

# **Susie's Story – Part 1**

## **The Legacy of the Indian Removal Still Impacting Life's Today**

**Don & Diane Wells**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Susie Helton's great grandmother, Abigail Hester Helton was part Cherokee Indian and her great-great grandmother Katie Owl Helton was a full blood Cherokee. Her family did not live on a reservation; they lived in Georgia in an almost hidden cove among the Blue Ridge Mountains. In that cove, every generation of her family for at least the past 150 years has struggled to maintain a life existing on what they could grow and gather from the land. As a family with Indian heritage, they were fearful of being found and taken to Oklahoma and so generation after generation of family members never talked about their heritage outside of the family.

The US Congress voted in 1830 after a highly contentious and bitter debate to pass the Indian Removal Act forcing the Indians to cede their national sovereign lands and move to Oklahoma. President Andrew Jackson said in his Second Annual Message to Congress on December 6, 1830, "It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation. Two important tribes have accepted the provision made for their removal at the last session of Congress, and it is believed that their example will induce the remaining tribes also to seek the same obvious advantages."

The State of Georgia, in particular, was involved in a contentious jurisdictional dispute with the Cherokee nation who occupied the majority of lands north of Atlanta. The state enacted many laws taking away the rights of the Cherokee Indians even though they were a sovereign nation not under the jurisdiction of Georgia. After the Removal Act was passed, Georgia surveyed all of the Cherokee Lands in the 1832 Land Lottery and distributed those lands to GA citizens. However, it was not until 1838 that the US Government forced the removal of all Indians from GA and other southern states in what is now known as the Cherokee Trail of Tears. 17,000 Cherokees were forcibly gathered from their homes in the southern states and marched to Oklahoma where over 4,000 died along the route and another 1,000 disappeared. However, not all of the Cherokee's went on the Trail of Tears.

Many of the Cherokees who lived apart from the Cherokee villages scattered across the southern states intermarried with some of the settlers who moved into the Cherokee territory before they had the right to live there. Also, some married traders who frequented the Cherokee nation to trade goods with the Indians. The features of those who intermarried changed somewhat to the point that they could claim other heritage and avoid the removal actions of 1838. Ricky Butch Walker from AL told us that his family, who were of Creek and Cherokee ancestry, claimed black Dutch or black Irish to avoid the removal. He said, "Families like his had to make a forced choice; they could give up their lands and go on the removal or they could stay." His family stayed but they had to hide their Indian heritage for 150 years.

Still others of Indian ancestry went on the Trail of tears or left on their own accord earlier and moved to AR and OK. The infighting among Cherokees that has sided with the government to sign treaties and those who did not brought violence to the area and some left to come back to their native lands. When they returned, they began a new life but hid their culture so as not to be taken back to OK.

Susie's family was like Ricky Butch Walkers' family. They made a choice not to go on the removal and they hid from that most grievous period of American history. In our travels across the nation researching Indian culture, we have met many families whose story is the same as Susie's and Ricky. These families lived under the constant burden and worry that someone in



**Diane and Susie at her Home in the Cove**

authority would discover they were Indian and would come to remove them to Oklahoma. Gail King, a Cherokee descendant from AL told us, "My grandmother buried the family Bible so their family history could not be discovered." One gentleman from AR who is helping us research the Indian Marker Trees in that state told us he does not want his name used because his family with Indian heritage is still concerned that some law may be used to come and remove them to OK. Stan Cartwright from GA talked to us about how his father took him as a young man to see the location of the caves near their home that the family could hide in if someone came to remove them.

Susie's family and many like hers over many generations have lived under the weight of the fear that they could still be impacted by the Indian Removal Act. This fear is handed down from one generation to another and today continues to be a heavy burden for these family members to carry. One impact of this fear in sharing their Indian heritage is that these families in some case have lost the knowledge of that heritage. Nothing was written down and oral stories have been lost. Many of us whose families have not had to hide our culture have failed to document our family's history and, in many cases, it is also all but lost.

# Susie's Story – Part 2

## Isolated But Not Alone

Don & Diane Wells

More years ago than we care to remember, we became interested in and read many of the Foxfire series books. The Foxfire books are a compilation of stories about mountain living written by the students at the Rabun-Nacoochee School in Rabun County, GA mentored by their English teacher Eliot “Wig” Wigginton. These stories captured the pioneer life of folks who occupied the mountains, valleys and coves of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Their lives were a struggle to eke out an existence with little money to provide for the basic essentials. They made almost everything they needed to support their plain living style, and either grew or gathered foods to eat.

Thirty-four miles to the southwest of where these stories were written, we discovered that some of the pioneering families were living similar lives among the mountains and coves of the Blue Ridge Mountains in White and Lumpkin County. That is where Susie's family has lived for over 150 years. Her family's story could have been part of the Foxfire series had they known about her family.

After making a presentation on the *Mystery of the Trees* in White County in early March, Susie contacted us to tell us about an Indian Marker Tree on her property. Visiting Susie to see the tree opened our eyes to a bigger story that needed to be told. It also added to a growing story of how many families were living under the burden of hiding their Indian culture to avoid the potential of having their property seized and being removed to OK because they were of Indian heritage. Diane and I interviewed Susie on 3 May, 2013 and this is her story.



**Susie Helton**

Susie was born in 1936 to James Marvin Helton and Dorothy Stancil Helton. She is one of

four children that grew up in the cove where they owned parts of four Land Lots in White and Lumpkin County. Susie was eight years old before she ever saw a person other than her family. She was home schooled by her mother along with her other siblings until they were old enough to walk two miles to go to a two room schoolhouse. Their mother taught them to read and write

using the King James Version of the Bible. In her two-room school in rural White County, the high school kids were taught by one teacher and all other grades were taught by another teacher. Susie said, "You had to come to school with clean socks and a clean handkerchief every day and bring your own lunch." They got up very early in the morning to get ready for school. They walked two miles in the dark over a mountain ridge on a small path to reach the country school. Rain, sleet, snow or other weather conditions did not matter. You made it to the school every school day. When she reached the fifth grade, White County consolidated many of the small schools in White County and she and her siblings walked about a mile over another ridge to reach the school bus stop by 7:00 AM. If you were late, you missed the bus.

Susie said, "They lived an isolated life but they were not alone." Susie and her brothers and sisters had chores to do every day but when they had free time, they played games with each other. Susie and her sister cut out dolls from a Sears Roebuck catalog and played make believe lives. They had a box of water colors and they could paint their dolls to spruce them up. Being artistic, they painted pictures as well. When they could find a piece of rope, they would play jump rope and sometimes they would play hide and seek although their mother didn't let them wander far from the house due to many poisonous snakes around and a fear of being attacked by a "mad" dog (one with rabies).

One of Susie's daily chores was to collect the milk from their cow and put it in the spring box. She also collected butter and butter milk that either she or her mother made and put it in the spring box. A spring box is a wooden structure built around the natural spring just behind their house which would allow the water to collect up to the top of the box before spilling over. The temperature of the cold spring water would keep the milk, butter and butter milk cold throughout the year and keep it fresh. Susie said, "They did not get electricity until 1954 just before she graduated from high school." Telephone service did not reach them until sometimes in the 1960's. Susie did say that when block ice became available, her father would drive their truck to Cleveland GA to pick up a large block of ice and bring it home to use with an ice box that was chilled by the ice.

For the most part, everything that Susie's family needed to live was built by her father and mother including their house. When we visited the home in which she grew up, she showed us the table where they used to eat their meals and do other chores. It was built by her father probably in the 1930's. The original hutch built by her father was also in the house. On the porch, Susie showed us the two compartment box built by her father to store flour and corn meal. They grew corn and had it ground into corn meal at the grist mill nearby every couple of weeks. They also grew sugar cane which they processed by hand to get sugar and syrup for sweetener. They had a hog every year which they would butcher for meat and grease for cooking. They cooked all their meals on a four burner wood stove which also provided some heat for the uninsulated cabin. The stove was also used to heat an iron that they used to press their clothes. Susie's sister was the ironer in the family.

# **Susie's Story – Part 3**

## **Isolated But Not Alone**

**Don & Diane Wells**

Many of the pioneering families in the Southern Appalachian Mountains lived a frugal life making almost everything they needed. Quoting the Bible verse, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”, Susie said they lived by Biblical principles never wasting anything and never taking more than they needed. They were the original recyclers. They saved the cloth flour sacks to make underwear for the kids and to make other clothes. Susie said, “Her bother Bobbie didn’t like the shirts his mother made for him because the name of the flour was on the back of his shirt.” Sometimes they would unravel a cloth flour bag to get the thread which they used for sewing and crocheting. They unraveled the sacks that oranges came in as well to get the thread. In their lifestyle nothing was thrown away. Pieces of cloth they gathered were ironed flat and cut into squares to make quilts. Containers made of wood or metal were saved and used as needed to support them.

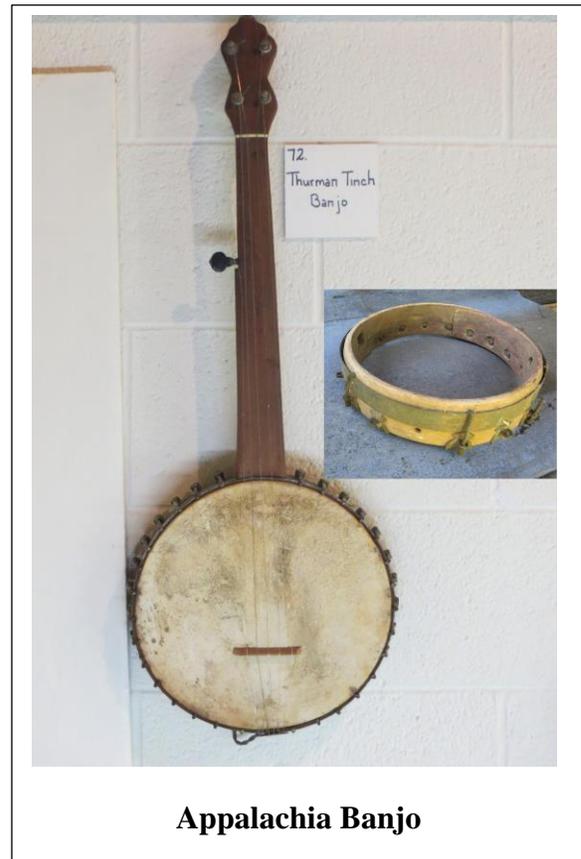
There weren’t many jobs and times were hard. Susie’s father worked at timbering near Blood Mountain. Susie said, “My father hoboed on the train to north GA at the start of the week and then hoboed home at the end of the week.” During the week, her mother cared for the family and kept the home safe. For food, they grew most of what they needed. They ate a lot of berries and wild foods that they gathered from the mountain. There was no money for doctors. Susie’s mother knew how to make medicine from the wild plants which she may have learned from her Cherokee ancestors. Susie said they always had medicinal plants on hand to help cure some of the basic ailments they encountered.

They made their own soap. There were two kinds: one for washing themselves and one for washing clothes. During the week, they washed themselves using a wash rag and a small basin of water. On the weekend, they put water in large kettles which was heated by the sun and they all got a bath outside. The clothes were washed once a week in the large kettles also. Water was brought to a boil and the clothes were washed by hand or using a scrub board. One of Susie’s chores was to gather the wood and build a fire to wash the clothes.

Living an isolated life far from civilization and with limited money, they could not go to town for entertainment to see a movie and to shop. But that never stopped Susie’s family from having fun. Susie said her mother and father were very musically gifted. Her father using recycled materials built a banjo for himself and cured a hide to make the banjo top. He also made a guitar for Susie’s mother. Susie remembers them gathering together to play music and sing songs. Susie’s mother being of Scotch-Irish heritage knew the Gaelic songs and would sign them to the family. Some of Susie’s schooling included basic piano lessons and she picked it up quickly. Not being able to afford a piano at home, Susie made a cardboard piano keyboard and practiced at home with her imaginary piano. Her bother William in later life learned to make electric guitars and played them regularly with some of his friends.

Susie played on the basketball team in high school and also worked with the school newspaper and other reporting activities. This helped prepare her to venture into a larger world. It was a world very different than a mountain cove she was accustomed to.

When Susie finished high school, she enlisted in the Air Force with her parents' permission and signature. She had to go to Atlanta for her induction and then fly to Texas for her training. This was the second time for her to venture into the big city and to ride on an airplane and a train. Her high school senior class had traveled to Washington DC by train the year before her graduation. It is hard to imagine what that may have been like for a young country girl growing up in the mountains. After basic training, she returned home briefly and then was sent to an Air Force base north of Detroit where she served her enlistment as the Chaplain's assistant. After four years in the Air Force, she returned home. She found temporary employment in Atlanta and eventually got a job with a large insurance company. After a few years with them, they sent her to the office in Chicago where she worked until her retirement from the company in the early 1980's. By then, her mother and father had died, so she packed up her belongings and moved back to the cove in White County and moved back into the house in which she was raised.



Her bother William was still living on the property but in poor health. In the interim period after her mother and father had died, other people had used their family property as a dumping ground and some were even growing marijuana on the property. Susie had never walked their entire 140 acres but she began trekking over the hills and valleys to learn about the land. She ran off the people who were abusing the property. This is when she found the Indian Marker Tree high up on a ridge above her home.

Today, although having some support from her retirement and social security, Susie has reverted back to a living style of her early Southern Appalachian years. She lives frugally making do with little. She can no longer grow and tend the fields of corn and sugar cane so she buys what food she needs at the store in Cleveland, GA. The house is still heated by wood but she does have an electric range to cook on and a refrigerator.

## **Stan's Story – The Cove of Meriwether County – Part 4**

### **A Place of Historical and Cultural Importance to the Indigenous Peoples**

**Don & Diane Wells**

With Part 4 of this series, we continue the story of families who lived under the burden of hiding their Indian culture for fear of being removed to Oklahoma. Susie's story was centered in North GA in a cove in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Stan Cartwright's story is also centered in a cove area but his is in Middle GA in Meriwether County.

The Cove is in fact a meteorite impact crater which is located on the east side of Meriwether County. The Flint River cuts through the east side of the crater formation. The circular impact crater with its high mountainous sides forms a place of isolation, a place of safety. It might be considered a "sanctuary." Black Elk, Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux said, "Everything the power of the world does is done in a circle. The sky is round and I have heard that the Earth is round like a ball and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood-to-childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tipis were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children."

The early Indian trade routes and pathways went west, north and south of the Cove but none of them went through it probably because one would have to cross over the mountainous ring twice going in any direction. The archaeological evidence found in the Cove shows that indigenous peoples have lived there or at least visited there for various purposes from the Archaic period, 10,000 years up until today. During the Historic period the Muskogee-Creek and other Indian heritages lived in the Cove. The Cove has many artesian springs with good water, the land in the bottom of the Cove is very fertile, and the Flint River is a source of food. In the Cove are two Indian fish weirs that remain in existence today.

This place of sanctuary is where indigenous people of many Indian heritages came to stay. Families with Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Muskogee-Creek have lived there for generations. The story of how all these people of various tribal heritages knew about this place is not known but it must have been shared when they traveled the thousands of miles of trails to trade and hunt. Even the Iroquois knew about White Sulphur Springs and its waters with healing properties that exists ten miles to the west of the Cove. It is to this sanctuary that Stan's family migrated many generations ago.

Because his family with Muskogee Creek heritage did not want to be found, they did not record a lot about their whereabouts. They also avoided the census takers in order to remain off the record. Thus, it is hard to track the time his ancestors actually moved into the Cove. It is likely that his ancestors initially were living just east of the Flint River in a place called Long Branch. The land on the east side of the Flint was ceded by the Creek Indians in 1821 and the Creek Indians had to leave and move to the west side of the Flint. But just six years later, William McIntosh, the Chief of the Lower Creek Indians ceded the lands between the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers against the wishes of many Creek Indians. Thus, the Creeks were now required to move further west into a small part of Alabama that remained in Creek hands. Not all moved. Stan's ancestors probably began their life in the Cove hiding from the government who wanted them out of this territory.

Those that lived in the Cove were a mix of Indian heritage and pioneers, mostly Scotch-Irish, who also did not like the government. Their closely knit society lived their lives, mostly harmoniously, apart from the outside world. They banded together to protect each other from those that wanted to harm any member of the Cove. Stan said, "If an unknown person ventured into the Cove, all work stopped until it could be determined what this person's purpose was for being in the Cove."

As a young boy, Stan's father took him to see the caves nearby on the Flint River where they could hide if someone from the government was coming to take them away.

Stan's heritage is Muskogee Creek on his father's side and is Cherokee on his mother's side. Some of the family members were included in the census roles of Oklahoma Indian tribes. One of his relatives was Jessie Bartley Milam (1884 - 1949) who was the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1941 to 1949.

Stan's great-great grandfather, John Benjamin Cartwright (1812-1895) was probably the first of the Cartwright family to arrive in the area of the Cove. Stan's great grandfather, Benjamin Hill Cartwright, was born in The Cove in 1857. It is through Willie Lou Allen, who married one of



**1832 Wright Cabin in The Cove**

the Cartwright men, from whom Stan inherits his Muskogee Creek bloodline. Some of the Cartwright men removed to Oklahoma with their Indian wives. Stan's great grandfather, Benjamin Hill Cartwright, is buried in Woodbury, Georgia, just north of The Cove. Next to him are two graves that are identified as "Indian".

Stan's other great grandfather, Arthur Allen (born 1873, Tallapoosa, Alabama) was in the Cove by around 1890. Arthur Allen came to The Cove, following saw mills in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Eventually, he would find himself in a small community called Long Branch, just east of the Flint River and The Cove. Long Branch was also called "Over the Top", because it is located on the top of the eastern rim of the meteorite crater that formed The Cove. Along the banks of the secluded Long Branch Creek and the Flint River, Stan's paternal great grandfather met Lou Teal, a Muskogee Creek Indian woman, living and hiding from the world, to avoid removal.

Although Stan is both Muskogee Creek and Cherokee, he was raised in the ways of the Muskogee Creek and it is this heritage that gave his family the ability to live close to the land and survive in an environment where the "hunter-gather" way of life was the norm.

## **Stan's Story – The Cove of Meriwether County – Part 5**

### **Growing up Indian – Keeping Oneself Pure and in Balance with Nature**

**Don & Diane Wells**

Stan Cartwright was born in 1951 in the Cove to Warner "Junebug" Cartwright and Louise Pilkinton Cartwright. When Stan was brought home there was no crib to put him in so his first bed was a dresser drawer which was used until he could be safely put in a bed. His home was a log cabin with no running water and no power. They did not have the refinements of city folks who had TV, telephone or indoor plumbing. One might think that they were poor folks but, in fact, Stan looks at it as growing up privileged to live a life close to the earth.

Stan's heritage is Muskogee Creek on his father's side and Cherokee on his mother's side. It is through Willie Lou Allen, his great grandmother, who married one of the Cartwright men, that Stan inherits his Muskogee Creek bloodline. Although he has both Muskogee-Creek and Cherokee heritage, he was raised in the Muskogee-Creek ways.

From the time he was a little boy until into his adult life, he was mentored by his father and his grandparents in the ways of the Creek Indians. His father was a story teller and Stan recalls many nights, as a child, sitting and listening to his father telling stories about animals or other creatures that we best avoid. He was not told of his Indian heritage until he was 10 years old and could better understand the meaning of being Indian. With that understanding, he was taught that people may come into the Cove to take them to Oklahoma so living out in the open areas of the Cove was too dangerous.

In the Cove was a road known to the locals as the "White Line" where some white families rented houses to live in from a single owner. Stan said, "The White Line was not secluded

enough so his family lived at the end of dead end roads. We were used to living on dead end roads, with the mountains at our backs. We disappeared into those mountains more times than I can remember.” There were caves in the walls of the crater along the Flint River and that is where Stan’s father took him to show him where to hide if needed. Stan remembers his grandparents living a very secretive life in a cabin on the Flint River. It was part of being Creek Indian and living under the burden of the possibility of being removed from the Cove.

The Cove is defined by the boundary of the impact crater but that was not the only place Stan’s family remained. To the east of the crater was the old town of Long Branch, sometimes called “Over the Hill,” Stan’s relatives once lived there and they visited that area periodically. There are two cemeteries where some of his relatives are buried. Further south of that location on both sides of the Flint River are other locations they frequented.

Stan’s father only had an elementary school education but he had a PhD in living close to the land. Every day was a learning experience for Stan on how to hunt game or fish for food. Bringing home supper from your hunter-gather trips was their way of life. Stan said, “My father did everything by the phases of the moon including planting and harvesting crops, knowing when a certain fish were running in the rivers or creeks, and the availability of seasonal plants that grew in the Cove.” In today’s world of mostly working mothers and fathers living a city life, the skills of living off the land have all but been forgotten. Therefore, teaching our children about this way of life, about existing and surviving, is all but gone from our knowledge banks.

Stan, on the other hand, was raised Indian. Every hour of every day when he was not in school he spent with his father or grandparents listening and learning. Stan said, “I became a hardened young man climbing those mountains and paddling on the river an old wooden boat on that his daddy had built out of wooden planks and sealed with pitch. He would bait and check trot lines and even as a young married man, he said “I did what daddy told me to do.”

One cold day in early March, Stan’s father took him to the mouth of Pigeon Creek on the south side of the Cove. Pigeon Creek flows into the Flint River near several Indian sites. Stan said he and his father arrived in the late afternoon and set up their camp. Stan built a fire to stay warm and tended it throughout the night. Stan’s father just lay down on the beach and went to sleep with little protection from the cold. In the morning, they rigged fishing poles with hooks and fished for the suckers swimming rapidly toward the Flint River during their spawning season. In 30 minutes they had a “croaker” sack full of fish. Stan said, “We came home with all the fish my grandmother could can, cook, or freeze, heads and all.”

The Flint River was a major source of food for the Cartwright family. Stan remembers spending days at a time on the river with his father catching fish. They would sleep on the embankments at night and then get up and fish all day. The fish they caught were cleaned and then preserved for their family’s food supply.

One of the skills of the Indians is basket making using oak shavings, river cane and pine straw. Normally, this skill is found in the Indian women. But in Stan's family, his granddaddy made the baskets, including fish/turtle baskets and he also put bottoms/back on chairs. He sold some of his crafts and made sure family members had baskets of all sizes and shapes for their daily needs.

## **Stan's Story – The Cove of Meriwether County – Part 6**

### **Indian Spirituality**

**Don & Diane Wells**

In tribal life, a "Medicine Man" served the tribe as their spiritual leader and healer. This person often underwent tens of years of training to gain the knowledge on how to deal with various sicknesses and evil spirits. But not all are trained. Some inherited this capability. Stan's great-grandmother was Lou Teal Allen and his grandmother was Middie Lou Allen Cartwright. Both had the gift of healing and of perceiving the spiritual world.

One of Stan's fondest memories growing up in the Cove was going with his grandmother to pick medicinal plants to use for Indian medicine. He said they would travel all over the Cove for a day or more gathering plants when they were in season. It was one of those special bonding experiences that are hard to describe.

Stan's grandmother was reverently called "The Indian Woman." She was not a "shaman" but she had acquired a great knowledge about Indian medicine. Growing up in the Cove, Stan said they did not go to the doctor if they had an illness. They just went to grandmother and she fixed a potion or suave from the medicinal plants or gave them something to cure their illness. Unfortunately today, there are few Indians who are able to perform the services of the "Indian Woman."

The deeper spiritual understanding inherited by Stan's grandmother is not well understood and seldom spoken about by Native Americans. William Winn, who is an authority on Creek Indians in the Chattahoochee Valley, wrote a book entitled "The Old Beloved Path, Daily Life Among the Indians of the Chattahoochee River Valley." In his book Winn said, "Special individuals called *keethlulgi* or "knowers" among the Creeks were considered to be invested with spiritual powers beyond the ordinary." He went on to say they were not a shaman but rather someone with a rare and exceptional gift with deep spiritual and psychological wisdom and a sort of second sight. To the Creek Indians, an integral part of daily life was keeping oneself pure and in balance with nature. Winn surmises in his book that the *keethla's* main function seems to have been to help restore order or balance with nature. A Muskogee language scholar said that they would write the word as *kerrvlke* for the group of knowers and *kerry* for a single knower.

The gift of *kerry or keethla* appears to be an inherited gift and certain family members having varying aspects of the gift. Stan's father had it and so does Stan. Stan's father told him that some of those with the gift could speak to the animals and to the dead. To prove his statement about

speaking to the animals, Stan said his father would stand out in a field and, using a language he did not understand, would call the animals to him. Birds of various species and four-legged animals would appear near them when his father called them using various languages for each species. Stan said having the gift of *keeththla* is not always considered a gift. What he sees in his dreams sometimes can be disturbing to his well-being.

Biblically, spiritual gifts are mentioned in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 1 Corinthians 12:28 and in Ephesians 4:11. The spiritual gifts mentioned in Romans are said to be provided to each Christian individual to be used for the church. One of those gifts is prophesy. That term carries a deeper meaning beyond what we would see in people with that gift. A term more representing the meaning is “perceiving or knowing.” Diane has the gift of perceiving. One Sunday when heading to



**Sam Proctor, Muskogee-Creek Elder with Stan Cartwright  
in The Cove, Meriwether County, GA**

the Parish Hall for coffee after the services were over, Diane told me she had to remain in the church because there was someone who needed her. It is times like these that I know to move on as I don't comprehend this gift or have an understanding but she definitely does. Later she told me a lady by the name of Nell remained in the church after everyone had left and Diane sat down with her to ask her what was troubling her. Nell had cancer and was facing an operation on Monday that scared her. This was Nell's first visit to our church and no one knew her story. Diane prayed with Nell and they became the best of friends. Nell was cured of her cancer and still attends that church in Alexandria, VA.

Few of today's family members who have hid their Indian culture for fear of being removed from where they live, have a comprehensive understanding of their Indian heritage. Although, in some cases, they were told the Indian stories and about their heritage, very little understanding has been passed on. None of Stan's family knows what plants to use for medicinal purposes as his grandmother did. The ability to speak to the animals is all but gone and the hunter-gather life of an Indian is a thing of the past as most family members have become urbanized. This is not

only true of Stan's family and those like his but, in some cases, of those Indians living on the reservations.

The Indian way of life of living in harmony with nature has been greatly impacted by the terrible injustice our ancestors did to the Indians. In a period of 400 years from the time that Columbus set foot in the New World over 90% of the indigenous people had perished. The greatest harm from that calamity was the loss of the elders who were the keepers of the culture and knowledge. Today, there are few elders left who have a comprehensive understanding of their tribal culture. For most tribes, there are few left that can speak the language of the tribe. One elder told us if you cannot speak your language, you cannot sing your songs, tell your stories and perform your ceremonies. You're no longer an Indian.

With Part 6, we come to a close of this series. We have met and interviewed many more families who have lived under the burden of hiding their culture in Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee and elsewhere. Each week that we are out speaking to groups across the country, we meet more people who share their stories that are similar to Susie's and Stan's and others. It is a sad commentary on the history of the relationship between American and those who have lived under and in some case continue to live under the burden of fear that they are in danger. We can only hope that someday these families will feel like they can join the society as an equal partner.