DARLENE PETERS, Klallum

November 7, 1975
Longview, Washington

Part I

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.
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LISTENING TO INDIANS

NO. 98

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Part 1

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Sam Myers:
I'm talking today with Mrs. Darlene Peters, who is the Director of Minority Affairs at Lower Columbia College at Longview, Washington. Mrs. Peters is a Klallum Indian. Darlene, would you help me with that?

Darlene Peters:
You spell it Klallum or Clallum. These are white people's interpretations of the sound of the Indian word.

SM: Did you ever live on the Klallum Reservation, Darlene?

DP: No, I didn't live actually on the Klallum Reservation. I lived on a reservation called Suquamish, and that was my stepfather's reservation, and at another place called Indianola.

SM: Indianola, that's in northern Washington also?

DP: Yes, it is on the Kitsap Peninsula.

SM: That would be on the Sound side of the Olympic Peninsula. You grew up there?

DP: Yes, I did. My tribe was originally located on the Little Boston Reservation, about 12 miles away from where I was raised, and that is where most of my family lived. When my mother married a Suquamish Indian, we moved to the reservation and lived among those people, but our tribe was the Klallum Tribe on the Boston Reservation.

SM: Did you ever learn to speak either one of those languages?

DP: No. By the time I was born the language was lost. My mother could understand it to a certain degree, but she couldn't speak it. My
grandmother would only speak it when she was saying prayers, but she didn't use it as part of her everyday language any more, and they didn't teach us at all.

SM: So then you grew up speaking English?

DP: Yes.

SM: Were you required to speak English in school?

DP: Oh, I think that the word "required" would apply mostly to my mother and to all my aunts and uncles, and to people in their era more than it would me, because it was just a way of life for me.

SM: It was accepted by the time you came along. It was your mother's generation that had to make the switch-over?

DP: That's right. It was required to speak only English.

SM: Where did the original requirement come for this speaking English and giving up the native tongue?

DP: The missionaries, people who came with their churches to the reservation, required that the Indians speak only English, because it wasn't proper; they felt they couldn't get along in the world; that the American way was better, and that the Indian way of speaking was not good.

SM: Any other habits they tried to change for you?

DP: All their habits they tried to change. They took all their customs away. They lost everything within just maybe four or five decades.
SM: That must have been quite a transition.

DP: Well, the missionaries, I really don't want to come down too hard on them, because at that time they were doing what they thought was right, but they changed their way of living, their way of dressing. We have to go way back 100 or 150 years as far as what was going on and what was changed. We lived in a very temperate climate here in the Northwest, and the missionaries, when they originally came here, saw these Klallum Indians, or the Northwest coast Indians in this area unclothed.

SM: They wore a minimum of clothing?

DP: Right. And this unclothedness looked like they were sinful, and thus they were heathens, according to the Christian way of living, because they weren't wearing very much clothing. The weather was temperate; they didn't feel like they needed clothes; they didn't think their body was ugly, it was just something that carried them through life. To help you understand what kind of clothes they were wearing, I'll try to explain what they were. The clothes were made out of cedar, and they had a cedar bark skirt, and it was taken from the bark of the tree to keep the rain off of their bodies, and they had cedar bark capes that they wore on their shoulders so that the rain would drip off their shoulders and they wouldn't get wet and cold, because we have a lot of rain out here.

SM: This bark, now that sounds kind of stiff. Did they shred it and weave it somehow?

DP: No, they beat it. They had a special process to keep it soft and pliable. They took it and they soaked it in salt water, and beat it on rocks, and it made them pliable. It was almost like a Hawaiian skirt. See there's a lot of rain in Hawaii too, and they used that cedar tree for everything in life. It wasn't just for clothing.
They used it for everything. The fibers from the boughs, the bark for clothes; the actual trunk for their boats and canoes; they used it for their houses, they used it for their utensils, they used it for their bowls to eat from. They used bowls, they didn't just sit out there and eat, you know, off the beach or something. They actually had bowls.

SM: Would babies be dressed in these materials also?

DP: No, they wove also.

SM: The Northwest coast Indians were weavers?

DP: Yes, we were very fine weavers. You don't see that very often in America, because you think of Navajos as being the weavers, but the Northwest coast Indians were very fine weavers, and they used the cedar bark. They took it and they made strands from that, and they also used the little wooly dog. A little white wooly dog, they used his wool. He didn't have hair, he had wool, and they took him as if he was a sheep and they took his hair and they wove it like they would the wool from a sheep and wove it into the blankets to make diapers and soft things for children, and for underclothing often, loin cloths, or whatever.

SM: Well that's remarkable.

DP: Very beautiful, colorful blankets. But they were lost immediately, as soon as the white missionaries came, and some of the pioneers came. I would love to see some of those blankets, because they were colorful and they were very unique blankets from the wool from this little dog.

SM: So that little wooly dog kind of softened up the whole?

DP: Softened up the whole thing, yes.
SM: Well, that's interesting.

DP: Yeah, a lot of people wonder, you know. It's one of those simple things of life. How did they take care of their babies? Did they wear diapers, or did the baby just run naked, or what? No, our children had diapers.

SM: They didn't have sheep. But now there were wild mountain goats, weren't there?

DP: Right. When the mountain goats or sheeps would be up in the mountains and as they would walk along and rub themselves, you know, they would take off the wool, and they would use that. They would go collect it from the mountain.

SM: They didn't have to kill the sheep or go and capture them?

DP: No, they just collected from the bushes. They were very innovative people.

SM: I suppose they used natural dyes, berries?

DP: All the berries, and they used the earth, and they used their environment for their colorful dyes.

SM: Yes. The technology of the Northwest coast Indians is impressive. They built plank houses and were great wood carvers as well as weavers. Their technology was developed probably more than most other tribes. Would that be right?

DP: I wouldn't say that. They used the land, and any time you're talking about a primitive people, before the white man, especially American Indians, you could consider them not primitive, because they used
their environment for art and practical things, and that technology . . . they could relax so much. They didn't have to struggle like the Shoshon and Sioux and the Cherokee, being nomadic. Their land around them was abundant and lush, so they had time for pleasurable things, they had time for technology.

SM: Did it only take about four or five months to make enough to live on the rest of the year, with the rest of the time for these other activities?

DP: Right. We did not preserve very much, because it was there. Very rich Indians.

SM: In fact, it ended up eventually in that potlatch ceremony, and maybe we can get into that later. Then, of course, you had the sea too, with salmon and all that sort of thing.

DP: Used it completely. Used everything. The clams, the salmon, the halibut. You know, they have some pretty strange things that we eat out of the sea, urchins and a lot of things.

SM: And the little wooly dogs were unusual, providing wool for weaving.

DP: He was a very unique thing, because the more little wooly dogs that you had, each woman, you know, was considered very wealthy, and it was a status symbol also.

SM: Like horses with the Plains Indians later on?

DP: That's right.

SM: Can you tell how they made those houses, because they didn't have saws?
DP: O.K. We go back to the cedar bark, and the unique thing about that cedar tree, the cedar tree can be split. You know we use them a lot on roofs. O.K., it splits very easily.

SM: Straight grained.

DP: That's right. So, why build a deer-hide home that would soak up and get all wet and gushy if you did, but why not utilize something that you can build a home. They had roofs, they had walls, and only one small entrance. And some of these longhouses, as we call them, were up to 100 feet long, because everybody lived in the longhouse. But I'll get back to the actual construction of it. The longhouse itself was split planks, and they had posts inside to hold it together. They put them into the ground and they put these planks up from the cedar tree, because if you can understand the cedar tree, it splits very easily. And they put them up and they left a crack around for ventilation. There were cracks all over; they didn't put them together close.

SM: They didn't chink them up like the log cabins back East against the cold?

DP: That's right. They had to leave ventilation, 'cause they cooked inside with their fire, too, in the winter. They had a roof with a big hole on top to let the fire smoke go up, and inside there they had compartments where different families lived, and kind of like bunk beds along the walls, and they brought their animals in there too. They weren't nomadic, they stayed in one place, and they would take an encampment out to follow the fish and bring it back for smoking, but they would not be gone for very long.

SM: Not nearly as nomadic.
DP: No, not nomadic at all. You couldn't consider them setting up camp, for instance, and never going back to that camp. They would set up camp for a couple of weeks, and come back to their home. That's not nomadic, that's just going out to get your food.

SM: The Pacific Northwest people did use the salmon. They dried them and preserved them, didn't they?

DP: Yes.

SM: That was one of the important foods, and even became sort of a part of the religion, didn't it? The spirit of the salmon people?

DP: Right, right. I'm not acquainted with their religion of the salmon. It's really difficult, because the Indian religion was important, and they believed in the spirit of all things. Everything had spirit, and that the god, if this is easier to communicate, was good to the people. And that if there was any kind of ceremony around the salmon, it would be simply to respect him and put back the bones into the water so that his spirit could go on and reproduce, but not to worship the salmon. See, many times the interpretation is that, oh, the Indians worship the salmon, but it was more of a respectful thing.

SM: Yes, because the salmon people went back to the sea, and if you didn't have all the bones back he might lose part of his anatomy, and he may not come back again next year. And then they would develop ceremonies to bring him back. The people had a good life, really, didn't they?

DP: Very good life.

SM: Proficient in woodworking. I even heard once they made sandpaper out of sharkskin.

DP: That's right.
SM: And they did not only woodworking, building houses, but they did all this carving of masks with hinges; they knew about steam bending wood, and so on.

DP: Right.

SM: They could use fire, I suppose, in various ways like other Indians around the country did too?

DP: Well, for example, fire is very important to building things like canoes, you know. They would take a big, larger cedar tree, depending if they were on the coast it would be smaller, out on the ocean, it would be ocean-going canoes. But for our people, what they did was basically the same. They chipped it out with their chippers, and then they would burn it inside, and then they would put water and plank it open and burn it and chip off the ashes, and soak it and stretch it, and that's how they made the canoes and used the fire.

SM: So they would end up with a shape quite different from the original log?

DP: Right.

SM: It's quite amazing that they could go whale hunting in the sea with these large canoes. That's a beautiful necklace. What is that made of?

DP: Abalone and coral and dentalium.

SM: It was a popular thing to use, dentalium.

DP: Dentalium was the Indian money.

SM: It's a little sea creature shell that they cut into little disks?
DP: Yes, dentalium is a deep water seashell, so it was very difficult to get. It was prized very highly.

SM: Then dentalium out here would be like the wampum back on the east coast. Did someone make the necklace for you?

DP: Yes, it was made for me by a lady at the University of Washington, and to her it represents the coastal Indian. It isn't a typical piece of jewelry, but it does represent us.

SM: She did a beautiful job on it. Well, Darlene, back to the missionaries again. Then you didn't have to encounter the problem of walking into your first day at school speaking a language different from that in the classroom?

DP: Yes, that's right. And I'd like to emphasize again that it wasn't war that hurt my people or destroyed them, but it was genocide, and I call all of the American Indian people my people. It was mostly disease that killed them.

SM: Disease probably killed more Indian people than bullets or anything else.

DP: Well, it's very difficult to speak of this, because lot of times people get put off because I talk about the genocide, and there were a lot of genocides imposed on the native Americans all over the United States. Chicken pox, small pox, the measles, the simple cold, they destroyed thousands and thousands of native Americans. For instance, there's a tribe just across from here, Clatskanie, I'll use them as a close one, because they are close. And there were Clatskanie Indians, and they all got the measles from some people that came into town. O.K., now, the measles came in with these people.
Now this isn't true genocide because if it was genocide it would be deliberate, I think.

SM: Depending on the definition of the word.

DP: If it's deliberate then it's true genocide, they attempted to kill the Indians. But when they got these measles, because of the way they dealt with fever, you know, to cool down the body they ran to the river, and they went into the river to take away the evilness, the evil whatever it was that they didn't know, and then, of course, they died of complications. They got pneumonia, and the complications killed them. So there isn't one Clatskanie Indian left. But genocide was used to exterminate the people.

SM: Genocide, in the dictionary, is, like we're saying, a deliberate extermination, and of course, all the Indians aren't exterminated. But a specific tribe, in this case, was wiped out accidentally, and then other tribes less accidentally, I guess.

DP: Very definitely. Like we've heard it over and over again, about the Army men. Well, they have the measles, and they'd say, "Well, just take them over to the Indians, let them use it." Of course they knew that the Indians would catch this from the blankets and these things, and it wasn't the whole system, it was these unscrupulous people who wanted to, well, get rid of them. "They're not people anyway." We didn't even become a member of this country until after the 14th and 15th Amendments of the Constitution were signed. Blacks were Americans, all the whites were Americans, but Indians weren't even anything. They weren't there.

SM: And still, there were always people who were interested in helping them, protecting them or being fair, but too many people on the other side of the attitudes always.
DP: It's always easier to let the powerful take advantage than it is to fight for good sometimes, and we wouldn't be here today if there wasn't some people who did some struggling for us, and it's been very difficult. And people say, "Well, all American Indians are all drunkards." My mother was a drunkard, my father was a drunkard, all my aunts and uncles were drunkards.

SM: Are you saying that now, or are you saying that's what people say?

DP: No, I am saying that. But again, to go back to where we were before, think about the position my parents were in. They went to a strange school, people took advantage of the Indian women and raped them, or, oh, "I'll give you this, I'll give you that, if you'll go to bed with me, or whatever." They weren't citizens, they couldn't go out. They were citizens, but sub-citizens. They couldn't go out and go to the bar even and learn to drink. They had to hide it, and they were put on a reservation. If you weren't on the reservation you were nothing. You couldn't go 20 miles off the reservation without being sent back. That's no way to live, and they say, "Well, that's no big deal. Why didn't they leave? Why didn't they come out here and do their thing?" And I'm thinking very quietly about them, because I feel so bad about my mother and that generation, about 50, 60 years ago, and the kind of pressures that was on those people.

SM: It's awfully hard for us to put ourselves back in those positions and understand, isn't it?

DP: It's very difficult, because I've seen how they destroyed most of my people through alcoholism.

SM: It would be an escape?

DP: An escape from reality.
SM: Reality and the frustrations, humiliations, everything else?

DP: Um hm. Plus, our world was in a bad state then too, still is, but better.

SM: What is an Indian? Is there some kind of a definition?

DP: That's really complicated. Indians do have a unique situation, you know, because now today we have what they call sovereign rights, and the federal government counts us to infinity.

SM: What does that mean now?

DP: Infinity meaning that if you had an Indian person in your background somewhere at some time, even if you're nothing now, you're still an Indian.

SM: Like 1/64 or something?

DP: So when you see a big roll that the federal government might put out, "Oh, there's more Indians today than there ever was," you're dealing with infinity.

SM: Diluted Indian blood.

DP: Now the Bureau of Indian Affairs is another special thing. They have a ruling that says you have to be 1/4 blood Indian or more to participate in the education, any rights, health rights, and all of these sorts of things. But to get some health care or anything, you have to be on the reservation too, you can't live off of it.

SM: You have to be on the roll, don't you?
DP: You have to be on the roll. And many of the rolls have been closed. O.K. we have affirmative action on the campus now. O.K., blacks don't have to be counted to blood degree. Asians don't be counted to blood degree. Mexicans don't have to be counted to blood degree. American Indians, in order to prove you're an Indian, you have to be registered like your favorite dog.

SM: I never thought of it that way.

DP: That's true. I'm a registered puppy in the United States of America.

(laughter)

SM: Well, we can laugh about it, because everything is going well for you, but still, when you think of other people.

DP: No. You know, because of some of the work that a lot of us are doing, we're finding that is a sovereign right. You look at it from that point of view, and it really grinds at you that you have to do that. But, on the other hand, those of us who have really cared or wanted to work with people, have also found another thing. That's a sovereign right that nobody has in the United States. You know, we have to put up with the Social Security number, we have to put up with registering to vote, and so forth.

SM: In that sense we're all subject to the same kind of things. Then the BIA has this 1/4 blood requirement, otherwise it's vague and anyone who says, "I'm an Indian," can claim to be one.

DP: That's right.

SM: Well then, there were other things that were conflicts between the two cultures, like you mentioned the idea of good and evil. What did you have in mind there?
DP: Well, as we all know, there's the Puritanical idea of what's good and what's evil, what's bad and what's good, and what's right and what's wrong, and, of course, the early missionaries that came across thought that anything that wasn't Christianity was evil, and that's where we got it. And it was a way to control people, you know, in the typical European idea of evil and rights and wrongs.

SM: With fear?

DP: And we all have found that to be difficult to live within, but among the American Indians, they believed that everything lived. We knew that there was some evil forces, but they weren't to be worshipped or followed or scared of, but they were known to be there, but they believed everything was alive, and had a right on earth. They didn't abuse the grass under your feet, they didn't abuse the rocks because there were rock people. The sky and the air, you don't abuse the earth because she's your mother, and we could find some of these same concepts in the Christian religion, but we're so worried about flesh, that we don't go back to the basic idea which is really good, and that is to be alive and caring for one another and caring for an environment.

SM: So this was another conflict between the cultures. They made the people wear more clothing, and set up different standards than the people were accustomed to. Well, now we've come a long ways from those old days of missionaries and pioneers and the good and the bad things that happened then. Does it look like there's been any progress made?

DP: Oh I think so. I don't believe that the Christian Church should die. I think it has a good philosophy, but I'm seeing a new thing happening. I'm seeing that finally the young people today are saying, "There is good in being alive and respecting our environment." You
You can see that everything is coming back to environmental, but we had to almost destroy ourselves before we realized that. It's almost as if they're coming back to the basic religious philosophy of their native people on American, the northern Indian—the respect for all that lives, and all lives.

SM: And everything lives, even the tree, the rocks, the earth.

DP: Everything. Everything is alive, and I'm finding great optimism in our world, just because I exist. Not me, as a person, but my office. That I'm allowed, and I have to be allowed, by the federal government saying, "You will hire minorities. You will hire, you will take them." I would never have existed here on this campus 15 years ago.

SM: But the mere fact now that you are the Director of Minority Affairs here, that you have such an office, that you are doing this job, is evidence of some improvement.

DP: Right. And I don't have to be condemned any more because of the color of my skin, and if I am, it's their problem. I have to share a little poem that I have here. I don't know who wrote it, but I've always loved it because I think it's a better understanding... giving you something about how I believe.

If you discriminate against me because I am dirty, I can wash myself; or because I am bad, I can reform and be good; or because of ignorance, I can learn; or because I am ill-mannered, I can improve my manners. But if you discriminate against me because of the color of my skin, you are discriminating against me because of something which God gave me, and over which I have no power.

And I think that says it all. I really believe it, and I'm not angry at anyone. We were all raised to know prejudice.
SM: All of us. Yes. Well, do you run into much of this sort of discrimination any more?

DP: Oh yes. You know, you walk into a room and people can only see the color of your skin first, and which I don't think I can ever overcome. There are times when I wish I could hang up my skin, and take it off and sit there with my blood and veins, looking at them and talking to them, and maybe they could forget that I have a color. 'Cause it is hard for me to say, "Boy, he didn't like me because I was an Indian." If I say that, I get people coming down on me. I don't have the right to be hurt because I've been discriminated against. People think I'm feeling sorry for myself.

SM: Oh, I see. That's what you mean, you don't have the right... .

DP: Yeah. "Hey, look, there are a lot of good people in the world, and one of my best friends is Indian."

SM: It's great for me to be able to talk with people like you, who can express some of these feelings that, well, we just can't read in books.

DP: Well, it's a very intangible thing. It's something that isn't up front.

SM: Darlene, there were some other things that I didn't ask you. You grew up back there on the Suquamish Reservation, because that's where your stepfather took you and your mother?

DP: Right.

SM: And then, did you go to school there?
DP: Yes, I went to school in a little place called Poulsbo.

SM: That was grade school?

DP: Um hm. At Suquamish, and Poulsbo I went to junior high.

SM: And high school?

DP: I didn't go to high school. I quit in the eighth grade. I got married in the eighth grade. It was intolerable to be in high school. It was intolerable going to school, pressures were too hard. When I was in grade school it seemed O.K., you know, I was tough, and everything, playing with the other kids and everything. Often parents didn't want me to go to their houses because, you know, I was a "dirty little Indian girl down on the reservation," and I didn't want to bring my white friends to my house, because it was a "dirty Indian reservation," I didn't have the things they had, I didn't really know I was poor, but I knew that nobody wanted me to be in their house, and I couldn't bring them to mine.

SM: There was something different.

DP: There was a difference. In junior high school I started becoming a young lady, and I found that the girls in there were very cliquish. They stuck together, and I didn't have the clothes that they had, and you weren't friends with Indians—they were considered automatically to be something.

SM: In grade school you all played together, but now you're getting a little older, now all of a sudden you're beginning to be shut out?

DP: I didn't realize then. I didn't know that, but, let me give you an example. Here I am in the seventh grade, and I wanted to go to the
junior prom, just like all little seventh graders want to go to the junior prom. So I thought, well, nobody asked me to go, but I'd go, you know, so I went, and this is one of the things that had some impact on my life was this one prom, and I remember it. I went there with my cousins, and I went in there, and I thought I was dressed, I was clean and everything. Of course, the other girls looked nicer, I suppose, but no one asked me to dance. They left me standing up against the wall, and nobody would talk to me like they did before. Nobody had anything to do with me. So then I got very hurt and angry, and I walked home, about 12 miles, and I walked back towards Indianola, and I was a very reserved little girl, and I didn't like their attitudes about not wanting to have anything to do with me. I didn't know why they didn't like me. I thought I was all right.

SM: And some of them had been your friends earlier.

DP: Um hm. When I was a girl.

SM: A little kid.

DP: Yes. But now, things were different. But, then, some of those guys would ask me to go to a drive-in or go park with them out on some back road or something, and they would automatically think that I was a slut. So I withdrew from them. At that point I start withdrawing from them.

SM: From the kids?

DP: Yes.

SM: So you sort of became more of a loner?

DP: That's right. And when they asked me to go to a drive-in to neck
and do all that, I have a terrible temper, and I just wouldn't do that. I wouldn't go with anybody anywhere from then on.

SM: So you didn't give in to that kind of thing like some of the girls probably did.

DP: Very much so.

SM: That made you angry too?

DP: Humiliated me. I was young, and it was humiliating for me to be assumed that I was something I wasn't.

SM: So you were withdrawing from the other kids, and you're in the seventh grade only now. Then you did go on to school though for a while yet?

DP: Well, yeah, I went for another year, and I didn't finish that year out, and I was 15, and I married a man. He was very gentle to me.

SM: Was this an Indian man?

DP: No, he was a white man.

SM: He didn't treat you like those other people then?

DP: No, he was very gentle with me, he did not try to abuse me, I didn't have to struggle. My home life was kind of rough; my mom was a promiscuous woman, and I didn't like that, and I didn't seem to fit anywhere. I was starting to believe and realize I didn't fit, and here comes this man who treated me with a great deal of respect. And he asked me to marry him, and I married him because he was gentle with me. But he began to treat me strange, although he was a gentle
person, he was bigotted, and he didn't trust my background. He thought it was an inborn thing.

SM: He was nice to you, good to you, kind, gentle, but still he had the same bigotted ideas about you that the other people had?

DP: Right. Yes.

SM: And then you gradually discovered this more and more?

DP: As I went along, and I couldn't understand that. I was married to him for almost 20 years. I believe a lot in marriage and cherished it, and I had three children with this man. Nobody could understand why I was this way, but he was very possessive. I even got in trouble if I went swimming with my children, and I spoke to my first cousin once and he was mad, because he thought I was going to run around on him, and, again, it was the same thing that happened all those years. "Why are you condemning me? Because of my manners? What have I done to wrong you?" And the only thing wrong was my race and the color of my skin. He made assumptions I was bad and I was wrong.

SM: That makes real problems, and puts strains on the family ties, or marital ties?

DP: It just kept making me angry and more angry.

SM: You mentioned your grandmother, but you never mentioned your grandfathers. Is that because the people lived in a matrilineal society?

DP: Well, the Northwest coast Indians and the Klallums were matriarchal. The reason that I didn't mention my grandfathers was because I don't have any.
SM: You didn't know them?

DP: They were dead, but I found out some things about my background. This sounds very spacy, I guess, when I go back to something that happened really neat. I went home one day, because I'd been researching my background and I wanted to go back to talk to my auntie. We were sitting around and talking, and finally I couldn't understand why she was so responsive to me. They called me "Snookie." And they said, "Snookie, I want to tell you something." And I said, "Yes, what is it?" And they said, "We waited a long time for Grandpa to come back, Grandpa Joe, in the spirit of somebody in my family. All my children," my auntie has 12 children, "all my sister's children, all my brother's children, are in jail, drunkards, nobody has been born with Grandpa's spirit." I said, "What do you mean, Auntie?" She said, "You're like Grandpa, you're Grandpa's spirit." And I sought some more from her, and she told me about Grandpa Joe. Grandpa Joe was one of the chiefs of the Klallum Tribe at Little Boston, and he was a religious man, and he did good for all, as many people as he could in those days. I didn't know this man, and that was a compliment. I had come of age, and she felt like I was part of my grandfather.

SM: She saw his characteristics in you?

DP: And she was very glad for that, that Grandpa Joe was still going on.

SM: That was a great thing, wasn't it?

DP: Um hm. And then I went back farther, past Grandpa Joe. His name was Joe Anderson. I went past him, and found out that I have a great grandfather by the name of One-Arm Pete. Yes, I can't find anything out about him, but his name was Grandpa Pete. And he married a lady by the name of Mary, and we thought that my grandfather would be
Joseph Pete, Pete's son, but the missionaries renamed my Grandpa Joseph Anderson. And he was part white, and he was born to Mr. Anderson. But we thought he would be Pete's son, and my name should be Peterson.

SM: The missionaries just arbitrarily gave you different names?

DP: They couldn't say the Indian names, so they called him "One-armed Pete," for example, my great grandfather who I've discovered.

SM: Is it possible that people can be prejudiced by being patronizing. For example, if someone says, "Well, I'm going to go out and help those poor Indians," that's sort of prejudice too, isn't it?

DP: That's the worst kind. That's the hardest to deal with. I can deal with somebody who just simply doesn't like me, who is up front, but, oh, to be missionaried to death. I call patronizing missionarying to death. They're very hard to deal with, because they're not dealing with their own. . . .

SM: They think they're doing good.

DP: They're the cruelest people of all. They're the ones that go out and try to do it for you, and never teach you to do it yourself, and they never let you be people.

SM: They'll make you over?

DP: Do you over.

SM: On the assumption that you're inferior?

DP: Yes, and it's very humiliating.
SM: Yes, I can see that. There's one more little subtlety about this discrimination thing I'd like to get your opinion on. For example, let's say we had a young Indian student in class, and let's say he was having trouble because he had not had a good background in grammar and composition. And so I gave him more help than I did someone else. Now would that be a form of patronizing, or showing prejudice, because I tried to help this student a little bit more?

DP: Only if you wouldn't give that same help to someone else who needed it, white or otherwise.

SM: O.K. That's good. Because if I gave it to him because he was an Indian that would be bad. If I gave it to him because he needed the help the same as I would give it to a Swede or a German or a Frenchman, that's O.K.

DP: That's all right. If a teacher is really simply wanting to help a student, and if it happens to be an Indian, we know the difference. Sometimes we don't, most of the times we do.

SM: You've cleared up a subtle point there. You can help Indian people, you can help French people, you can help anyone who needs it, but you've got to help them because they simply need it, not because of their race.

DP: That's right, then it's O.K.

SM: Sometimes people say, "Well, I want to go out work with those Indians." Now that's getting into the danger zone, isn't it?

DP: Oh, I've known a lot of people that are saying, "I want to go out and do something," and I guess I'll refer to you since you brought it up. I think that the way you are is very genuine, and I think all
people would recognize that when they get to know you, and if you're going out to do something to change a bad situation there may not be an Indian able to do that.

SM: More and more Indians now are getting through school, and several young Indian people are going into law, medicine, consumerism.

DP: Absolutely.

SM: Because they see the need for it, and now the young Indian people are doing it, and they're going to correct these things themselves.

DP: But you see, part of it is too, by saying that about you, about having a desire to do something for "those Indians," that's O.K., because if you're up front it's the same way. Well, I'm doing that like I would do it for a child that's in my class, because it needs to be done. But you see, on the other side, Sam, there aren't that many American Indians that are able to do some things, plus, the Indian is also getting a new attitude about the bigger society. It's a working along side of, rather than, "What can I get him to do for me?"

SM: Yes. Some still have the attitude, "Well, they put me in this position, so they might as well. . . ."

DP: "They might as well live with it. I'm a poor Indian. Your white society has done something against me, you've practiced genocide, I'm a drunkard, I'm this or I'm that, I've never gone to school, so you might as well take care of me."

SM: But the younger Indian people are resisting this. They resent it, in fact.

DP: Oh, they really do!
SM: And they're out there, getting an education, becoming capable. Are there only one or two Indian doctors in the country?

DP: Um hm. and I think there's only one female Indian lawyer. And she's only like a sixteenth.

SM: Well, some Indian girls are going into law school, so there's going to be more.

DP: I was going into law, see, but I couldn't do that because I'm of this other generation, right behind my mother. Now my children may be able to do that if they're so inclined, because their abilities are modern. My speaking abilities and my writing abilities are so that it would take me so many years to conquer those, to go into law or something like that, it would be very difficult.

SM: You got married when you were 15. Then some place along the line you got a high school diploma or the equivalent, didn't you?

DP: A GED.

SM: And then you went on to college?

DP: Yes.

SM: Where was that?

DP: Here at Lower Columbia College. 1968.

SM: Then you went someplace else too?

DP: I went to Monmouth, Oregon, Oregon College of Education. My goal was to become a school teacher. See when I first started out, that's
what I wanted to do. I had worked well with children, and found that I really had a gift with children, and really wanted to teach, but when I arrived at different places to find out about schools, the first thing they do is tell you, "Well, be a secretary, you know, learn to style hair." And I didn't want them to touch my hair, and I really am not very good with my fingers, and really couldn't see that. And I wanted to be a school teacher, and several people said, "If you want to be a teacher, be one." And they laid it back on me. I couldn't say, "Poor me," any more. So I started, and I had a lot of people giving me a lot of encouragement, but I had to do the work, and I worked ten times as hard, because I don't have good writing skills, and I can't verbalize very well.

SM: I can disagree with you there. You verbalize very well. Like you said, you didn't learn some of the niceties of English grammar because you dropped out of school and came back, and it was hard. But you're very expressive and communicate well.

DP: But I really wanted to teach, and I got out and I did it and I interviewed for a job teaching, and I had to struggle, and I got into confusion here and there, and finally landed a job in the fifth grade in Salem, and that was a story unto itself. We won't go into it, because I had some battles going. They said, "We can't hire anybody that's first year teachers," and then on the other hand they're saying, "We don't have any native Americans, any minorities to hire," and here I am, so they tried to block me with that. Then I took the job here.

SM: Well, this is not a teaching job. It's more like counseling?

DP: Counseling.

SM: Public relations?
DP: Um hm. And I work with the student individually. I try to break down some of the walls that were insurmountable, but aren't insurmountable any more, because I keep batting down the doors and fighting for their causes, and saying, "But you need to really stick by your guide-lines. If your federal government is saying you need to get Indian students in classes, do it!" "Well, there's no Indian students around to hire, to put in there. They don't come, and when they come, they go away." "Baloney," I say. Because I'm in a position of authority to do that. A student can't do that. But now John Brookhart and this school has said, "Do it!" So I'm doing it. And I'm graduating with a master's degree from Lewis and Clark now coming up in June.

SM: Great. And then you're also getting more students here now in the college. How many do you have now?

DP: Minorities, last year it was 89.

SM: Out of a student body of?

DP: Last year 2,200.

SM: You've got a ways to go, haven't you?

DP: I think I'll stabilize. I don't want to be a flesh monger, where I just go out and peddle and bring people in and bring people in. I need, when they come, to work with them and keep them, and see to their success, rather than to go out and be a circus performer.

SM: But you're doing everything you can to encourage those who want to work and get the educational advantages that are here.

DP: All the groundwork is done out there. The publicity is done now.
SM: Are there lots of Indian people in Washington? Do you have any idea about the statistics?

DP: Lots? I don't know what "lots" is.

SM: Well, like in Arizona there are 150,000 Navajos alone, almost.

DP: No, there aren't that many. Our numbers are very low. Yakima is bigger, you know, in Washington. They're the largest in Washington.

SM: The Yakima people?

DP: Um hm. But we're small. You're probably talking to one of the last Klallums.

SM: You are?

DP: Yes. In the next few decades there won't be any of us left.

SM: Do you have a reservation?

DP: We have a small reservation that's about 10 acres. We were looking at that, and I think it's five by five miles, or something like that. That's all.

SM: Was it one of those that went through the termination thing?

DP: No, we're not terminated.

SM: You still have the reservation going, but the people are just drifting away?

DP: Well, we're inbred, and they've all died off.
SM: You're one of the few left. You're liable to become a curiosity.

DP: Yes. They're gonna have to put me in a museum. There aren't very many Klallums. People say, "What is your tribe?" And I say, "Klallum." And, wow, who has ever heard of a Klallum?

SM: Some people mistake it with Klamath.

DP: Right.

SM: And that's a whole state away, or almost a state away.

DP: And they're bigger, and they're a different type of people altogether. They're river people.

SM: In southern Oregon, aren't they? You are from northern Washington. That's almost two states separating you.

DP: Right.

Part II of this interview appears on a separate transcript.