

Oral History of Chester Slaugh

Collected by Philip Daley

U.S. Studies 6th Hour  
Mrs. Carter  
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Chester Slaugh's Life History

Chester Slaugh born Oct. 29, 1916, in Logan UT. He resides in Price UT. I decided to interview my grandfather about his history because he has had and interesting life with many interesting experiences. His father was an Indian agent during the time when Indians were being put on futher restricted reservations. They have an elk hide that is located at the Price Museum.

Phillip: For my history report I decided to interview my grand father Chester Slaugh about his life. Where you born?

Chester: Logan Utah

Phillip: On what day?

Chester: Oct. 29, 1916

Phillip: Tell me about your early life.

Chester: Well, my father joined college when the first world war broke out. He either had to go into the army, um, or move on a farm. And so he um took off and quit college and didn't get to graduate, and went out to Vernal and worked on his fathers farm. An he had my mother and me, I was huh, just a young baby.

Phillip: Ok. where did you live?

Chester: Logan Utah, my father had a huh, farm close to his fathers where he lived on Diamond Mountain. He had to raise my

mothers sisters because their parents had died. And um I was just a baby.....

Phillip: Ok.

Chester: We lived there for awhile then he got a job as a county agent and we moved up into the town of Vernal an he stayed there until uh the war was over an then he took off and went back to Logan to finish off his school.

Phillip: Ok. Tell me more about Diamond Mountain.

Chester: Well a, that was thrown open to homesteading up there uh.....when I was about four years old. An uh my father homesteaded a farm up there. He uh....home steded... one- hundred and sixty acres up there.

Phillip: What are some of your childhood memories?

Chester: Well, I remember when we uh lived on Diamond Mountain there were lots of sage hens. There were thousands of them. They would come out and stroll out in past uh the flat. We would sit out on the front porch and shoot two or three of them for us to eat the next day. An uh.

Phillip: Ok. So this comes the time when you were about four years old what happened next?

Chester: Well, my father decided to go back to college.....sold the place out in Vernal and moved to Logan. We stayed there all winter while he went to school. He decided to go back to Logan again or... we are in Logan go back to Vernal

again for the summer and helped farm, my father got a farm down on Green river. I helped to work on the farm all summer an then we went back to Logan so my father could finish school.

Phillip: What kind of transportation did you have back then?

Chester: We had a Model-T Ford. We uh...loaded that poor old thing down to where you couldn't believe it! We had to take everything with us, uh because there wasn't any thing like food or motels along the way. We had this little Model-T and a tent, and it used to rain on us. Uh ...my mother's youngest sister was left in Green River when her mother died...so my father took her in. She lived with us until she was eighteen. An then she ran into one of my dad's youngest brothers. At that time my dad decided that he wanted to go down to the University of California. She went with us and married my dad's youngest brother down there.

Phillip: Ok. So now your in California is this where you started school?

Chester: Yes, I started the first grade there. An uh...my father was going to the the University of California there. He uh was going to get his masters degree.

Phillip: How old are were you?

Chester: I was seven. Uh my birthday was too late for me to start when I was six.

Phillip: If you were living in Burlkey do you remember the

fire?

Chester: Oh very vi-vividly. It uh it started up in the hills and the wind was blowing out in the fields it came down. They got us out of school and sent us home to be with our folks. And the fire came raging down it burned all the.....houses that were around us except the one that we were in and another next to it. My father stayed there and fought the fire...an..mother handed buckets of water out through a hole that had been burned in the roof. Shingles were flying through the air just like snow but burning. It burned everything up to the cabin where we were, a the place we were renting. My father saved the house by uh getting on the roof and putting the fire out. The man that we were renting the house from heard that everything had burned and thought that the house was burned also. He came running down and was (laughing) surprised to see the house sitting there intact and only had a hole in it where the shingles had burned through the roof. So uh...he was very happy and gave us several months free rent. (laughing) He was very happy.

Phillip: Wasn't your father a traveling salesman for awhile?

Chester: Yes we had this Model-T Ford and we traveled through Oregon and Washington.

Phillip: What kind of pets did you have?

Chester: My father had been going out through Nebraska in the summer because he didn't have enough money to go to school with.

And there were turtles out there in the sand hills of Nebraska. And we would find them crawling across the road and we would stop and pick them up for pets.

Phillip: Ok. We have covered the years up until you were about ten what comes next?

Chester: Well, we were here in Price, my father was teaching school here in Price an.....one of my friends had a bicycle and I didn't and he let me ride it. I got my leg in caught in the chain, there wasn't a chain guard. I fell and hit my elbow on the water meter and broke my elbow into pieces. So.....uh all that summer I couldn't do much. The doctors didn't get it set right so they had to re-break it again and had to go through a broken arm all over again, and still they never got it all the way straight.

Phillip: So the doctors weren't very good.

Chester: Oh I don't know.

Phillip: Didn't your dad spend a lot of time with the Indians?

Chester: Uh...yes he took a civil service test exam and ranked high in that. They gave him a job over...out in Wyoming on the Shoshone Indian reservation, as a farm agent out there. He left us here in Price, I was going to school here, he left us here in Price and um went out there for a few months and um got a place for us to live in an old um army barracks. All the rooms were one right after another in a line. You had to go through all the

rooms to get to the bathroom, the living room, the dining room, kitchen and bedroom, and into (laughing) the back.

Phillip: Did you have any friends that were Indians?

Chester: O-yes there was...we used to go horseback riding together and fishing. There was wonderful fishing there in Wyoming on the Shoshone Indian reservation. They let you go fishing there. They let you snare fish in there, it was quite fun. You would get out on an...old tree branch that fell across the river. We used to go out on that tree and sit there with a willow with a wire loop in the end, small copper wire, And work out in the water there, you would see a trout in the water there, deep in the water, you would slowly bring this loop up and over his head and jerk him out. We always had...a lot of fish, we got pretty good at snaring those fish.

Phillip: What was the Indian Reservation that you was living on?

Chester: The reservation was originally for the Shoshone Indians, Shoshone Indians there. There happened to be a bunch of ar...Arapahos come up on a raid from down in the corners of the south and east. And they fought a battle, with the soldiers and the Shoshone Indians and they killed a bunch of the Arapahos and they held them there as prisoners of war. They weren't supposed to be there but eventually the government, the way that they mess things up, settled them down there in the backyard of the

Shoshone reservation. Old chief Washakie was telling us he has always been a friend of the white man. He never broke (laughing) his vow to be the friend of the white man. He said "even after you brought my worst enemy and settled him in my backyard and gave him part of my reservation." He said "but still I've never been unfaithful to my pledge for being a friend of the white man.

Phillip: Tell me about the cemetery.

Chester: Well...they had this cemetery called the Washakie Cemetery, it's where Chief Washakie is buried. It had a big stone wall around it and an iron gate into it. It was unlocked all the time and you could go in a wander around in there, Chief Washakie was buried there, and one of his two wives.

Phillip: Is it still there?

Chester: O-yes it's still there.

Phillip: Was there a different cemetery?

Chester: Yes. This was called the Washakie Cemetery, and then there was another one up on the hill called Sackajuea Cemetery. There was an old Indian woman who guided Lois and Clark on their expedition. She is quite noted in history.

Phillip: Were there any other white people there?

Chester: O-yes quite a lot of white people there.

Phillip: Were there any other boys your age?

Chester: Not white ones but Quite a few Indians boys. I went horseback riding with them and hunting. Of course the Indians



were allowed snag fish.

Phillip: I know that you have an elk hide that you got down there, can you tell me about?

Chester: Well, I'll start with the story of Chief Washakie. Um... Washakie was a leader of the Shoshone Indian tribe. Washakie was um born some time between 1798 and 1804. He was first named Pina Quahah, which means the smell of sugar. His tribal name, Washakie, came from his first bison kill. After skinning the head, Washakie removed the hair and tied the skin around a hallow stick. Then he blew the skin up like a balloon and put little rocks in it. After the skin dried, the little rocks rattled. He carried this noisemaker to scare his enemies' horses when he was in battle. That is how he got his name which means "The Rattle." His father belonged to the Flathead tribe, and was killed by the Blackfeet when Washakie was four or five years old. His mother was Shoshone. After his father was killed, she took her family to live with the Lemhis. Washakie joined the Bridger Valley Shoshone in 1832 and quickly became a famous leader. He was married several times, once to a Crow woman, and had twelve children. He was over six feet tall, and his skin was lighter than most of the other Shoshones. He was not only a great warrior, he was also know as a great singer. He used a gourd rattle when he sang. He had a great skill for making arrows. Washakie was well known for his peaceful nature

and for helping the soldiers and settlers who came to his area. Although most Indians were enemies to the white men, Washakie was friends with them. Chief Washakie was becoming very concerned with other Indian groups and Non-Indians that were moving into the Shoshone territory, so in 1850 Chief Washakie went on a vision quest. A vision quest is where the Indians fast and pray for three days. The Great Spirit showed him the future. He saw white men making guns, and the Indians had disappeared. The Great Spirit told Washakie he could not fight the white men, but instead the Shoshone would have to live in peacefully with them. In the future Washakie could see the iron horse (the railroad), carriages without horses, and men flying in birds. He was told that eventually the blood of Indians and the blood of white men would flow together and they would become one people. The vision of Washakie was painted on an elk hide by Chief Washakie's son, Charlie Washakie. Charlie was hired by my dad, Forest Slaugh, who shot the elk. The hide was tanned by using a paste of liver and brains. This mixture was spread on the flesh side of the hide, rolled up, and left to sit for a while. The hair was then scraped off. An old Indian squaw chewed and rubbed the hide until it was soft and tanned into buckskin. It was then ready to be painted. The dye was pricked in with a sharp stick, much like the tattoos are done today. In chief Washakie's vision he saw planes and trains even before they were invented. My dad gave

the hide to me and I donated it to the CEU Prehistoric Museum in Price, UT.

Phillip: What did you do for amusement in Wyoming?

Chester: Well I liked to go horse back riding in the summer.

In the fall why I like to go hunting up in the mountains. In the winter the main thing to do was to go snow sledding, there was lost of snow. We had hot springs they were great big springs that bubbled up out of the ground. In the...summer it was too hot to swim. Of course I hunted and fished for amusement. One summer they decided to have a wolf dance because they had not had one for over thirty years and they did not want the young men to forget the old ancestors. There was an old hut...hut in the river bottom and there was a small tunnel you had to crawl through to get in. And we sat around a fire an dancers danced in the middle. We were only whites around for several miles.

Phillip: I've heard stories about your alligator. Why don't you tell me about that.

Chester: Well huh they had in the paper one time about alligators for a dollar. And so I sent the dollar in and got an alligator back. It was about huh 8 in. long, just a small alligator. I had to catch minnows to feed him, it kept me busy. I took a net down to the river to catch the minnows. I would put him in the bathtub and turn the minnows loose in there and he would catch um.

Phillip: What did your mom say about the minnows or um the alligator in the bathtub?

Chester: My mother was very broad minded she didn't mind. She made me scrub the tub out after or before we took a bath. Because the alligator lived in the tub.

Phillip: How big did it get?

Chester: Oh it was eight inches long when I got it. And...when it finally died it huh when I went away to college I didn't have any place to keep it, it soon died. I couldn't take care of it. We didn't pay much attention to it, it just went around the house, wherever it wanted to. It slept a good part of the time. To eat it would come out when it was hungry and we would feed it....and then it would crawl back under somewhere and go to sleep. We just let it live around the house where it wanted to, and we would forget about for a few days. It only ate about twice a week. And the rest of the time it slept. One day a lady was sitting out on our sun porch on the couch and the alligator came out. I guess it got hungry or something. It came out from under that couch. She let out a scream out of her, stood up on the couch and held her dress up above her knees up by her waist, and (laughing)screamed!

Phillip: Did you have snakes and stuff.

Chester: Yeh, love to have snakes, I always had pet snake around. Caught some big lizards. During the summer I would let

them loose in the house. My mother was very good she didn't mind anything I had.

Phillip: I've heard that your mother didn't like cats.

Chester: NO, she always didn't. She could handle a snake or lizard around but she couldn't stand to have a cat around.

Phillip: Tell me about your college?

Chester: Well, when I got through high school in Wyoming uh I went the next fall to Logan to go to college there. I took classes there.

Phillip: Tell me about your teachers.

Chester: I started out taking Forestry but I had to take summer school and I didn't want to do that. So I...switched from Forestry...to Agriculture class.

Phillip: Didn't you have a deaf teacher?

Chester: Yeh, um one teacher was um deaf. He read lips, he was very good a lip reading. When the students wanted to say something they would raise their arm and he would point to them and they could ask their question. He had a student there that would then um tell him the question close, kind of shout to him, what the questions were and he would (laughing) answer them.

Phillip: On one final I heard that you had a guy watching your class, tell me about that.

Chester: Well, my teacher couldn't hear and on the final exam he had a guy sitting there just watching um the class. When I

came the next day an he looked at me and said "Mr. Slaugh your excused go out I the hall." I thought what in the devil have I done. And I went out in the hall, and pretty soon a fellow come out and said "on that test yesterday you were the only student who didn't...cheat." He said " the the funny thing of it is your the only student who didn't cheat and you also had the highest grade in the class (Laughing).

Phillip: You were a teacher when you lived in North Dakota weren't yah.

Chester: Yes, I uh...my father was transfered from California to North Dakota. And I got out of...college that sp-spring when I went up to North Dakota where they were. And I was there my father got me a job teaching school.

Phillip: How long did you teach there?

Chester: Two years. My father got a job in Arabia so mother and I left and went...to Price.

Phillip: I heard that you found a buffalo skull there in North Dakota.

Chester: Yes, I was fishing there one day one the side stream there on the Misora. And I looked down, the water was clear unlike the Misora, I looked down and there was a buffalo skull down in the water. I striped down and waded out and got it and brought it back. I had it there in the house and mounted it on a board. My father when he got sick or didn't feel he would lay in

bed when he was sleeping and moan, O-Moses, O-Moses. (Laughing)  
so I called the skull O-Moses.

Phillip: Was there lots of rattle snakes in North Dakota?

Chester: O a lot of them. They lived in that tall grass there.  
And I run into them all the time in the summer time. I would da  
jump back, I would hear them rattling, and jump back. If I had  
my .22 with me I would shoot um. Otherwise I would get a long  
branch and crack um on the head and kill um. I strung the  
rattles on a string. And I had quite a string of um. Then  
people from New York came out there an they thought that was  
quite somthing those rattle snake rattles. And when they left,  
my rattle snake rattles went with them, without my knowing. We  
never locked our doors or anything. They just came in the house  
and took them.

Phillip: Didn't you catch a large snapping turtle down there?

Chester: I caught a real big one. There was a little stream  
that ran into the Misora River there by a little stream...there I  
...caught ...

Phillip: Tell me what you did with the snapping turtle you  
found.

Chester: I shot it in the head. And brought it in and every  
one said "o-their good to eat, o-their good to eat," everyone  
said. They would say "do you want any?" I would say "no"  
(laughing).

Phillip: So you never ate any.

Chester: I didn't. Finally somebody said "if you clean it then I'll take it and cook it," well I cleaned the thing. I took the thing out and cut it cut the sides off and opened it up and took the meat out of it.

Phillip: Tell me about the blizzards over there.

Chester: Well, they had what you called white outs, you would go out side there and you couldn't see your hand before your face. The snow blowing horizontally you know, you just couldn't see a thing. A lot of people got killed, and the farmers and there had uh...out houses, we didn't have sewer lines or anything. They would stretch a rope between there kitchen door and thier outhouse so that they could feel their way over to the outhouse. They had to do that so that they wouldn't get lost. Several people got lost and died uh died in the blizzard because they couldn't get back. You couldn't feel a thing, it was just like a white sheet that got placed in front of you.

Phillip: After you was married and moved in Price what did you do for a living?

Chester: I worked in some greenhouses that were on the corner there. My father built some green houses when he got back from Arabia, he didn't want to go back and work on an Indian Reservation. I worked with him.

Phillip: You owned a floral how did you get that started?



Chester: Well, while I worked in a green house I learned how to make sprays and grow flowers and stuff. When my father got back from Arabia he um built his own greenhouses. When he died I took over. I grew a lot of carnations, a lot of carnations. We had some other flowers but mostly carnations. Here in Price.

Phillip: You owned a hardware store here after the floral, tell me about it.

Chester: Well, we had the floral, and grew lots of flowers. We shipped a lot of them to Salt Lake. Eventually we closed out the green houses, around here the green houses were getting old.

Phillip: So how did you start the hardware store?

Chester: Well, there was an empty building across the street from the floral shop. We decided we would put a hardware store there, um it was the Gambles store. We still had the floral but it was too hard to run both. We would have to work seven days a week and over all the holidays. It seemed like someone was always dieing and we would have to work extra hours. So we just sold out the foral shop, and ran the hardware store.

Vision of Washakie



Dick and Charlie Washakie

Dick was Chief Washakie's son; by his Shoshone wife, Dick participated in several battles, with his father, including the one at Rosebud in 1876. He contributed to his father's biography, Dick also painted scenes on the silver, a Wolf he and Charlie learned from their father.

A gift from the  
Chester F. Slaugh Family  
Mr. Slaugh's father, Chief Agricultural Agent on the Wind River Reservation, commissioned Charlie Washakie to paint the hide in 1932.



Crazy Horse gave up his territory, he gave up his horse and pastoral pursuits.



Chief Washakie

Washakie was generally just a Shoshone, however, he was also a member of the Kiowa, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Comanche tribes. He was a brave warrior, a skilled horseman, and a great leader. He was the first to lead his people to the Wind River Reservation in 1868. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1868. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1876. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1885. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1892. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1900. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1906. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1914. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1920. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1925. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1932. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1938. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1945. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1950. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1955. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1960. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1965. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1970. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1975. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1980. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1985. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1990. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 1995. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 2000. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 2005. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 2010. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 2015. He was the first to sign the Treaty of 2020.

#### 4. Scalp dance :

On June 3, 1876, General Crook asked for Crow and Shoshone recruits to join in a campaign against the Sioux. Within four hours, 125 Shoshone warriors, including Chief Washakie, were on the way. The army met the Ogallala Sioux commanded by Crazy Horse in Rosebud county on June 17. The Shoshones were instrumental in the turn of battle, forcing the Sioux to withdraw. The Wind River Reservation to display their scalps and to engage in a scalp dance. Eight days later and eighteen miles away, General Custer offered annihilation at the hands of the same enemy.