

Oklahoma's Indian Warriors

By E. E. Dale

The Indian population of Oklahoma is more than twice as great as is that of any other state of the Union. Moreover, these people of Indian descent have in many instances become so fully amalgamated with the whites that it has become very difficult to say just what is meant by the term "Indian." For the purpose of this paper an Indian is defined as any person of Indian blood whose name appears on the rolls of an Oklahoma tribe, or the direct descendant of any such person. Under this definition the number of Indians residing within the limits of Oklahoma is about 120,000, or approximately five per cent of the total population of the state.

These citizens of Indian blood have made contributions in government, art, music, and literature out of all proportion to their numbers. In no field of endeavor, however, have their achievements been more outstanding than in that of National Defense. The Indian is traditionally a fighting man and the tribes now living in Oklahoma have proved gallant soldiers in every major war in which the United States has been engaged.

It is true that during the American Revolution most of the Indians belonging to tribes now in Oklahoma fought on the side of the British. There were Indians in the armies of both Washington and General Gates, however, though most of them were used as scouts and guides. In the Second War with Great Britain many Cherokees, Creeks, and Choctaws served under General Jackson and various other American officers. The famous Choctaw, Pushmataha, was given a brigadier general's commission by Jackson and is said to have led a force of five hundred warriors and to have fought in twenty-four engagements!

A number of Oklahoma Indians served with distinction in the War with Mexico. R. M. McWilliams of the Cherokee tribe, writing from Monterrey, Mexico, asserted that he had participated in eight battles. He further declared that: "The cannonballs and grape shots flew in showers about me and my hat was knocked off by a cannonball."

The Five Civilized Tribes played a con-

spicious part in the War between the States. Nearly all of the able-bodied men of the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes served in the armies of the Confederacy as did many Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles. The distinguished Cherokee, Stand Watie, rose to the rank of brigadier general and was the last Confederate general to surrender. Yet many Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles served in the Union army as did a considerable number of Osage. Colonel Ely S. Parker of the Seneca tribe, one branch of which is now in Oklahoma, was on General Grant's staff and was present when General Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

For twenty years after the close of the war the United States Army was engaged in intermittent warfare with some of the Plains Tribes including the Sioux, Apache, Cheyenne, Modoc, Nez Perce, and Utes. There was little difficulty with any Oklahoma tribe, however, except for raids made into Kansas by Cheyennes, and brief forays of Kiowa and Comanche into Texas. In virtually every Indian campaign friendly Indians of various tribes served the army as scouts and guides.

A number of Oklahoma Indians fought in the Spanish-American War. The first United States volunteers, commonly known as the Rough Riders, had four troops from what is now the state of Oklahoma. Two of these were from Oklahoma Territory and had but few Indians. Troops L and M from Indian Territory, however, had a great many, including Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, and perhaps a few Seminoles. While the majority of these Indian soldiers were mixed bloods, a number were full bloods.

In the Santiago campaign the Oklahoma Indians won distinction by their bravery under fire. Thomas Isbell, a Cherokee, was wounded seven times in the first engagement in which the Rough Riders participated. Though he continued to fight in spite of his wounds, they were so severe that he had to be returned to the states for hospitalization. Captain Allyn K. Capron, whom Roosevelt had called the ablest soldier in the regiment, commanded L Troop and was killed at Las Guasimas. His unit

and Troop M shared in the bloodiest fighting of the entire campaign. Both troops had Indian soldiers from some of the most prominent families of the Five Civilized Tribes, including John M. Adair and Richard L. Oskison, Cherokees; Theodore E. Stidham, Creek; Bud Maytubby, Choctaw; and many others.

After the Spanish-American War was over a number of Oklahoma Indians served in the Philippines. These included Lieutenant Clarence L. Tinker of the Osage tribe who entered the army as a lieutenant in the Philippine Constabulary; Major Washington Grayson, son of a former principal chief of the Creek Nation, and several more. There were also a few Oklahoma Indians with General Pershing's Expeditionary force which invaded Mexico in pursuit of Pancho Villa.

With the outbreak of World War I, Indians swarmed to the recruiting offices in Oklahoma to enlist. Most full bloods were not subject to the draft but their zeal to volunteer revealed their eagerness to fight in defense of their country. Captain Ben Davis Locke, who had also served on the Mexican border, was a Choctaw who won distinction as an officer in a regiment composed largely of his fellow tribesmen and other Indians.

Even before the United States entered the war a number of Indians from Oklahoma had enlisted in the Canadian Army just as they were to do before our entrance into World War II. Any figures as to the number of Oklahomans of Indian descent who participated in World War I must be only approximations since military records do not differentiate between Indian and white soldiers. No doubt they numbered several thousand and included representatives of every tribe of importance in the state. The story has often been repeated of how Cherokee and Choctaw soldiers transmitted, in their own language, messages by telephone which the Germans who tapped the wires found it impossible to understand.

Oklahoma's foremost soldier hero in World War I was Joseph Oklahombi, a full blood Choctaw whose achievements seem to have equalled those of the better

known Alvin York. Private Oklahombi is credited with having stormed single-handed a strong German outpost, containing a number of trench mortars and over fifty machine guns, and the capture of 171 prisoners. How the gallant Choctaw could have accomplished such a feat is difficult to understand. Perhaps his explanation was that of the Irish soldier who when asked how he had taken the sixty-five prisoners whom he brought back from his one-man foray into enemy territory, replied that he had "surrounded them!"

Another Indian of Oklahoma, Sergeant Otis W. Leader of the Chickasaw tribe, was selected by the French government as the model for a painting of the typical American soldier. His portrait was painted before he left France and hung in the French Federal Building in Paris. Both Oklahombi and Leader were still living at the time of the outbreak of World War II. With the coming of this war, Oklahombi sold a tract of land for \$3,000 and invested \$2,250 of this money in war bonds using the remaining \$750 to build a one room home for himself and his wife in his home town of Wright City.

A considerable number of Oklahoma Indians were already in the Armed Forces at the outbreak of World War II. Some were professional soldiers or sailors in the Army or Navy while others were veterans of World War I who had found army life to their liking and remained in the service after the coming of peace. Some examples are Sergeant Standley Hoklatubbe, a full blood Choctaw, who in 1943 had rounded out a career of thirty-one years of military service. Another Choctaw, Henry Nolatubby, who was a graduate of Chilocco Indian School, was killed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The number of Oklahoma Indians already in the Armed Forces was very small, however, compared with the thousands who rushed in to join as soon as war had been declared. As was true of World War I, it is very difficult to obtain any exact figures as to the number of enlistments of Oklahomans of Indian descent. In the early spring of 1945, however, the Indian Office reported a grand total of 24,921 Indians in the various branches of the service. This figure did not include officers and obviously referred only to those under jurisdiction of the Indian Office. In consequence, a very large part of the Indians of Oklahoma were omitted.

The enthusiasm with which Oklahoma's Indian citizens enlisted for the defense of the nation is shown by the fact that one family had six sons in the armed forces and two others each had five. The six sons of Mr. and Mrs. Houston S. Terrell of Sans Bois, both Choctaws, were all in military

service in 1943. Their ages ranged from 20 to 38 years and in the autumn of 1943 they were in military camps in Oregon, California, Texas, Mississippi, Nevada, and Oklahoma.

Apparently the Osage Agency was the only one in Oklahoma which attempted to keep a complete record of the number of Indians under its jurisdiction who saw service in World War II. The report of the Agency superintendent, made to the Commissioners of Indian Affairs on June 6, 1945, reveals that out of a total population of 4,542 there were 2,293 males of all ages. Of these 504 were in the armed forces. In addition the tribe contributed twenty-seven women to the service, most of them in the WACS or WAVES.

Of the 504 Osage men in the armed forces, forty-nine, or nearly ten per cent were commissioned officers. These included one major general, one major, seven captains, thirty-three lieutenants, one navy lieutenant (j.g.), and six ensigns. In addition there were twenty-two sergeants, and twenty-four corporals.

It was reported that by June, 1945, awards for valor had been received by twelve members of the Osage tribe. These awards included the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, and the Presidential Citation. Casualties suffered by the above date were twenty-three killed in action, twelve wounded, three reported missing, and ten prisoners of war, for a total of forty-eight killed, wounded, missing, or prisoners—or again nearly ten per cent of all those in service.

In addition to military service, this richest tribe in the state made substantial contributions to the war effort by the purchase of defense bonds. By June, 1945, \$3,642,000 worth of war bonds had been bought out of the restricted funds of individuals and groups that had authorized the Agency to make such purchases for them. This was

in addition to bonds bought by individuals and paid for out of unrestricted funds for which no exact figures are available.

The 4,542 Osages constitute less than four per cent of the total Indian population of Oklahoma. This means that some twelve to fifteen thousand Oklahoma Indians must have fought in World War II, if other tribes furnished a proportional number of men to the armed forces. It is certain that a considerable percentage of soldiers in the 45th Division were of Indian descent. The majority of these were members of the Five Civilized Tribes though there were many from the tribes of the western part of the state. The grandfathers of some of these were doubtless born in smoke-stained teepees, wore moccasins, and blankets, and had engaged in raids on the frontier settlers.

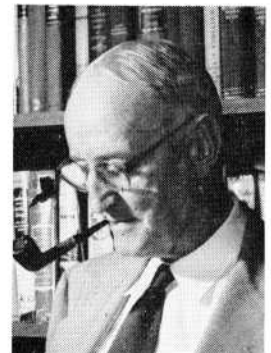
A group of Indian soldiers of this Division fashioned drums, usually made of beer kegs. Sometimes at the close of the day's work they decked themselves out in native costumes, complete with feathers and war paint, and to the throb of the booming drums, gave the ceremonial dances of their forebears. They even invented a new one which they named the "Victory Dance." They practiced it diligently and took a solemn vow to dance it in Berlin.

Many Oklahoma Indians served in the South Pacific where they proved invaluable in jungle warfare. They were adept in the use of the knife and bayonet while their keen sense of sight and hearing together with their life-long practice of close observation made them ideal scouts and trailers. Usually when the fighting came to resemble most closely the primitive type of warfare practiced for centuries by his ancestors, the Indian soldier proved superior to his white comrades.

When an Indian tribe notified General Douglas MacArthur that he had been

About the Author

It's hardly necessary for the Quarterly to make a list of the published contributions which the genial and scholarly Edward Everett Dale has made to the cultural and social history of Oklahoma. Indians have been his chief interest, Indians everywhere, but especially Oklahoma Indians. No one is better qualified to write a sketch of "Oklahoma's Indian Warriors" than is this distinguished historian. During 1953-54 Dr. Dale has lectured on American history and institutions at the University of Melbourne, Australia, having received an Educational Exchange Grant under the Fulbright Act. Dr. and Mrs. Dale left Norman in March and will return early in 1954.



adopted as one of its members the General cabled from Australia:

As a warrior the Indian's fame is world wide. Many successful methods of modern warfare are based on what he evolved centuries ago. Individually, he exemplified what the line fighter could do by adaptation to the characteristics of the particular countryside in which he fought. His tactics, so brilliantly utilized by our first great commander, George Washington, again apply in basic principle to the vast jungle covered reaches of the present war.

Adept as he was in jungle fighting, the Indian did not lack skill in mechanized warfare. Many Indians from Oklahoma served with distinction in the Tank Corps, Air Force, and Artillery units. Staff Sergeant Jesse Reynolds Coffey, a full blood Comanche-Delaware, completed forty-six missions over New Guinea as radio operator and gunner. He had attended both Riverside and Chilocco Indian schools in Oklahoma, and graduated from the Anadarko High School in 1941. After a course in radio and electricity at Haskell Indian School, he joined the Air Corps. Sergeant Coffey was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with two clusters, and Purple Heart.

Captain Meech Tahsequah of Walters, Oklahoma, is another Comanche who has won high honors. By 1943 he had been awarded four medals including the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal. These were given for his work in several months of action against Rommel's flyers in North Africa. He was pilot of a B-24 American Liberator and was with the first American squadron that reached the North African battlefield to join with the British and Australians.

So many Oklahoma Indians received awards and decorations for valor in World War II that it is possible to list only a few of them. Two, however, cannot be omitted. These are Lieutenants Jack C. Montgomery, Cherokee, and Ernest Childers, Creek, both of whom received the Congressional Medal of Honor—the highest military award granted by the United States.

The Indian Office in 1944 and again in 1945 issued lists of names of Indians receiving awards. These are doubtless incomplete even for those Indians over whom the Indian Bureau claims jurisdiction and certainly do not include the names of those Oklahomans of Indian descent who have been completely merged with the white population. Even so these lists are impressive. They give names and tribes of twelve Oklahoma Indians who were awarded the Silver Star, eleven who received the Distinguished Flying Cross, sixteen receiving the Air Medal, two the Distinguished Service Cross, two given Soldiers Medals by the United States and one by the British and seven the Bronze Star Medal. These are in

addition to the large numbers of those who received the Purple Heart.

The most distinguished Indian soldier in the Second World War was Major General Clarence L. Tinker already mentioned in connection with his service in the Philippines. General Tinker was born in the Osage Nation, November 21, 1887. He attended the Osage Indian Boarding School at Pawhuska for a time and later spent some time in the Sedan, Kansas, public school and Haskell Institute at Lawrence, Kansas. He then attended Wentworth Military Academy at Lexington, Missouri, but just before his twenty-first birthday enlisted in the army as a lieutenant. He served in the Philippines for six years and was then sent to Hawaii.

During the First World War, General Tinker served on the Pacific Coast in the Regular Army. In 1920 he began flying and was transferred to the Air Force where he was rated both as a command pilot and an observer. He became a brigadier general in 1940 and commanded a division of the Army Air Corps stationed at Drew Field, Florida. He was later transferred to Hamilton Field, California, and after Pearl Harbor was placed in command of the Hawaiian Army Air Force with the rank of major general. He was shot down and killed while leading his flyers at the Battle of Midway. He was awarded posthumously the Distinguished Service Medal and the great air base at Oklahoma City was promptly named Tinker Field. In so designating it the Department of War made an exception to its policy of not naming any military post for a war hero until after the close of the war in which he had won distinction. Of the three children of General Tinker, the oldest, Edward L. Tinker, Jr., was a lieutenant in the Army Air Corps at the outbreak of the war, his daughter Madelaine was the wife of an Air Corps captain, and the younger son was not old enough to enter the service.

Major General William P. T. Hill of the United States Marines is another Oklahoman of Indian descent who has had a long and distinguished military career. He was born at Vinita in the Cherokee Nation on February 22, 1895. His father, Davis Hill, was a prominent rancher of



Not All Things

For I do not agree with those who have recently begun to argue that soul and body perish at the same time, and that all things are destroyed by death.

Cicero, *De Amicitia*, IV, 13.

Translation by W. A. Falconer.

that region while his mother, Frances Elizabeth (Parks) Hill, was a member of one of the leading Cherokee families. General Hill is officially enrolled as a Cherokee citizen by blood, his roll number being 8,461 on the tribal rolls.

He attended grade school in Indian Territory, Kemper Military Academy at Booneville, Missouri, and was graduated from the Western Military Academy at Alton, Illinois. He then entered the University of Oklahoma where he was a member of the Indian Club and the Sigma Nu fraternity. He withdrew from the University just before graduation to enter the Marine Corps but was later awarded the B. A. degree.

General Hill entered the Marines as a second lieutenant and received training at Parris Island, South Carolina, and Quantico, Virginia. He qualified as a pilot and served overseas with the First Marine Aeronautic Company. He was for a time instructor in flying at Naval Air Station and Old Curtis Field at Miami, Florida. He served as provisional First Lieutenant or Captain during most of World War I, but at its close became a Captain in the regular Marine Corps.

For some time he was Assistant Officer in Charge of Marine Corps Aviation at Washington, D. C. From 1920 to 1923 he was the geologist and a member of the Navy's Alaska Coal Commission, and was Special Coal-mining Engineer for the Bureau of Mines of the Department of the Interior. These years were spent in Alaska, but from 1926 to 1928 he was topographer with Roy Chapman Andrew's expedition to the Gobi Desert. In 1933-34 he served with Garde d'Haiti as Quartermaster-Paymaster Director with the rank of Colonel.

General Hill has served in the Infantry, Engineers, Artillery, Aviation, and Supply of the United States Marine Corps and in all ranks from Second Lieutenant to Major General. In 1944 he was made Quartermaster General Fiscal Director of the Marine Corps. His decorations include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal and the Distinguished Service Medal of the Republic of Haiti. Also, the Order of Orange Nassau with Swords, and Grade of Commander from the Netherlands. Other medals include the Marine Corps Expeditionary, World War I and World War II, Pacific Area with one star. He is a member of numerous clubs and societies including the Explorers' Club of New York, the Arctic Institute of North America, the Society of Military Engineers and various others. His only son, W.P.T. Hill, Jr., is a lieutenant in the Marines.

Few American soldiers had a more remarkable career during World War II

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hower supporters. He promised no utopia. But he gave evidence of unquestionable faith in the ultimate triumph of the free way of life. A rare combination, he is an intellectual William Jennings Bryan and a human Woodrow Wilson. He has become in a very short time, even though in opposition, the official interpreter of the soul of America. It would be a shame, both for himself and for the country, if, at the behest of party professionals, he permitted his God-given talent to be dedicated to cheap partisan ends.

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than the Choctaw, Lieutenant Colonel Edward McLish. He was graduated from Haskell Institute in 1929 and Bacone College in 1931. Called into active service in the National Guard in 1940, he was sent to the Philippines early in 1941. Here he was given command of a company of Philippine Scouts but was soon sent to Panay to mobilize units of the Philippine Army. He removed with his men to Negros where he was stationed at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Later he removed to Mindanao where all the Moro battalions were added to his command.

When the Japanese seized the Philippines, Colonel McLish was in a hospital some distance from headquarters and so avoided capture. Escaping to the hills, he organized a strong guerrilla force and set to work to organize the fighting forces in the four eastern provinces of the island as the 110th Division. From September, 1942, until January, 1945, his guerrillas were engaged in constant warfare with the Japanese. During this time he also organized civil government in the provinces under his control. The records show some 350 engagements of his guerrilla forces with the enemy, in which the Japanese lost over three thousand men killed in action, while the forces of Colonel McLish suffered less than two hundred casualties. With the coming of American forces to this part of the South Pacific, contact was made with them and these guerrilla units were of great service in the reconquest of the Philippines.

In addition to the large number of Oklahoma Indians who were in the Army or Marines during World Wars I and II, a considerable number served in the Navy. Perhaps the most outstanding of these is Rear Admiral Joseph James Clark of Cherokee descent who was born at Pryor, Indian Territory, November 12, 1893. He attended the Oklahoma A. and M. College for three and a half years and was graduated from the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1917. At graduation he was commissioned as ensign and ad-

vanced steadily through the years following. In 1943 he was in command of the new aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. *Yorktown* with the rank of captain. The following year he was advanced to the rank of rear admiral. His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, Navy Cross, and Commendation Ribbon.

Mention has already been made of the Osage women in the service, but in addition there were young women from every important tribe in the state who served in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, or Nurses Corps. They did their duty with fidelity and courage, often enduring real hardship cheerfully and with the same fortitude shown by their grandmothers in a remote past.

In addition to the contributions made to the war effort by Oklahoma Indians in the Armed Forces, many thousand others contributed much by their work in factories, munition plants, ship yards, and machine shops. In addition, a large number worked as civilian employees at the various military establishments or in the production of food on their farms or war materials from the mines, forests, and oil fields. Oklahomans of Indian descent also made large purchases of war bonds. As early as the spring of 1943 the little tribes of the Quapaw Jurisdiction in the northeastern part of Oklahoma had invested nearly half a million dollars of tribal, group, and individual funds in such bonds. By that time the Five Civilized Tribes had re-invested \$2,185,000 of tribal funds received from bonds that had been redeemed and added \$900,000 more. The amount invested in war bonds by individuals of these tribes is impossible to estimate but it must have been very large. The amount of tribal funds expended for bonds at some other Indian Agencies by that date was, for the Pawnee, \$75,000; Cheyenne-Arapaho, \$35,000; Shawnee, \$25,000; and Osage \$800,000. As has been said, however, the last named tribe had by June, 1945, increased the amount of their purchases of war bonds to \$3,642,400. In addition to the amount expended by these various tribes from tribal or group funds, large purchases had been made by individual Indians.

In a brief study it has been possible to give the names of only a few Oklahoma Indians who have won distinction in the two great wars in which the United States has been engaged during the first half of this century. There have been thousands of others, many of whom have shown equal gallantry in action and not a few that have made the supreme sacrifice in defense of their country. Today a number of Oklahomans of Indian descent are fighting bravely in Korea. Late in March, 1951,

Sergeant Luke Tampeah, full blood Kiowa and former state boxing champion, was killed on the Korean battlefield. In October, 1951, his body was buried at Fort Sill with full military honors. Tampeah was a veteran of World War II and had been wounded while fighting in the European theater. He was educated at St. Patrick's Mission at Anadarko, Riverside, and Fort Sill Indian Boarding Schools, and Cameron Junior College. While a student at Cameron he won the Oklahoma Golden Gloves light-heavyweight championship. In January, 1948, he rejoined the Army, enlisting in the Paratroopers at Fort Benning, Georgia, and a few months later was sent to Korea.

After spending most of 1950 training in the United States, the 45th Division with its large number of Indians was sent to Japan. One of its outstanding leaders, Brigadier General Hal Muldrow (now Major General), is of Indian descent. By the close of 1951 some units of this Division were on the Korean battlefield. Undoubtedly, this minority group, the Oklahoma Indians, numbering only about five per cent of our total population, has given to our state some of its most distinguished fighting men.

It is also clear that if the time should come again when America must "spend her blood and her might" in all-out war for the defense of those principles which have made her great, these first Americans will again place America first. Once more they will respond to the call of the war drums with as much enthusiasm as did their ancestors upon so many occasions in the past. For the Indian is by nature a warrior, especially if he belongs to a tribe which only yesterday followed the old way of life now gone forever. To him the white man's paths of peace often represent only frustration while the war trail promises the fulfillment of all his dreams.

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