Listening to Indians

JIMMIE HOLDER, Delaware
October 2, 1975
Anadarko, Oklahoma

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, 63135. 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.

This transcript series was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and by support from St. Louis Community College.

Copyright © S.I. Myers 1978
LISTENING TO INDIANS

NO. 54

JIMMIE HOLDER, Delaware
October 2, 1975
Anadarko, Oklahoma

Glen Rock, New Jersey
Microfilming Corporation of America
1978
Sam Myers:

Today I'm in Anadarko, Oklahoma, talking with Jimmie Holder. Jimmie, which of the tribes are you from?

Jimmie Holder:

I'm from the Delaware Tribe.

SM: And what is your position here?

JH: I'm the tribal management specialist.

SM: In other words you have your tribal office and you are the specialist in management?

JH: This particular organization that I'm a member of is actually a corporation composed of three tribes, the Wichita, Caddo and Delaware Tribes, and we are basically an economic development corporation.

SM: Then if you want to get some industry, make employment and so on, this is the organization that goes after it?

JH: Yes.

SM: That's unique. I haven't found any organization just like this before. I'd like to make you acquainted to our listeners. Did you grow up in this area?

JH: I was born in Lawton, where I now reside with my family. It's about 38-40 miles south of here.

SM: That's down by Fort Sill. Is the old Fort Sill there?

JH: Yes. It's very recently been renovated. It looks nice.
SM: That's the one where there was the famous corruption over Indian agents in the last century?

JH: We weren't involved in that one. I think at that particular time they were dealing with the Kiowa, Comanches and Apaches in this area, which are still in this area. Of course the control belongs to the Bureau now here, in the Anadarko area.

SM: Things have been improved a little?

JH: And getting better I should say.

SM: You live in Lawton?

JH: I live in Lawton right now. I was born in Lawton, and I was raised west of Anadarko here, about five miles to the west.

SM: Isn't Anadarko called the Indian capital?

JH: The Indian capital of the world. Right.

SM: Is that because there are so many different tribes that converge here?

JH: We're basically seven tribes in this area, and working out of the Anadarko agency we have what is known as the KCA--Kiowa, Comanche and Apache. These people are south of the river, south of the Washita River. And north of the river we've got the Wichita, Caddo and Delaware Tribes. I should qualify the Delaware portion. We are known as the Delawares of western Oklahoma.

SM: Because there are other Delawares in northeastern Oklahoma?

JH: Right, yes there is.
SM: The Washita, now that's another historic area, because it's up the stream here a ways where Custer attacked Black Kettle's band, wasn't it: The Battle of the Washita?

JH: I believe it's further to our west. Probably a historical point is Fort Cobb, which is to the west of us here. At one time it was a cavalry post, but, of course, it's been long gone now. Nothing remains to identify it.

SM: Did you go to school here in town?

JH: I went to school here in Anadarko in the public schools until 1945, and at that time I started to school at Riverside Indian School, which is north of the river, an Indian boarding school, and I finished my high school education there in 1950.

SM: How far is that from here?

JH: It's one mile. At the time I was going they had everything from the first grade to the 12th grade, but now they're strictly nine through twelve. It's a high school.

SM: Then did you go to school any after that?

JH: Not other than Service schools. I went into Service in 1950. I went to Korea. I got back to the States in '52 and took about a two and a half year break, then I went back into the Army, and I retired a year ago from the Service.

SM: Did you get 20 years in?

JH: Twenty four.
SM: So you're a retired Army career man. That gets you a lot of experience, doesn't it? A lot of travel?

JH: Lots of travel, lot of experience, lot of dealing with people.

SM: After you got out of the Service, did you get into this work here?

JH: Yes. I came from the Army straight into this job here. In fact, the organization is just over a year old at this time.

SM: You haven't been back too long?

JH: No.

SM: Do you drive back and forth to work every day?

JH: Yes.

SM: Well, you get plenty of miles on the car.

JH: Too many.

SM: Have you thought of moving up here?

JH: I would like to move up here, but my wife is employed by the Army down at the Army hospital at Fort Sill post.

SM: Do you have a family?

JH: We don't have any family at home any longer. We've got a boy that's presently attending Bentley College in Boston, majoring in accounting; and we've got a girl that's attending Central State University at Edmond, Oklahoma, with a major in physical therapy.
SM: I suppose the physical therapy now . . . she kind of knows from her mother's experience that she's interested in that?

JH: Possibly. My wife is basically a psychiatric tech at the hospital. She got into the field several years ago when they first started bringing the people back from southeast Asia. They were addicted to drugs, what they call "substance addiction," or "substance abuse," and she got in some college hours in this particular field and she started working with these people. She likes this; this is where she wants to be.

SM: Well, you've had a very good preparation for most any kind of work like this where you deal with people and the problems, the organizations, all the way from your wife's experience with those people, and I suppose some of that rubs off on you too.

JH: I think she uses me as a training agent.

SM: Well, it's nice that she can. You are the tribal management specialist for the . . .

JH: Wichita, Caddo and Delaware Tribes. We call them the WCD.

SM: That's a unique way to refer to three tribes.

JH: And we are commonly referred to as the business arm of the three tribes. We are not involved in their tribal affairs as such. We don't make decisions for these people in their tribal problems or their tribal business, but we do seek and get their go-ahead or acceptance for projects that will benefit all three tribes that we administer and operate as a corporation here.

SM: Have you tackled any particular projects?
JH: Just this late spring, June, we've opened the new building out there on our land, which is just to the east of Riverside Indian School, which houses the area office, the Bureau of Indian Affairs area office, for western Oklahoma and Kansas.

SM: Your organization has built the building, and you're leasing it to the BIA?

JH: Yes.

SM: You've got a good tenant there. Do you suppose they can afford to pay the rent?

JH: We hope so. It's looking pretty good right now.

SM: Do they have a long term lease?

JH: We've got a 20-year lease.

SM: That's probably a good investment.

JH: This will more than pay for what we've put into the operation so far.

SM: And bring a return for the tribes?

JH: And we've got several other things in the planning stage right now. Of course, just like a lot of other things, you can do all kind of planning, but you need some dollars to get these things going, you know, and we're catching up slowly but surely.

SM: Where do you get funds?

JH: We are funded by the Office of Native American Programs out of Washington, D.C.
SM: Is that under the Department of Interior?

JH: No, this is, I believe, under the HEW, Health, Education and Welfare.

SM: You have other programs in various stages of development?

JH: We're pretty well covering all bases within the organization here. We've got, of course, our executive director who is responsible to the board of directors, composed of the three tribes, but the executive director is full time, of course. We've got a sufficient amount of secretarial and clerical help. We've got a gentleman on board by the name of Vern Haddon, who is the program developer. He has quite an extensive background in planning and so on.

SM: He helps work up the programs for presentation?

JH: Writing the programs and so forth. We all get involved in this in a little bit of way. Then we've got a business developer, Mr. Gene Watkins, who is presently in Oklahoma City. He is also heading up the OMB program, Office of Minority Businesses. We have a program like that here, where we assist people, Indian people, that are already in business or want to get in business, putting a complete package together for them, so they can present it to a potential organization that would fund these people for whatever they want to get into.

SM: So if an Indian individual or a group of people want to start some kind of project that will contribute to the economy, they would come to you for guidance and expert help?

JH: Yes, this is the way it works.

SM: And this is what your office would do then to help them put it over and get it going.
JH: This OMB program is one particular section, and this is a separate portion from WCD Enterprises itself. And on the OMB program we have three people involved actually, and the clerical help, of course. And to continue on with our particular WCD organization, we have a full-time accountant who, incidentally, has spent something like 33 years in the Bureau in that particular field, so he is well qualified.

SM: He's a good man to know the ropes there.

JH: Yes, he knows how to do the thing in the accounting field, which is most important to any organization, as everybody realizes.

SM: This BIA and the Department of the Interior and HEW, these are really vast things, aren't they?

JH: The Bureau, for instance, which is probably the most lived with, as far as the Indian people are concerned, organization there is, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and for years has been telling the people what they'll do and what they have to do in order to get something accomplished. Hopefully, this will change. It's changing, but it seems to be very reluctantly in some cases.

SM: Some people are reluctant to give up their controls?

JH: It's our understanding that the Bureau of Indian Affairs, in their relationship with the Indian tribes at this point, they are to serve as a service organization to meet the needs of the people--whatever we want, whatever we would like to see, like to have, because, like you say, on the ground, we know what our problems are.

SM: You're right here, you know the people.

JH: We see them. And you take a guy sitting up in an office, and he
never has any contact with the people who are having the problems, I can't see how he is justified in saying what they will do, and what they have to do, in order to get something done, because we're the people that are having the problems, not him.

SM: Would you say, then, that there is some improvement coming in this self-determination kind of thing?

JH: Yes. The Indian Self-determination and Education Act, which should be finalized about the first of this next year. It's in the works now.

SM: Both the Administration and Congress are on record as favoring this, aren't they?

JH: They're pretty sure. At least we hear they're pretty sure that it's going to become a law. It's out to the people, like all the staff here have copies of this particular thing. We're reading them and trying to submit our comments or recommendations or suggestions, whatever you want to call it, into the area office, so they can incorporate these into one packet and send it on forward.

SM: Would it be reasonably accurate to refer to it as the self-determination law?

JH: I think the actual title is the Indian Self-determination and Education Act. It goes into education too. And there's another one coming in that pertains to Indian health service, which is going to entail a lot of money, and is something like a five or seven-year program, but this particular program is going to go into alcohol and drug abuse as well as medical facilities, clinics, etc. So this is another thing that is going to have to be ironed out for our people, because we have these problems, and I'm talking about alcohol abuse problems. And I'm sorry to say this, but there's lot of the Indian people that don't
believe we have problems.

SM: They haven't admitted it to themselves?

JH: No, they won't admit to to themselves, and I guess probably the reason that I say we have got them is because I'm on the board of directors of the alcoholic program we have here at Anadarko, and you can see these things, and you can see it on the street.

SM: Now from your experience back in the Service, would you say that the difficulty the Indians are having with alcoholism is worse than the average serviceman?

JH: Definitely.

SM: Would it be worse than the average of the population as a whole?

JH: I would think so, yes, I would think so.

SM: Is there some way to account for this, or explain it?

JH: I don't know. I tried to figure this thing out myself. I looked at it from several different angles, and I tried to do this as objectively as I could, and come out with some kind of reason for the high rate of alcohol abuse, and it appears to me that it's just the make-up of the individual, the person, the Indian.

SM: In other words, it isn't something peculiar to Indians?

JH: It may be to the point that it's the Indian's nature, you might say, with the way he's brought up. Now we can go into this and talk about this in the Indian world as well as the Caucasian world, as far as how they're brought up--parental guidance, whatever you want to call
it, religious activities being thrown in during his childhood and bringing up. And we found this in the Indian boarding schools at this time, that lot of the kids treat alcohol and drug abuse—by drug abuse I'm talking mainly about the use of marijuana more than the harder drugs—that it's condoned more than in other places. I guess what I'm trying to say is we find Indian students coming into these Indian schools here from areas, certain areas, that you'll find the incidence of alcohol abuse higher than you will in others. Which leads me to believe that in these various areas that these kids come from, they're more tolerant in their use of alcohol than other areas.

SM: So it varies in different areas, and then when they come together at schools, they tend to equalize out?

JH: Not really. They don't really equalize out, because you find that peer pressure can just cause them to do this thing, if they're not brought up like this. We've been working with this thing for some time, and I don't know if we're doing any good or not. I guess the young people, any more, look at the older people as what I always refer to as "the establishment."

SM: But among the Indian population there is more respect for elderly people's points-of-view than there is among the population as a whole, isn't that true?

JH: Yes, definitely. You will find out the families are larger in the Indian world because this is the Indian way.

SM: Uncles, cousins, and so on, are a part of the family?

JH: Yes.

SM: It's an extended family that's more cohesive.
JH: And even in my particular world, even though I've got two brothers and a sister--I've got a sister in Alaska and her husband's in the Armed Services, I've got a brother out in California who works for the Pacific Gas and Electric, and I've got a brother in college--but our family doesn't quit there. We've got aunts, we've got uncles, and I'm a member of the Native American Church myself, and I've got people that I go to church with that I feel very close to, so even though there's no blood relation whatsoever, they call me "son" or whatever.

SM: Like if you go to one of your uncles, you sort of expect to be treated about the same as you would by your own father, don't you?

JH: Sure, and maybe in some cases better, because of the respect that's there.

SM: Well, then, that old respect for people, elders, and the family cohesiveness, is still there basically, but there are a lot of pressures against it too?

JH: Sure, because you'll find people I guess just like in any other race or country even that are not as strong as others. And the way it is set up right now, a person, to really do good, to get motivated to hang in there good, he's got to pick the best parts of both worlds, and go on that.

SM: The Indian people have been remarkably able to survive, haven't they, in the face of great odds?

JH: And I believe we're approaching a time now where we're going to come out and the people can see what it really is. We've been stereotyped for years and years, as you well know, and I for one am very interested in what the Indian people do, not only our three tribes that I work for here, but for the other tribes. My wife is Kiowa--I met her at school--
and of course, our kids, we think we did a real good job with these people. And if every father could have a couple kids like those, he wouldn't have a bit of trouble, as far as I'm concerned.

SM: You're lucky to be able to say that.

JH: We're really pleased with them, and we're trying to hopefully go through an education process with our own people. 'Course it's not a quick, cram course. We can't do it in six weeks or a year, but we can bring it out little by little until we reeducate these people to the point where they can accept their lot in life, and then not stand still for it, but to try to get ahead and do something for themselves. Because we're getting to the point where we can't sit back and wait for somebody to help us, we've got to get out and do something, and I think everybody on the staff here feels like this. It doesn't seem like it, but we're really hustling trying to get something done.

SM: You've only been back about a year. Has this office been here very much longer?

JH: No. This office actually came into being on the first of July of last year.

SM: So it's new too. But you've already got things accomplished. You've got that building out there erected and leased, and you've got other projects in the works.

JH: We've got quite a few things going right now.

SM: Any industry going in the area?

JH: We have two carpet mills out here. They have been down, but one of them is back in circulation, the other one is starting up, and this is
the only thing we've got in this area as far as industry.

SM: What kind of carpet mills are those?

JH: These are just the regular conventional type carpet, whatever, inlay. They've changed the name in the last six months or so. These people went out of business and another company came in. They seem to be coming along pretty good right now, but the industry is very small. In fact, that's the only one. Chickasha, which is 18 miles to our east, has a little bit of industry. Several people work over there.

SM: What is the economic base here? Mostly farming?

JH: Farming, that's the biggest thing. And this kind of makes it difficult too, because lot of the Indian people are what you might call seasonal workers, and once this farming is finished, the crops are in and whatever, lot of these people are without employment in the winter time. You'll find that the Indian people, they're very, very reluctant to leave home.

SM: They like to be with the family, and not wander off into that other world?

JH: Because there's too many instances of people going out into areas such as Cleveland, San Francisco, and so on, and finding conditions no better than a ghetto when they get there, where the Indian people live. And they're really jumping out of the frying pan into the fire, so to speak, and I think after an experience like this, they're pretty reluctant to leave.

SM: That certainly is understandable for any group of people, and particularly with the problems that the Indian people have faced in the large cities, and so on. Jimmie, you mentioned that you are a
member of the Native American Church. This is something that is of
great interest, especially to college students, and none of us, who
aren't in it, know enough about it. Have you always been a member?

JH: No, I haven't. I was not brought up this way. My grandfather was
a member of the Native American Church for years, and, of course, after
I graduated from high school I left, and I was gone for 20 some years
and I came back.

SM: Did you belong to any particular religious group at this time?

JH: Not really. You know if I wanted to go to services wherever—in the
Army you've got anything you wanted, and this was it—but I didn't feel
that I was getting anything from it, and it was kind of a hit or miss
situation. I got interested in this church a couple of years ago.

SM: And now you are a participating member?

JH: Yes.

SM: Is the whole church group growing?

JH: Yes.

SM: I read once that it had grown extensively, and then had begun to
diminish.

JH: It's still growing. We're enjoying something that has been absent
for years and years—the young people are starting to follow the
trail that the old people have left, in this way. Not only in this
way, but in our ceremonials too. What people call powwows. You'll
find that here several years ago you'd look out there at the big drum,
and they were all middle-aged fellows out there singing and drumming.
Now you look out there and you see quite a few young fellows, 18, 19, 20 years old out there, learning the songs and taking part in these things.

SM: They're taking it more seriously now?

JH: Yes, I've noticed since I've been back that we're having what I called a real upsurge in Indian nationalism, people are coming back to the old traditions, the old ways. They're starting to participate, and to believe the Indian way—all Indians are brothers and sisters.

SM: This new Indian-ness, this Indian nationalism that you spoke of, that doesn't necessarily mean hate the other person, does it?

JH: No.

SM: It means simply that you're going to recapture and preserve Indian culture and ways?

JH: Indian culture, Indian ways, hopefully helping each other to get through the hard spots any way you can. It doesn't always mean a dollar here or something like this, it just means being friends with somebody, trying to help somebody. Show them, any way you can, assist these people to make them feel good.

SM: Well, maybe we can all learn something good from that.

JH: I hope so. We're dealing, in this organization, basically with three tribes, but I feel that any Indian that comes in here that needs something, I'll do my best.

SM: Now there was a time when that didn't necessarily prevail?
JH: No, there are still places that you go to now that you can't get help unless you're of that particular tribe.

SM: Back to the church now. Do you have to join it, or do you just begin to take part to whatever extent you want?

JH: You don't have to join as a put-on-a-roster church group. But, you know, once you've expressed your feelings in this way you're free, because in this religion we're dealing with something lot of people call a narcotic. It's not a narcotic. The finished product may be a narcotic, mescaline, but this is not what it's all about. So in order to keep the people in this particular field off of our church, when we join the church we're issued a membership card which authorizes you to have this particular cactus plant with you.

SM: Can you carry it with you all the time if you want?

JH: If we wanted to, yes.

SM: I talked to a man yesterday who has what he called a "father peyote." Is that a particular, blessed piece or button or plant, or are all pieces called "father peyote?"

JH: No. I'm fairly new in this, and there may be things that I won't be so sure about.

SM: But your point of view is a good one, because we would all be new if we were going to go into this thing.

JH: This particular "father" that he is talking about is something that is used as a sacrament. It's been blessed and used many times.

SM: Some of the literature about it says that you can belong to a Christian church if you want to, and still participate in the Native
American Church, and violate neither one. Is that true?

JH: Yes, you can.

SM: May I ask, are those mescal beans?

JH: Yes, mescal.

SM: It makes an attractive necklace. Now they have been dried, haven't they?

JH: These are dried ones, I picked these in Texas. I make these necklaces as a hobby.

SM: Are those gold beads in between?

JH: These are brass beads.

SM: The very simplicity of it makes it attractive.

JH: Thank you. I've had about five or six of them, and people liked them, so I just gave them. This is what is called the Indian way.

SM: It is interesting, and I was able to take a picture of a very elaborate necklace that is used in the ceremony over at Scott Tonemah's house. He was very careful not to do anything improper, but to lay it on the table and let me photograph it, there's nothing wrong with that. So that was really a remarkable, quite elaborate necklace, long, many, many beads. And he had a painting of his Uncle Charlie who was wearing it, by the way. A lot of young people sometimes get the idea that it would be a regular drug orgy. That's about as far from it as you can get, isn't it?

JH: Yes, definitely.
SM: It's a sacrament like a glass of wine in one of the other churches?

JH: This is what it's called. Like I say, we are kind of dealing with a government agency in this thing too, you know. You take for instance the people in Texas where this plant that we use grows, are really cracking down on the people going down there and getting this thing, to make sure that the people who are authorized to have it have a card to show. This is one of the main reasons why we carry it, this card.

SM: Let's say, for example, that your group is out--you've used up the peyote button supply, and you have to get some more. Is it true to say you make a pilgrimage down into the south, into Texas, the Rio Grande country, to get more?

JH: Yes.

SM: Can you go right out into the desert and pick it?

JH: This depends on where you're going. They have dealers down there.

SM: Across the border?

JH: No. You can't bring it from Mexico into the United States. So you've got these Mexican people that are authorized by the state, federal, I guess, and so on, they go out there and they pick this plant, and they dry it and they sell it, on this side of the border.

SM: It can't be cultivated, or at least no one does?

JH: Not that I know of.

SM: Well, it's just a little tiny cactus that grows almost like a little
bump in the ground, isn't it? Does it have a flower?

JH: Yes, it definitely has a beautiful flower, a pink flower on it. I met a professor from a college in Nebraska last spring, and he's doing a paper on this, and he handed me a copy of a kind of pamphlet that he and another gentleman had done, and they were very interested in this particular religion, specifically in the areas where this particular cactus grows. And this was his third year going down there, where he had kinda found a certain amount of these plants, and he was checking how much it grew each year. So the location of the plant itself is pretty well open to the public, if anyone can find references as to where this is located.

SM: It's in desert country along the Rio Grande? Now it grows south of the Rio Grande in Mexico too?

JH: I understand from my reading this was brought from old Mexico into Texas, and the Tonkawa Indians were probably the first recorded people to use this, and the Comanches soon after. Of course the Apaches may have been the first, many years ago.

SM: The Apaches, yes, because they lived on the border, they frequently went into Mexico.

JH: Right. And of course, my people are not peyote people. Basically their religion was the Longhouse, with the ceremonial drum. And, of course, this has been lost for years and years, and we've come here with the three tribes, we've intermarried all the way around, the Cheyenne and Arapaho to our northwest, the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache to the south, our own tribes here. See, my wife was brought up this way, in this religion, and she knows, she knows much about this thing. She's Kiowa.

SM: The religion of the Longhouse. Is that something that the Iroquois
are trying to preserve through their White Roots of Peace movement?

JH: I talked to a gentleman about three or four weeks ago—I was up in Washington, D.C., on a business trip—and he tells me they're doing a lot of work in this area. I don't know how much they have retained of the old traditional songs and the traditional ways of the Longhouse people, but this is something I'd surely like to see some day.

SM: There are so many things about the Native American Church we're all interested in. How much of a typical ceremony can you describe without violating any of the rules?

JH: Well, frankly, I wouldn't like to get into it at all.

SM: The point is that you find it very good, helpful?

JH: Very good. Within the state here we have several different chapters, and we've formed into chapters for security as well as an organization type of movement, because of the restrictions that the state and federal government want to place on us for using the peyote.

SM: Are they still talking about restrictions?

JH: Yes, this is what they want.

SM: Who is this?

JH: The state of Oklahoma, and very recently we had a case up in Enid, where they caught a middle-aged fellow that had a peyote button on him, and they took him to court and convicted him on it.

SM: Convicted him for what?
JH: For carrying it. He didn't have a card, he wasn't authorized to have it. And this is the thing we're running into, so what the state wants us to do is draw up laws regarding this thing, which is something I, I say "we" because I'm going to place myself with my grandfather way back there, up to now haven't had to cope with.

SM: In other words, if I had a peyote button in my pocket, I could be arrested because I don't have a card as a member of the Native American Church. If it's not a narcotic, why does the government arrest anyone for possession of it?

JH: Well, this is what we're concerned about. The state tells us that if we don't get our regulations together that they're gonna make them for us. And this is what we're concerned about, because some of our older people have said, "Well, ever since I can remember we've prayed this way, we've had our church this way." We haven't had to go by regulations other than what we establish ourselves in our tepee.

SM: I'm a non-Indian. If I wanted to become a member of this, ordinarily I would find it difficult, wouldn't I?

JH: Yes, definitely.

SM: There have been one or two instances of non-Indians becoming members, or at least of attending services?

JH: Right.

SM: And the drug cultists are definitely discouraged, aren't they?

JH: Right. I had the opportunity, and I should say the privilege, of going to church with the Pueblos in Taos, New Mexico, about six or eight weeks ago, and I didn't know this at the time, but there's a lot of people that everybody calls "hippies" that are out there,
and they do this thing.

SM: But they don't do it in the Native American Church, do they?

JH: That's what they say.

SM: They say they do?

JH: Yes. I've never seen these people in here. I've never seen them because we don't have them in this area here. There have been instances--I think there's still one man in eastern Oklahoma, a black man, goes to church this way. And I talked to my brother-in-law last night, who is a very well-respected man in the tepee, he's a Comanche man, and he says he went over to Stroud, Oklahoma, which is east of Oklahoma City, and there was a Caucasian man in there.

SM: And then you did hear of some people in the Taos area who were claiming to participate?

JH: Right. In fact, I think these people conducted their own services by themselves in this way.

SM: Not with Indians?

JH: I think maybe they had a few Indians in there at one time or another.

SM: They learned enough about it, so that then they were carrying on themselves? Well, anyway, it's a growing, group of people?

JH: Yes, I think it's growing.

SM: It's a very peace-oriented, sober sort of thing. Most Native American Church members, I've read one place, do not drink or smoke.
JH: This is probably one of the things that you will find in the Native American Church. A lot of us, like myself, we use tobacco in the church. Drinking itself is prohibited, and I had the occasion several months ago to run into an individual that made the mistake one time a long time ago of going into the tepee while he had been drinking. And the chief, who is the man that's conducting the services, told him to come in, to go back out the door, and never come back. He was 19 years away from the religion before he went back, because he was drinking.

SM: Is the man who leads the service called a priest?

JH: No, he's the chief, the roadman. Different areas have their own way. The Sioux call him a roadman.

SM: The services, they're usually held on week-ends?

JH: Yes, unless there's a very special occasion, or something has happened that requires this tepee to go up during the week.

SM: It's always a tepee erected. Figuratively or literally?

JH: Literally.

SM: And then you could have services, for example, over someone's birthday?

JH: Birthdays, anything, naming of a baby or a child. Very recently my brother-in-law had the occasion or the honor to have one of his sons named after his father. This called for a special meeting.

SM: So there was a meeting then of the people, and they had a ceremony?

JH: Like a christening. Birthdays, anniversaries, when the kids go to
school. Somebody comes home from the hospital that you're really happy for. This is a way of showing respect for these people.

SM: The services are held in groups. An individual, for example, will rarely participate alone?

JH: Never.

SM: So the group interaction of people has a lot to do with it.

JH: This place, this tepee, or wherever it's in, sometimes people can't afford to have a tepee, they'll hold it in their house.

SM: They never build churches, though?

JH: No, we don't have any $10,000 buildings or $100,000 buildings. Let me tell you this that a man told me not too long ago. This way of thinking, it's different than maybe what your people are accustomed to. He said, "Son, right here this tepee has everything you need in it, everything you want. You go away to college, you study for four years, six years, eight years, ten years, you're finished. You come back. In the tepee you have a never-ending education. Everything. In here you've got water that comes from the ground, the father, you drink it for thirst. You've got mother earth. We don't sit in beautiful pews, we sit on the ground, next to mother earth. We've got fire to keep us warm, provide light for us." He said, "These white people, they get in a rocket and go to the moon. We got the moon. It's on that tepee. We got people praying, we got people singing. Everything for an entire lifetime. You can go in there and your education will continue for an entire lifetime. You can't learn everything there is in two lifetimes in there." Everything is there, and this is the way I feel too. This is why I can't say too much, 'cause it's a sacred thing to me. It's part of me, it's part of my life,
it's part of my people's life.

SM: Some people have experienced really uplifting or inspiring emotions or feelings in the ceremonies because of the practice of this religion, the way it's carried out, and that's something we should respect.

JH: It's deeper than anything I've ever encountered in my entire lifetime. It's something that makes you go from day to day with this thing on your mind, and wanting to live because you know that everything that you do is known upstairs, and you want to do good, everything good, your life as good as you can make it.

SM: That's a great thought to end with. We started out talking about business, and we end up talking about these spiritual matters, and the uplift and the strength they have obviously brought to you.

JH: It's been my privilege to be able to go with these people this way, and I'm still a young man at it, and I'm trying hard, and have a great deal of respect for this thing.

SM: And this should help us understand a little better too. I appreciate your talking to me today, Jimmie.