This transcript is one of a series of interviews with American Indian people throughout much of the United States by S. I. Myers of the History Department of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 63131.

The purpose of these interviews is to bring the Indian peoples' own comments to students in classrooms, and to foster greater understanding among the peoples of the United States by providing Indians the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to a wider audience.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and ease of reading, but every effort has been made to preserve the original feeling. Conversations and opinions were encouraged on any subject of interest to interviewees; questions and responses do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the interviewer, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or St. Louis Community College.

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LISTENING TO INDIANS

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WENDY FOLZ, Klallum
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Sam Myers:

Today I'm talking with Wendy Folz, a young lady from the Oregon College of Education. Wendy, where is that?

Wendy Folz:

In Monmouth, Oregon.

SM: And this is Thanksgiving Day, and you're home for Thanksgiving. Did you just get home last night?

WF: Just last night.

SM: When do you have to go back?

WF: Sunday. We're trying to beat the traffic.

SM: And school starts Monday again. How do you like it down there?

WF: It's pretty good. It's kinda different from high school. You have to do too much homework and stuff. I don't have time much to do anything.

SM: Is this your first year down there?

WF: Um hm.

SM: So you're a freshman at Oregon College of Education. Are you going into education then?

WF: PE.

SM: Football, gymnastics?
WF: Just I'm gonna be a teacher, and hopefully I'll be a coach for basketball by the time I do get in teaching.

SM: Girls participate in basketball more in this part of the country than in some?

WF: Do they? I don't know. Like in high school, we just started basketball. I was one of the first people to play basketball.

SM: So then you'd be aiming at a career in secondary education, in high school?

WF: I think so.

SM: Coaching basketball, and you'd have to teach some classes, too, like PE maybe?

WF: Well, it depends on the major or minor, and mine's gonna be math.

SM: So then you might teach a math class and some PE classes and coach basketball?

WF: Um hm.

SM: Where would you like to be most? What part of the country?

WF: Probably in this area. I really like it here.

SM: Right around the Columbia River. Yes, it's nice country here, isn't it?

WF: Yeah, it's really pretty.
SM: Today, for example, the sun came out, and the sky is blue for a change on a winter day here, because it's never very cold, but it often is raining.

WF: It's always rainy.

SM: Do you people who live here get used to it?

WF: Oh yeah. It rains all the time. It's so unpredictable, you never know it's comin' up.

SM: What kind of classes do you have now?

WF: I'm basically taking liberal arts classes now. I'm going for four years, and then later on I'll specialize in my area.

SM: Any Indian activities down there?

WF: Well, there's just the one group. There's an Indian group down there, and they do quite a bit of stuff like art exhibits and stuff like that that has to do with the culture.

SM: It's not a social club?

WF: It is, kinda. They meet and they have banquets and all kinds of stuff like that.

SM: Dances?

WF: Not that I know of. I've only heard of it a couple times, and I've never gone to any of their meetings.

SM: You might join later?
WF: Yeah, I want to go to the next one if I can find the time. It really sounds interesting, and I know the people that are running it too.

SM: You don't have any conflict with their opinions or anything?

WF: I really don't think I have an opinion so far.

SM: In other words, you're not militantly for this or against that?

WF: No, I'm not really into everything yet.

SM: Schoolwork keeps you pretty busy?

WF: Yes.

SM: By the way now, you are a Klallum Indian?

WF: Yes, I am.

SM: From your mother's side?

WF: Um hm.

SM: Not only that, but a little Hawaiian maybe?

WF: Yeah, that's what we just found out recently.

SM: And then some non-Indian too. Do you ever remember living on any reservation?

WF: No, I don't think us kids ever lived on one. My mom did, and then we lived near one in Handsville, Washington, right by Puget Sound.

SM: Is that near where the Klallum Reservation was?
WF: Yeah, it's pretty near, I think, about 20 miles or so. It's just a little, tiny town.

SM: That's up the Sound, on the west side, Olympic Peninsula side, isn't it?

WF: I think so.

SM: Near Port Angeles?

WF: Um hm.

SM: There's another community college up there too.

WF: Is there?

SM: Yes. Pretty place. Well, I've been very much amazed here in the Pacific Northwest to discover all the different tribes. There are probably more here than any place in the whole country. In fact, one book at the library showed 51, and I'm sure that was not all.

WF: I think I'd like to get more into it. When we lived in Clatskanie, my mom just started really getting into doing the sign languages and stuff. You know, us kids didn't hardly know much about it.

SM: How old were you?

WF: I was about in the 6th grade.

SM: Clatskanie, where is that?

WF: That's about 12 miles up the hill from Longview. It's in Oregon.
SM: Oh, it's across the Columbia River and up the hill over there?

WF: Um hm. It's kinda in the valley a little. Just a little, tiny town.

SM: Did you ever know any Clatskanie people over there, that is Indian people?

WF: No. The town is named after an Indian chief, but I think we were practically the only Indian family there.

SM: There aren't any more there, are there, because all the Clatskanie are gone. They are one of the examples, someone said, of the actual elimination of an entire tribe through disease. They got something with high fevers and got into the cold streams to bring down the fever, and died from pneumonia and complications, all of them, every one of them, so they're all gone. All that's left is the name.

WF: That's really too bad.

SM: These things happened. What was about the first time in Clatskanie then that you can remember taking part in any Indian activities?

WF: My mom more or less did, and we'd always go and watch her and she'd tell us what happened, and then I started to get a little bit interested, but I never did pursue, you know, try to find out what our culture is like and stuff like that, and I think I'd like to start doin' that, 'cause I find a lot of people come up and ask me about things, and I really am ignorant about it, and I wish I weren't.

SM: Do a lot of people assume that you are Indian?

WF: Um hm. A lot of people ask me.
SM: Do they ask you if you are Spanish sometimes too?

WF: Not as much as Hawaiian.

SM: Maybe because there are more Hawaiian people here?

WF: In Monmouth there's quite a few.

SM: But not very many Spanish people?

WF: No, not very many at all.

SM: If you lived in Santa Fe, probably they would take you for a Spanish girl.

WF: Probably.

SM: That's interesting. I'm a little surprised that they would ask you if you are Indian.

WF: A lot of them do.

SM: Do they do it nicely?

WF: Yeah. Well they just come up and very bluntly say, "Are you half Indian, or part Indian?" And I say, "Yes, I am," and they start goin' off.

SM: Have you ever run into any unpleasant instances because of this?

WF: I never have. Everybody's pretty nice.

SM: You and your family illustrate something that's happened, because
your mother's mother had problems, and your mother had some problems, and you kids, at least you and your sister, haven't had any.

WF: I hate to say this, but when I was littler I was kind of ashamed to be an Indian, because it wasn't the thing, you know, and then, when my mom started getting into this thing about the Indians, then I started to become more proud, you know.

SM: Mostly now we envy you.

WF: Yeah, I really enjoy being Indian. It's something I'm glad I turned out to be. It's really a good thing.

SM: You haven't been to the powwows then, or any of these other affairs that go on in the area?

WF: I have with my mom a couple times, and it was really interesting. I like to watch the dancers and all the neat costumes, and you learn quite a bit. Just by watching them you learn, you know, how they dance, and all the different customs that they have.

SM: Have you ever participated?

WF: I never have. I've just watched.

SM: Your sister has, hasn't she?

WF: I don't know, I think she might have got brave once. I really don't know. We knew this guy who lived up in Seattle, and he was white, like he had an Indian wife, and he really got into this Indian thing, and he started to play the drums at the powwows, and, you know, he started considering himself as Indian and everybody did accept that, because he was just so much a part of it--what they were doing.
SM: Oftentimes Indian people will accept non-Indians much better, don't they?

WF: They really do. They don't look down on them.

SM: More tolerant?

WF: I really have found that.

SM: Back at school down there, Monmouth, Oregon, is it?

WF: Monmouth, um hm.

SM: How far is that from here?

WF: About 120 miles. It's about 10 miles from Salem.

SM: You go down through Portland.

WF: Um hm. And through Salem.

SM: What classes are you taking now?

WF: I'm taking a western civilization class that deals with starting from way back in primitive times, and then lit., and two PE classes.

SM: English literature?

WF: Reading, yeah, English literature. And health, I think that's it.

SM: Two PE classes?

WF: Um hm. Because I'm majoring in PE, so they require that you take at
least two professional classes.

SM: What kind of PE is it?

WF: My PE is volleyball, and folk and square.

SM: Dancing?

WF: Um hm. So I'll learn all about different kind of dances from way over in Europe, and all kinds of things.

SM: That would be interesting. Maybe some day you can teach the kids in some of your classes how to do some Indian dancing.

WF: Yeah. I think that'd be really nice. My mom, when she was a Girl Scout leader, she taught some of us how to do the one dance, and the kids really liked it.

SM: At the nursery school yesterday, where your little baby sister is, your mother, in her dress, talked to all these little tiny kids, you know, two and three years old, and they were fascinated, and they all had little feathers and stuff they'd made and stuck on their heads, you know. They were getting a big kick out of playing Indian for a while in connection with the Thanksgiving idea. See how it's changed again? The accent is a little different than it used to be. Now all the kids want to be Indians.

WF: When I went down to Colorado this summer, I went with my girl friend, we stayed with her sister, and she has a little boy that's about four years old, and he came up to me one day and he said, "Wendy are you Indian?" And I go, "Yes, I am." He goes,"Are you the Indian that goes running around the woods and killing all the animals, and chopping everybody's scalp off?" I just had to start laughing, it was so
stereotyped, you know, and I tried to explain to him that it wasn't really like that any more.

SM: How old was he?

WF: He was about four.

SM: Some place he picked this up.

WF: Yeah, Colorado. Strange, his conception.

SM: You've never actually run into any real problems? That's about the worst instance you could think of, from a four-year old?

WF: Yeah. Sometimes I get to feeling that people are always looking at me, you know, and I can't tell whether they're very prejudiced or not, but you can always tell the ones who don't like the Indians.

SM: How do you do that?

WF: You can tell, 'cause they kinda look at you funny, you know, and give you "the eye." But not very many people are like that, not any more.

SM: Would this be mostly older people or younger ones?

WF: The older people, definitely the older ones. The younger people, you know, they could care less.

SM: They accept you no matter what?

WF: Yeah, as long as you're the kind of person you are. If they like the kind of person you are.
SM: They don't care anything about whether you're black, red, yellow or what?

WF: No, not at all.

SM: That's good. Maybe we're making progress in the world after all.

WF: I hope so.

SM: Do you think so?

WF: I think so.

SM: Wendy, this being Thanksgiving Day, can I ask you what you think about Thanksgiving? For example, I've run into some Indian people who say, "Thanksgiving. I've got nothing to be thankful for. All it means is that we helped those people out when they came here as Pilgrims, and then they took our land, so why should we be thankful?" Do you feel like that?

WF: No. I think Thanksgiving's a day when you're not thanking the white people for taking away our land, we're thanking God for letting us be alive and having everything we have. That happened a long time ago, and what happened today? Thanksgiving is a time just to love and care.

SM: In the family setting especially. Like here now you have your whole family and a couple of young friends from Minnesota. You're going to have a big group here today, aren't you?

WF: Yeah. We're gonna have a pretty big group.

SM: You're going to have a good time, too.
WF: Yeah, oh yeah. It's a beautiful time of the year.

SM: I wonder, though, do you suppose we're ever going to get over some of those attitudes of friction about these things? What is the answer? Have you thought about it much?

WF: You mean as far as the Indians. . . .

SM: The Indians and the Europeans, for example.

WF: I wish that we could just come all together, you know, and just forget that we're white or we're black, you know, the whole bit. Be one group instead of being separated by our color of our skin.

SM: Yes. This is one of those strange paradoxes. We're supposed to have no discrimination, theoretically, in fact, it's even illegal, but the law doesn't always get carried out, in spirit at least, and then, on the other hand, we have various minority groups wanting to separate themselves out. There's no reason why they shouldn't if they want to, is there?

WF: No, there isn't.

SM: But is that a conflict? The idea that everybody should be together, yet this Indian tribe should have a reservation, exclusive to itself, and no one else is permitted there without their permission?

WF: I think that's kinda being selfish on their part, kinda, 'cause I think they should let the people--if there is such a case--they should let the people come in and see how they live there, what their culture is and everything.

SM: Usually they do, but there are cases where intruders are not very
welcome. You know, there's been the trouble in South Dakota that you heard about. There are arguments both ways, I suppose, but you think, at least from your point of view, that it would be better to get over all these separations and prejudices?

WF: I would like to see everybody come together, like in spirit and soul and everything like that, and then have the Indians keep their culture, or just remember it.

SM: There's no reason why they can't, is there?

WF: No, there isn't at all.

SM: And then some other group, like some Polish group, they can keep their culture too, can't they, mores and folk dances and everything?

WF: Yeah. I think that's part of our history and it's really important.

SM: So that we would all be equal and not discriminated against, any of us, but still each of us would have the right, then, to keep his own ways, his own attitudes, and so on, and be respected by the others. Think we'll make it?

WF: I wish we could. Maybe some day we can.

SM: Does it look like we're aiming in that direction? For example, down at school?

WF: I think we are, 'cause everybody is really close, they could care less what color people are.

SM: Tell me more about the school. Is it a big school, a small one?
WF: It's a small college. To get to the farthest away class you go only about a quarter of a mile, and it's mainly a teachers' school, secondary or elementary. It's a really nice school, everybody's really warm. I've talked to people who've gone to several different colleges, and they felt that OCE was the best, as far as friendliness and things like that.

SM: This one has a good atmosphere then, so you like it. Why did you choose it?

WF: Because my mom went there, and I like that area down there too, and it's friendly.

SM: A lot of pretty country in Oregon, isn't there?

WF: There really is.

SM: Is Monmouth a small town?

WF: It's just a college town.

SM: How big would you say?

WF: Oh, it's about 5,000.

SM: Any idea how many students there are?

WF: I don't know, I really don't know. Probably about 3,000. There really isn't very many that just come to live there, because it's basically students.

SM: There are dorms there? You live in the dorm?

WF: I live in the dorm.
SM: How's that? Do you like that?

WF: It's O.K. The only thing I don't like is the dorm food. It's awful. I'll get skinny.

SM: You don't eat much of it because you don't like it so well?

WF: It was O.K. the beginning of the year, but now I don't know what they're doing to it, they must be cleaning out the refrigerators, but otherwise, my roommates are really nice and we get along real well.

SM: About the same number of boys and girls?

WF: Um hm. I live in a co-ed dorm.

SM: How does that work out?

WF: It works out pretty good. Like there's one floor of girls and then a floor of guys. In our pod there's two floors of guys and one floor of girls. But everybody gets along real well.

SM: Do you have lounges where you can visit and talk?

WF: Yeah. Everybody goes down to watch T.V., which is really nice. It's kind of a social place.

SM: Then you don't have visiting privileges in the rooms, though?

WF: Yes we do. Sure. We can have people up till 12:00 midnight, on the weekdays, and then 2:00 on the week-ends.

SM: Is there a lot of that visiting?
WF: Oh yeah.

SM: So there's kind of a free and easy atmosphere?

WF: It's not really restricted down because it's like we're on our own. Like you have a house mother or a house resident. She's really young, and she doesn't watch us, she just lets us do whatever we want, except for like when we get a little loud, have pillow fights and everything like that, they kinda come up and tell us to be quiet. Besides that they're really good people.

SM: In other words, if you were going to get the job as a house mother or house resident sometime, would you do it the same way?

WF: I think I would be about the same way. I think that by the time you reach freshman in college you should have the responsibility, and, if you can't handle it, then you might as well just leave.

SM: Well, that's interesting, because it wasn't so long ago that a lot of people considered the college administration was kind of a substitute for your parents, and they had to watch you and scold you and punish you, and all that sort of thing. That's not so much true any more, is it?

WF: No. You're out on your own.

SM: Well, how is it working?

WF: I think that we're becoming more responsible, because we are getting more responsibilities on us, and we're being able to make our own decisions, the right decisions, sometimes the wrong ones, but generally I think it works out really good this way.
SM: Coming from you, you see, that's a pretty good recommendation. Do you plan to go there all the four years?

WF: I plan to so far. I was thinking about maybe going into accounting or something like that, and then to do that I'd have to go over to OSU.

SM: Oregon State University?

WF: Um hm.

SM: Where is that?

WF: That's in Corvallis, that's only about 20 miles away.

SM: How far are you from the Pacific Ocean there at Monmouth?

WF: About 60 miles.

SM: Do you ever go over to the beach?

WF: Um hm. Every once in a while. It's pretty cold over there, and rainy, so you don't go there very much during the winter months.

SM: Like in the spring, back in our school, some of the kids go down to Florida for the spring vacation, have fun on the beaches. But this doesn't happen over on the Oregon beaches?

WF: No, I don't think as much. You kinda just go home, because Oregon beaches are cold. A lot of people go down there to go down and booze it up, whatever.

SM: People don't go swimming there much?
WF: No, it's too cold.

SM: The water is often cold all along the west coast, isn't it? Even way down into California.

WF: I've never been down that way.

SM: The beaches are beautiful, though, aren't they?

WF: Especially up in northern California. Oh, they're so pretty, the big tides, really big tides.

SM: Have you been along the beaches here in Washington, too?

WF: Not very much, the Washington beaches. Just in this area.

SM: Mostly around the river here, the Columbia, and then in Oregon. Well, the Oregon beaches are spectacular too, the scenery, you know. Of course, like every place, there are stretches of beach which are just sand and nothing else.

WF: Sometimes that's nice too.

SM: Did you ever dig clams?

WF: Oh yeah. We used to always get up really early in the morning and rush down there and have lots of fun, digging our hands in the sand and getting just soaked to the bone.

SM: A lot of people don't know about that. These are razorback clams?

WF: Um hm. Yeah, they make a little hole in the sand, and then you try to be as quiet as you can, you tip-toe up to the hole, and then you just start digging like mad, and stick your hand down in there.
SM: Three feet down in the hole. And get wet and cold.

WF: You have to throw yourself on the sand and just stick your hand in there and try and just feel it. They move fast.

SM: I guess there's a carefully guarded limit on how many you can take, isn't there?

WF: Yeah, I think it's about 12.

SM: Someone said, during the season when you can take clams, it's like a mass of people at a fairgrounds. Thousands of people on the beach digging for clams. Have you seen that?

WF: We haven't gone out for a long time, so I don't know what the situation is now, but when we used to go when I was littler, just hundreds of people, just lots.

SM: It's interesting. It would be great. I think oftentimes everybody ought to have the chance to come from the eastern part of the country out into the expanses of the West, where you have all these things--the mountains, the prairies, canyons and the sea coast. It's just beautiful, and there's so much of it. Any last word, Wendy, before we leave? Any advice for young freshman students leaving home for the first time?

WF: Make sure and study hard.

SM: Have you been studying hard?

WF: Oh, too hard, I think.

SM: Are you going to catch up and take it a little easier, maybe?
WF: Yeah, I hope so. I was kinda dumb this first term, because I kinda put things off, and now it's the last two weeks I have to madly rush and try to get everything done.

SM: Well, everybody does that, I think. I want to thank you very much for your time today.