of a detachment which traveled by water reported: "Three hundred and eleven persons drowned when an over loaded flatboat capsized". One of the 82 deaths reported by the Rev. Bushyhead was that of his 17-year old daughter which occurred shortly after the party had crossed the Mississippi River near Cape Girardeau, Mo. Because of the ice-choked waters, the crossing itself took nearly a month.

In the Trail of Tears State Park, in Cape Girardeau County, a memorial monument was dedicated in 1961 to: "Princess Qtahki, daughter of Chief Jesse Bushyhead -- one of several hundred Cherokee Indians who died here -- in the severe winter of 1838-39". Actually, according to documented evidence, the inscription is misleading. The girl could not have been a princess since her father was not a chief but a minister. The Bushyhead who did become a Cherokee chief was only a lad of 12 when he accompanied his parents on the long journey that was the Trail of Tears.

The St. Louis Bushyhead descendants were aware of the inaccuracy when they attended the dedication, but according to one, "We had not been consulted, only

invited to the ceremony, and we had a hard time keeping our father quiet about the facts". These were nice people who were doing such a nice thing in memory of our family, and we are grateful. We accepted the tribute on behalf of all the Cherokees who suffered and died during their sad journey. And if there are those who want to think in terms of a mythical princess, well - it's often difficult to separate legend from fact and sometimes legend becomes more appealing.

IN THEIR new home, the displaced tribe set to work to attack the raw frontier by building homes, schools and churches. They set up a government and named their capital Tahlequah still the cultural center of the Cherokees and the source of documented evidence of their history. The Indians were well on their way in the formation of a new nation when the agony of the Civil War descended upon them. Although the Cherokees fought with both the North and the South, they were officially aligned with the Confederacy, which all but surrounded them. Then, too, the South had promised that when the war was over they would be permitted to form an all-Indian state. But when the North emerged as victors, the Indians, like the South, were soundly penalized. More than half their lands guaranteed by the "perpetual treaty" was taken from them and what was left was war-scorched earth.

The leader most responsible for rebuilding the post war Cherokee nation was the minister's son, Chief Dennis Bushyhead, who guided his people between the years 1879 and 1887. He had attended Princeton University for two years and then joined the '49ers in the gold rush to California, after which he returned to enter Cherokee politics. His first wife was a sister of the mother of Will Rogers, and his second was a grandniece of the famed Commodore Oliver Perry, both part Cherokee.

"The Chief was almost 60 years old when my Father was born", the present James Butler Bushyhead said. "Historians often speak of him as a wealthy man but I don't know where his riches were, or are. When I married I had \$1000 and my wife was in debt \$500. What we have we made on our own, but the Bushyhead's were all provided with a sound education".

The son of Chief Dennis, James Butler Bushyhead, left Indian Territory to attend the University of Missouri, He married a girl from Stephens College and remained in Missouri, and that is how two grandsons of a Cherokee Chief came to make their home in the St. Louis area. "Our father enjoyed a bonanza just before he died," son,

James Butler said. "For 20 years the Cherokees had pushed litigation against the U.S. for what they considered just payment of part of their land known as the Cherokee Strip, which the government had forcibly `bought' for \$1.27 an acre. In 1963 the Government agreed to pay an additional \$12,000,000 to the Cherokees and their descendants who had occupied the controversial territory. My father's share was only about \$300, but for him it was a great moral victory."

THE INDIAN TERRITORY and the Cherokee Nation became only something that once existed when Oklahoma became a state in 1907, and the Indian people found themselves forced to abandon their age-old practice of common ownership and to begin to live according to the white man's rules of private enterprise. For some it worked and for some it didn't. Today, as is the case with other nationals, there are both rich and poor.

Following the year of the sale of the Cherokee Strip, a New York newspaper reported: "Five Cherokees have come east to attend a class reunion at Princeton University, bringing with them \$7,000,000 to invest on Wall Street". And the 'honorary chief of the Cherokee people today is W. W. Keeler, president of the Phillips Petroleum Co".

"Although countless Indians have been assimilated by other races, there are still those of pure blood in Oklahoma, and many of them are poor", James Butler Bushyhead said. "The term 'part Cherokee' is a common one today and actually dates back to the coming of the white man. For example, our family has the name and the heritage of prominent Cherokee leaders, but we can't actually claim much Indian blood since from the very beginning our ancestry was mixed with the white race. British subjects who came to the New World and married Cherokee women usually chose to cast their lot with the natives, and the Cherokees were one of the few tribes that encouraged marriage with non-Indians."

Robert Bushyhead, the son of James Butler, and presently a student at Southern Methodist University, said, "I seldom mention the fact that my great-grandfather was a Cherokee Chief. Nobody would believe it, and besides, what difference does it make?" THE OLDER descendants say they had much the same attitude when they were younger.

Jack Bushyhead said, "My grandmother the Chief's wife, used to want me to sit at her knees for hours while she tried to tell me stories about our people. I wish that I had listened, but at that time it didn't seem important. But as I grow older I am more interested in preserving our heritage, not particularly for myself, but out of respect for those who were my people. I don't think of myself in terms of being an Indian", he intoned, "but I'm conscious of things that pertain to them. For example, I've noticed in movies and on TV that when white men win a battle it's called a great victory; when Indians win one it's called a massacre. I think of myself as being strictly American, which I am, literally,"

James Butler Bushyhead said, "Of course I'm aware - and proud - of our Cherokee heritage. When some of our friends let go with pointed Indian 'arrows' the best thing I can think of to say is that in those earlier days the Indians should have had stricter immigration laws. That would have taken care of the whole problem". On a more serious note, he asked, "Do you think the current land and oil boom in Alaska, as it involves the Indians and Eskimos, might turn out to be a parallel to what happened to the Cherokees - another forced Trail of Tears"?