

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

North American Indian Project

Life as an Indian

O. H. 595

FRANK SANCHEZ

Interviewed

by

Jay Toth

on

May 3, 1979

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INTERVIEWEE: FRANK SANCHEZ

INTERVIEWER: Jay Toth

SUBJECT: Miami Indians, Greenville Treaty, chartering

DATE: May 3, 1979

T: This is an interview with Frank Sanchez for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on North American Indians, by Jay Toth, at the Youngstown Indian Center, on May 3, 1979, at 11:30 a.m.

Let's start by telling about your family history?

S: At the present time I've been elected chief of the Miami tribe, the Northeastern Miami International Council here in Ohio. Our people originated up through the northern part of Wisconsin in the 1700's. They migrated through Indiana where they fought the Illinois, all the state of Ohio. The chief of the Miamis at the time was Chief Little Turtle. His picture hangs in the state capital building in Columbus, Ohio. He was prominent in wars, in fact, one of the greatest warriors that ever lived. He was responsible for signing the peace treaty with Anthony Wayne in Greenville, Ohio after he had routed General Hammer and General St. Clair. He was also presented to George Washington, who was the president at the time in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

T: Do you remember your grandparents?

S: I remember my grandmother and my grandfather. My grandfather was half Mohawk and half French. My grandmother was a full-blooded Miami. Her name was Louisa G. Bole. Her name is on the 1891 Rolls today. By the way, when they signed the Greenville Treaty in Greenville, Ohio there was one chief, Chief Bluejack, that didn't want to sign the treaty. He said, "I'm not going to sign until every white man is dead." So then the tribe was split, which were the Miamis of Oklahoma--where they had migrated after they signed the treaty--and then you had the Bluejack that kept fighting. Anthony Wayne was after him. They defeated him in Indianapolis, Indiana; that's how

Indianapolis got its name actually. Today there are possibly 1500 or 2000 Miami Indians living there. Down in Oklahoma there are possibly another 400 today living, which we are registered in the Bureau of Indian Affairs computer. We've had about nine land claims against the government; we got paid for five of them already, which involved six million acres just here in Ohio alone. We've got four more dockets, which we should have got paid last year, but Indians from Indiana had a share in this last dock of the Wabash River. They weren't happy at what the government was offering on this, so they appealed it. It may be another year or two now because this Board of Land Claims in Washington dissolves in the year January 1, 1980.

As far as my background, I was born in Springfield, Illinois. My mother was born in Miami, Oklahoma. My grandmother died when she was about thirty years old; she had thirteen children. I have one uncle living today, and another aunt down in Bakersfield, California. My mother was raised in the Wyandot School in Wyandot, Oklahoma. She married my dad down in Oklahoma and moved around a lot. He worked for the Swift meat packing company. He went to work in Kansas City, Kansas. From there they moved to Springfield, Illinois, and that's where I was born. From there they moved to Cleveland, Ohio. My dad worked there for the Midland Steel Corporation until 1926. When they opened the Youngstown Steel Door Company he got transferred up here and we've been here ever since. Besides myself, I have three other brothers and two sisters here in Youngstown, plus a lot of other relations here. There are about 57 of us here all together today. We own this cultural center here on 1010 Bryson Street. It started out with no funds whatsoever. We were trying to get this thing built up out of the help and cooperation of the people of the Mahoning Valley. Three weeks ago we were up to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C. and spoke to the recognition board with the historian, anthropologist, and genealogist. What we're trying to do now is be recognized by the Secretary of the Interior so that we can get a charter from the federal government where we could be allowed grants by the state of Ohio and also funding through the federal bureau. This would give us money for educational benefits, hospital care, and anything else that we may be in need of. Everything is moving along pretty smooth through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, so we just have to wait and see what comes out of it. Hopefully they will recognize us. The state has, but the big one is the federal government. Today they give a lot of block grants from HUD; it is given to a lot of other minorities, which they always spoke of as Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos. I don't think there is anybody more deserving than anybody else, and an Indian was never named as a minority. This was their land, and you see where they're at today living, out in the desert with the snakes and what have you.

- T: In those desert lands they have oil, coal, and gas. Don't you feel that the government may be planning to reap those harvests and move them elsewhere again?
- S: Those companies get in there and they put that before their council, whatever tribe it is that owns these lands. These big companies come in there and they may find zinc, oil, ore, uranium, and they throw a little proposition to the chief of the tribe. He brings it before the council and they vote on it. If they think it is something that will better their people, where they can get some funds for their people and get them some education right there on their reservation, nine times out of ten the big companies come in there. After they strip it down it is all over, but they have to watch their environment and everything. Just the way nature is, that's the way they would like it kept, always.
- T: As far as your experiences with your parents, your grandparents, did they ever teach you anything as far as the Miami way?
- S: Everybody that is an Indian likes to keep their heritage, their culture alive. You find a lot of that up north or towards your southwestern states.
- T: What about yourself as an individual in the family?
- S: I feel strong. I think we should all keep our heritage and our culture right here alive today. If we get funded by the federal government we could get ourselves a building of our own and bring in some of our crafts. People learn to do bead work and jewelry work; that would be a real nice thing.
- T: Did your mother show you things that were tradition?
- S: My mother used to talk a lot about that. In fact, at one time she was going to send all of us to the Indian school in Wyandot, Oklahoma. She wrote and they sent her the five applications. After she filled the applications out and kept them for a few weeks she said, "I'm not sending you away from home." She threw them away. She was raised in an Indian school herself.
- T: In other words, it was a bad experience for her?
- S: She was an orphan. My grandmother passed away all the land that she had in Miami, Oklahoma since she married out of her tribe. My grandfather was Mohawk and French, and since he was not a Miami, when she passed away he subdivided the land for the thirteen children. The government surveyors came out a month later and pulled up the stakes and took the land. They took all the children and placed them in this Indian school. The government today grabs anything they want.

- T: Being a Miami with Indian descent, what were your experiences within school?
- S: I never had any problems. I went to Stambaugh School, Chaney High School, and also Youngstown University in 1957. I took two years of business administration. I dropped out because I couldn't put my mind to the work. Right now I'm a time-keeper down at Wean United on South Phelps Street, and laid off by the way.
- T: Were you ever in the service?
- S: I was in the service close to four years; I was in the United States Coast Guard.
- T: You were elected tribal chairman of the Miamis. What are your duties as such?
- S: As chief of the Miamis here my functions are to keep all our people together. My brother is the second chief, and also we have two cousins that sit on the council, and also a nephew on the council. Our function is to keep this thing alive and to get funding from the federal government. Hopefully we can even build a hospital.
- T: How long do your terms run?
- S: Our term runs four years. It runs till April of 1983. Then we have another meeting afterwards and election of officers.
- T: Do you sign yourself up to be elected or does someone have to sponsor you?
- S: When they open it for elections only the people that are registered on the tribal rolls can come in to vote. We have a number on it. To elect a chief a person would stand up and make a motion. Then they have balltos. Then somebody stands up and makes a motion for the second chief. The second chief's duties are what the head chief cannot perform. The second chief is voted on and then you have five people that you can put in for nomination to council. Out of the five you only vote for three that sit on council. After that is all over we have three people that we elect. Council votes and after the votes are counted those are put in a box and are sealed until the next election.
- T: We had the Longest Walk last year which was prompted by some bills in Congress that were anti-Indian bills. What are prompting these anti-Indian bills?
- S: I wasn't in on that. Some of these organizations that people hear of, like the Indian movement, some of them are kind of

radical activities, but ours aren't. My cousin is the chief of the Miamis in Miami, Oklahoma, and the reason we're splitting the tribe here is that the people in Oklahoma get education; they get medical benefits, all the things that we should be getting up here. Even though we're registered at the rolls down there in Oklahoma, when the federal government puts out this two to three billion dollars a year, each council throughout the United States is allotted so much money per head count. There are 57 of us on the rolls in Miami, Oklahoma, which they get credit for, but we don't derive any benefits from here. If I should break my leg I would have to go to Oklahoma to get it put in a cast and fly back to Youngstown. That is why we're trying to get a council here of our own to take care of the people that are in need here. With the recognition of the federal government we'll have the same thing here.

T: Do you feel that within Youngstown the American Indian is still being discriminated against?

S: Not as much like they are in the southeast.

T: What barriers and goals do you see for the American Indian to survive in the future?

S: They have to have more training. They should have more colleges where they take the Indian people in. A lot of them don't have money and when they leave the reservation a lot of them don't have any skills. It's a pitiful sight when you see them out west; all they can do is labor work. A lot of them take to drinking to pass their time away. Helping centers have been started all over the country to help Indians. They help Indians find work.

END OF INTERVIEW