

Minisa Crumbo Halsey

The accomplished artist shares an insight into her father, Thomas Gilcrease and her Native American upbringing.

Chapter 1 – 1:08

Introduction

Announcer: Woody Crumbo was born near Lexington, Oklahoma, on January 31, 1912, as Woodrow Wilson Crumbo on his Potawatomi mother's tribal allotment of land. Unfortunately, by the time he was seven he was an orphan, but his nomadic early life, living with different Indian families, including Creek and Sioux, and later becoming friends with a group of Kiowas with whom he studied art, instilled an appreciation for the diverse and disappearing cultures and traditions of the country's tribes. With art, Woody Crumbo found a way to honor, promote, and preserve this history. While studying at Wichita University and later the University of Oklahoma, he supported himself as a dancer, learning different tribe's dances from across the nation. And he was one of the first Native American artists to take on oil painting as a medium. His daughter Minisa, an accomplished artist in her own right, shares an insight into her father, his relationship with Thomas Gilcrease and her Native American upbringing.

Thanks to the University of Tulsa, foundations and individuals who believe in preserving Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time...you can hear Minisa Crumbo Halsey on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 2 – 9:00**The Crumbos**

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is November 11, 2014. Minisa, would you state your full name please?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: My name is Minisa Crumbo Halsey.

JE: Did you have a middle name, Minisa something Crumbo?

MCH: I do, actually, it's Yoland.

JE: Were you named after somebody?

MCH: No it's a very interesting story behind that. Names are important. Names carry power, energy, connection. It's a Lakota word meaning red water at sunset.

JE: Minisa?

MCH: Me-nee-sa, Me-nee-sa.

JE: We say Mineesa, but if you really want to say it right it's Mi-nessa.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative). The way the story goes is my father was a flute maker and a flute player. When he was traveling in the north country, nearest I can tell, it was around the Standing Rock Reservation. He went out one evening and he was playing his flute and one of the things that the flute functions as is a caller of beauty and a speaker of beauty. And a caller of love and a massive manifestation of that beauty. So I'm not sure if he really had that intention when he went out that night to play. But he called up, or I responded to his song, and I was born to him through my mother and he named me for that time.

JE: Wow, that's a great story. Okay, your date of birth please.

MCH: September 2, 1942.

JE: And that makes your present age?

MCH: Well, is that seventy-two?

JE: You've chosen to forget. So you're seventy-two, right?

MCH: I don't know. Last year I went through a year thinking I was a year ahead. So, uh—

JE: Apparently those things are not important to you.

MCH: No.

JE: That's good.

MCH: I lose track of time.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

MCH: At the Jim Halsey office, 3225 South Norwood, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

JE: Where were you born?

MCH: Tulsa.

JE: What hospital?

MCH: St. John.

JE: Did you have brothers or sisters?

MCH: I have one brother—Woody Max. He's younger, he was also born here in town.

JE: Woody Max?

MCH: My mother made a trip to Mexico before my brother was born and before she met our father. And she was very, very much a fan of Mexican culture and Mexico. I believe, it's my personal opinion, that Max came from the Emperor Maximilian, who had spent some time.

JE: Your mother's name and where she was born?

MCH: Lillian Hoge, and she was in Pierce, Oklahoma.

JE: And that's where she grew up?

MCH: Yes she did. It's very near the original allotment. She grew up with two sisters and my grandmother and grandfather on a farm. Outside of Pierce.

JE: What was her ancestry?

MCH: Well, the Muskogee Creek blood comes through my grandmother, Harriet Hoge. Harriet Lavanche Hoge. My grandfather, William Brady Hoge, was Scots-Irish.

JE: How do you remember you mother? And what kind of personality did she have?

MCH: My mother was a teacher and she was my first teacher. Before I started to school with her in the first grade she brought me books home from every teacher's meeting that she went to. She gave me a love of reading and a love of knowledge that stayed with me all of my life. And then she was my first teacher. She was very even-handed, she treated me just like any other student. And she was a wonderful teacher.

JE: Was she artistic?

MCH: Yes.

JE: In what form?

MCH: Well, she painted and drew flowers, she was a floral painter.

JE: You saw her work as a child?

MCH: No I did not. She did not begin painting and drawing until later years.

JE: Okay.

MCH: Teaching took all of her time and energy.

JE: She was a teacher of what grade?

MCH: First.

JE: And where was that?

MCH: Taos Pueblo Day School in Taos, New Mexico.

JE: Your father's name?

MCH: Woodrow Wilson Crumbo.

JE: He was born when?

MCH: He was born in 1912, in Lexington, Oklahoma.

JE: So then it's safe to say that he would have been named after Woodrow Wilson?

MCH: President Woodrow Wilson. He was born on the original allotment that his mother, Mary Ann Herd, the Potawatomi, was allotted outside of Shawnee, Oklahoma, the agency.

JE: It's interesting, Woodrow Wilson was the 28th president, your father, Woody, was born in 1912, President Woodrow Wilson took office in 1913, but there was another set of parents, who named Woody Guthrie in 1912. He was born July 14th and he too was named after Woodrow Wilson and went by Woody. Here's two families that had no idea they were doing the exact same thing.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: When did your father die?

MCH: April 4, 1989.

JE: That would make him seventy-seven then—

MCH: Right.

JE: At his death. And what is it that took him?

MCH: Life. It was his time. Never sick a day in his life. Wasn't anything happening to him, didn't take, didn't even take aspirin. He got up one morning to greet the sun and fell at the door.

JE: Is that right?

MCH: As he opened it up. Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Wow.

MCH: Good way to go.

JE: Yeah, yeah it is. Let's talk about your father then. What do you know about his early days? He was orphaned, wasn't he? At an early age?

MCH: He was the youngest child. The older siblings were fanned out. I'm not sure they really knew what was going on either. If you're not there, there were no cell phones, maybe not even writing. You know, everyone hit the ground running trying to make a living. I don't know what took my grandmother at an early age, I really don't. It's hard to say. You know, in the past it was often blood poisoning, they called it. A farm accident, a cut, would introduce an infection. I don't ever hearing she suffered from any kind of ill health. The older children were already moving away or had moved away. So when the family went through that change our father went to stay with his older sister Phoebe Crag in Sand Springs, principally. And then he lived a lot as an orphan on the land, dependent largely on the goodwill of a lot of people, a lot of Creek families in Sapulpa before he was sent to Chilocco.

JE: What tribe was he from?

MCH: Potawatomi.

JE: And so then what are you?

MCH: Muskogee Creek from my mother and Potawatomi from my father. Scots-Irish and French. And German.

JE: Okay.

MCH: Probably the larger bit German. Because my father was half actually, half German. His father was Alexander Crumbo and that name was originally spelled K-r-u-m-p-e, Krum-pol. I did not find that out until very late in life. We thought that he was French because they called him the little Frenchman. Because he immigrated from Amsterdam and took a couple of years there waiting for quotas to be filled. So he learned to speak French and probably Dutch. But when I was in Germany, in East Germany with Jim on a tour with the Oak Ridge Boys—they didn't go to East Germany but we finished our trip there. I was talking to some people in the Ministry of Culture about my German blood and saying that I wish that I had been able to get around and research that a bit. And out of curiosity I said, "Is Crumbo a German name?" They didn't know how we spelled it necessarily. And they said, "Oh yes." I asked them, "How do you spell it?" "K-r-u-m-p-e, Krum-pol, which happened to be in West Germany. Halberstadt, Germany, is where they immigrated from. As stonemasons.

JE: So how did it become Crumbo? C-r-u-m-b-o?

MCH: Some immigration official in New Orleans—

JE: Okay.

MCH: Didn't pass through Ellis Island, they went through New Orleans.

JE: And that's what he thought he heard?

MCH: That's what he thought he heard, um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: That's happened to a lot of families.

MCH: Well, East Berlin thought they heard that, when they said Crumbo they heard Krumpe. So it was a reverse back, Crumbo, Krumpe.

Chapter 03 - 9:27

Chilocco Indian School

John Erling: You said your father, Woody, went to the school at Chilocco?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Was that an Indian school?

MCH: Yes. It was, but it was a federal Indian school, which was an outgrowth, of course, of the Department of War. It was a function of assimilation and a genocidal function.

JE: Genocidal?

MCH: In that when people are removed from their language and their community the culture begins to be affected. And that was not in a positive way. It was not intended to contribute to Indian community but to make a white man out of the Indian. And that is the definition of cultural genocide. A definition of it.

JE: I guess at that point there weren't any other schools for Indians to attend.

MCH: There were a lot and they were all federal. Some were church, some were church, which was about the same thing, just a different language.

JE: The thought back then, of course, was to, as you've already stated, make white men out of these people.

MCH: Right.

JE: And they had no regard for their culture at all.

MCH: They had regard, it was disregard.

JE: So then he was there two, three, four years?

MCH: I don't think he was there that long. It was a rough experience.

JE: Do you sense somewhere in here that he's revealing his artistic side?

MCH: Not yet. You want to hear about Chilocco?

JE: I do.

MCH: Well, we drove through there one time. My brother and I were sitting in the backseat and as we passed by different buildings he would say, "I broke rock for that building. I broke rock for that one. Broke rock for that one, broke rock for that one." But you got to understand that my father was born as a child of mixed blood and he wasn't a fluent first-language Potawatomi language speaker. So he did not speak Potawatomi a whole lot, but he had a lot of friends that did and there was commonly understood languages between the boys. And whenever they would talk Indian, as they said, it would be an infraction and they would be thrown on the rock pile for a while. And they broke rock. You go through Chilocco, those rocks that those buildings were made out of were broken and shaped by the Indian students that were there.

JE: Where is Chilocco?

MCH: It's on the Kansas line. I'd have to get out a map to see exactly, you have to go there on purpose. It's not too far off the road but it's not on 35, it's near there. Anyway, they didn't receive enough food; they received government issue food that was very poor quality. Their breakfast cereals, for instance, had just about been consumed already by the weevils. And they would take a spoon first thing and they would skim off the weevils and eat what was left. And once in a while, he said, some of the guys would run out for

a night, kill a cow and build a fire and eat all they could and then come back. They just didn't get enough to eat. Corporal punishment was common. But they came through okay, and there's a fine fellowship of people that came through Chilocco. It's a hard story, it's a hard segment of history that appears everywhere where you have shifting populations and shifting governments. Unfortunately, it's a story of man's inhumanity, a man with just particular names and dates and times tacked on to this and called Chilocco, Oklahoma Territory.

JE: We don't know how many years he was there?

MCH: No we don't.

JE: How did you ever get out of there? Did you have to escape? Did you finally graduate? Or how did you leave that place?

MCH: I don't know.

JE: When—

MCH: Maybe he just walked away one day.

JE: Yeah. Did he feel that he received some formal education? Any education?

MCH: I don't think so, I don't believe—he never said that he got anything out of that except—

JE: Discipline.

MCH: Discipline and a short haircut.

JE: As I understand, he really received no schooling past the third grade, then not much at Chilocco but, I think, by the time he was nineteen he did get a scholarship from the American Indian Institute in Wichita, Kansas.

MCH: Yes. Yes. I don't know very much about that at all. I do know that it was an extension of the sketchy education that he had received up to that time. But he was ready and stepped off and received so much from it. It was then that we began to see some development of his artistic leanings.

JE: But there was an art teacher in Anadarko, Susie Peters.

MCH: Susie Peters was actually a dorm mother that took a lot of the boys under her wing and provided them with things like paper bags to draw on, paper and some materials.

JE: Oh she was at the American Indian Institute in Wichita? That's where she was a dorm mother.

MCH: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

JE: So she supplied him with the basics in the drawing and painting.

MCH: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

JE: So by sometime in Chilocco or whatever he was showing a bent for art. I'm betting he did.

MCH: I'm betting that he did too.

JE: He drew on the ground or he painted rocks or he did something. He had to 'cause when they're born with this it seems it just has to come out of them.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Then he graduated from there and, as I understand, he graduated valedictorian of his class in 1933. And then he goes on to attend Wichita University, taking classes in mural painting and that type of thing. And watercolor painting. While he didn't early on have an education he was obviously very bright, very smart to enter and then to graduate like he did.

MCH: Right, he was ready.

JE: He also was a dancer.

MCH: Probably what you're referring to in large part was when he formed a group of men and women to do a WPA tour and they took the dance on to different sites.

JE: Work progress.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Projects that Franklin Roosevelt had set up across the United States.

MCH: Correct.

JE: And so he'd go dance for the WPA and take workers.

MCH: Correct. And take the group around. There was music, singing, the flute, drum, lots of different Pen Indian, you might say. Costumes, regalia of all kinds.

JE: You just marvel at how much talent he had. He wins a national dance contest in 1935, later turns with the Thurlow Lieurance Symphony in dancing, which we might point out as we'll get into later, his dancing influenced his art.

MCH: Definitely. That's where he became very familiar with regalia and the construction of it and the different types of regalia that different tribes wore.

JE: But he was not finished with his education because then in 1936 to '38 he attended the University of Oklahoma in Norman.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And he studies painting and drawing under Oscar B. Jacobson. He advanced the careers of many American Indian artists.

MCH: Right, especially the Kiowa Five, of which by that time my father was a good friend of and worked with the Kiowa Five. Although not officially one of the five. There were Kiowa Six, you know.

JE: Tell me what the Kiowa Five was.

MCH: Five young men, Kiowa men, that were artists. All of them one way or another became good friends of our fathers and were artists. And supported him by Susie Peters at that time also.

JE: And that's something how one person when they want to step out from their routine

and when they see talent want to say, "I can encourage this." And this Susie Peters then obviously influenced not only your father but many others. There ought to be a statue set up to her someplace.

MCH: There's a photograph of her in the documentary that I did.

JE: Okay.

MCH: Yeah. She's been recognized. I don't know if there was a statue but uh—

JE: We talk about him dancing and then you've already talked about him being a flute player, but he even performed as a flautist with the Wichita Symphony.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Look at all the areas he could have excelled in or stayed in as a musician, as a dancer.

MCH: There's just one thing about the flute playing. Indian way of playing the flutes, you have a song that comes to you as a gift from the Creator to you. And a lot of times a flute player will only have one song, and that's their song of their being in their life, their fiber of their being. Today with the technology as it is and the movements in the world and broadcast some people have added a lot of songs to their repertoire and are performers. But I never heard my father play anything but this song. One tune ever.

JE: That was his gift that had been given to him?

MCH: Yes.

JE: And I guess then they never tried to learn another tune.

MCH: It would have been someone else's tune. There's no other tune that has more power than your song. There's no reason to learn another song.

JE: Huh.

MCH: No reason.

JE: So is the flute an important instrument to Native Americans? At least to the Potawatomis?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative). The flute appears all over the world, isn't it? It's breath-made manifest in song, and breath is life.

Chapter 04 - 2:56

Mr. and Mrs. Crumbo

John Erling: He finishes his studies in 1938, at the University of Oklahoma. And then he seceded A. C. Blue Eagle as art director of Bacone College in Muskogee.

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Any memories that he may have talked about from that or A. C. Blue Eagle?

MCH: Well, A. C. was a relation of mine through my mother.

JE: Whatever—

MCH: A distant cousin.

JE: He held that position through 1941, and then again from 1943 to '45, after a period when he worked for Douglas Aircraft Company in Tulsa. That would have been during war years. Do you know what he did for them?

MCH: Design. I can't tell you anything more than that, I really wouldn't know. But going back just a little bit to talk about Bacone, he had so many fine memories of Bacone. Bacone was—where he was director of the Art Department and he did secede A. C., who was a great art, A. C. was more fun. Bacone was where our mother and father were married, under a tree on the campus by Dr. Weeks, who was the president of the school at that time.

JE: And then in that period you were born because you were born then in 1942.

MCH: Well, there was a little time in between there that was interesting. We really didn't touch too much on our mother when she graduated from the consolidated high school in Pierce. There wasn't too much else in Pierce than the consolidated high school. There was a post office and a general store. It was a farm community. She attended Connor State Teachers College outside of Muskogee and then she went to Tahlequah and studied at the college there. When she graduated she wanted to travel so she applied for a job with the Indian Service, which is now called the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the BIA, but it was the Indian Service back then. She got a job and was assigned to Dennehotso Indian School. She got on a train by herself, she had a name of some people out there, who lived at Dennehotso at the school that were going to receive her and make her feel welcome and known. She got on a train and rode all the way out there and taught out there for a couple of years. It was while our father was at Bacone that he traveled out to Santa Fe and our mother came in from the reservation to the west to Institute of American Indian Arts, IAIA. They met on the plaza at Santa Fe. She was staying on campus and he was staying on campus. And when he saw her, he said that she was the woman he was going to marry. And they did. So he came out and courted her after that a couple of times. Then she finished the school year and they met back up in Oklahoma and were married at Bacone. From there he moved to Tulsa

and took the job with Douglas and subsequently made the friendship and association with Thomas Gilcrease.

Chapter 05 - 4:10

Three Male Role Models

John Erling: Can you tell us about that? You were very young, of course, then. Nineteen forty-five you would have been four years old. He was artist in residence, wasn't he there? With Thomas Gilcrease?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: But he traveled with Thomas too, I think, in collected art.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Any recollection of that relationship at all?

MCH: Well, a lot. A lot of the recollection is just living everyday ordinary interactions. But he was very active as an artist at that time is what I will focus on because his studio was in the house.

JE: In the house?

MCH: In our house. In our home. We lived on the grounds.

JE: At Gilcrease?

MCH: On the grounds at the Gilcrease Museum, what was to become the Gilcrease Museum.

JE: It had not been built yet?

MCH: No it was being cleared, it was still just the big barn with a lot of movement around it when I lived there. He had his studio in the house and when he wasn't traveling with Gilcrease, Mr. Gilcrease, he was painting. He painted every day. He was a disciplined and dedicated painter. He said that he liked to be started by eight o'clock in the morning and he just aimed for that and did that. While he was artist in residence for Thomas Gilcrease he produced between 160 and 170 paintings.

JE: Huh.

MCH: In a couple of years. The math comes down to one every six and a half days.

JE: Wow. To my knowledge most of those are in the care and keeping of Gilcrease Museum to—

MCH: Yes.

JE: To this day.

MCH: Yes they are. He didn't work on a couple of pieces at once. He brought them to

completion one by one.

JE: That obviously was a good relationship with Mr. Gilcrease—

MCH: Very good.

JE: And your father.

MCH: Yes.

JE: You were five and six and seven years old then, weren't you? During that time?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Where were you going to school at that time?

MCH: I didn't start school until we moved to Taos, New Mexico, and I started at the Day School when I was seven.

JE: So you thought, "This is a great life, I don't have to go to school"?

MCH: I didn't know about school. I was set down beside my father to draw when he was working many times. My life was full, I mean, I played. My mother was a school teacher of first graders and she said that she always felt kids ought to be in the sandbox until seven too. True, they could learn a lot. But a lot of that should be life skills. And when they got to school it was another regimen.

JE: So that was by choice then on your mother's part that you wouldn't go to school until you were seven?

MCH: You know, people didn't used to start school until they were six or seven.

JE: Yeah.

MCH: And my birthday was September 2nd so it ran me—

JE: Right, into the next year then, yeah.

MCH: Into, um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Remembrances of your father then at that time, I guess to keep you busy they'd give you something to draw on and so you did that.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Was that a fun time?

MCH: It's just what we all did. I thought everyone did that. Mom cooked and he painted.

JE: You became obviously an artist. Any early time here when somebody said, "Wait a minute, she's doing more than just putting a crayon on a piece of paper"?

MCH: I don't think so. I think it was scribbles.

JE: All right.

MCH: I was still playing.

JE: So nobody knew there was an artist—

MCH: No I don't think so.

JE: Tell us about your father's personality.

MCH: It wasn't extraordinary. Whatever your norm is it usually seems ordinary and not extraordinary. I had nothing to measure it against except my grandfather, my Papa, who is one of the most wonderful men in the world. My father and Thomas Gilcrease, those were the only men I knew. And a few artists, A. C. Blue Eagle. A. C. Blue Eagle would come and sit around. I would crawl out of bed at night when he came to visit and crawl under a chair in the living room so I could follow their conversations. It's always a lot of laughter when A. C. was around. And A. C. would see me sitting under the chair but he never called me out. He'd just glance over there every once in a while. So I would stay up as long as he was there in the—I had wonderful male role models. And—

Chapter 06 - 5:00

Place of Inspiration

John Erling: Thomas Gilcrease, did he come and visit your father while he was working?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Um, no, no. The door was closed. The door was closed when he was in there and the door was closed when he was out. It was the studio and sacrosanct. When I began painting he said to me one time, "Don't ever do anything in the studio except paint. You can read a little bit or have a cup of coffee or something like that." But he said, "Keep the energy clear like that." He also said, "An artist lives in a very special place in the mind, heart, body, spirit that is slightly more oriented or a lot more oriented toward spirit." He said, "We live there and you live there when you paint from there. And more and more you'll come to reside in that place." He said, "As long as you're going to continue painting or being an artist you can never leave that place. It's a place of inspiration, if you want to call it inspiration." Which I like inspiration because it incorporates the word spirit, it's about spirit, in spirit. He said, "You can never leave that place. And when you go into the studio don't do anything else in there but that."

JE: So when the mind goes in there it knows what it's up to and you don't have to tell it to do anything.

MCH: Right. No, no it's hooked up, it's in that—

JE: Yeah, it is as soon as you walk in.

MCH: Right, right.

JE: Right. Thomas, did he seem to be interested in your or the family? He must have been kind to everybody.

MCH: He was congenial. You know, the guys talked to one another.

JE: Yeah.

MCH: They had their interests. I did more with the grandchildren. We didn't have a lot of interface but we did have some because they were living out of state.

JE: The Gilcreases?

MCH: Yes, Texas.

JE: In that home that's out there now—

MCH: He was living there alone.

JE: He lived in that home alone?

MCH: Yes. And his daughter Des Cygne was already away at school.

JE: Did you ever go in that house?

MCH: I spent a lot of time there.

JE: In the Gilcrease house?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And what was the kind of house that you lived in?

MCH: It was a stone house also, much smaller, like early Oklahoma stone houses probably four rooms. The front room, kitchen, two rooms at the back, one of which was studio and bedrooms, maybe five rooms.

JE: And you had water and light and electricity and all that?

MCH: Right, no it was fully modernized and it was on the edge of the bluff on the Gilcrease grounds. So it was a nice wooded area with a breakfast room that looked out over the woods. It was a lovely place, very, very nice.

JE: And at that time it was way out in the country from Tulsa.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Do recall making trips to Tulsa?

MCH: Yes.

JE: And what would you do there?

MCH: Go to Brown Duncan with my mother.

JE: A department store?

MCH: Right.

JE: Right. Eating places, you remember?

MCH: No, I don't think kids think about food too much.

JE: No.

MCH: We get a lot of underpinning. My food thoughts are grounded more with my grandmother's cooking on the farm, near Pierce. Now there's another story. Because my grandparents never did have running water or electricity or a car. They still butchered in the fall, I caught some of the last of that activity. And when they went to Checotah they hitched up a team to a wagon.

JE: And then?

MCH: Rode into town on the wagon.

JE: Huh.

MCH: They had their own chickens, hogs, fields. Raised some cattle, forty acres of pecans, and they lived their whole life like that. Milk cow, well for water, water had to be hauled for everything. And there was a table on the back porch with a bucket and dipper hanging beside it. That's what I remember more than Tulsa because we didn't go into Tulsa to socialize. When we got in the car to go somewhere we wanted to see Gram and Papa.

JE: Right.

MCH: In Pierce.

JE: Was there any prejudice against Native Americans? There was, of course, against blacks. Do you recall any of that?

MCH: No I didn't have any contact with the African Americans at all. Those hard days had passed a lot with education, movement, increased prosperity, World War II education just changed everything for everyone. I remember my grandfather had a farmhand and his family that lived at the back of the property and can only be described as a shack, even as a child it was very different. My mother later said that she had met up with one of the children who was grown since then. And what a remarkable thing it was that all of those kids graduated from college.

JE: Hmm.

MCH: That was about as low a state as you could occupy, what I saw back there too.

JE: All graduated from college, out of that shack?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative). I don't have another word for it.

JE: It's a picture you're, it's a picture you're giving me.

MCH: Right, it was very small and rough.

Chapter 07 - 5:30**Taos, New Mexico**

John Erling: He then was with Thomas Gilcrease for three years and then in 1948, he moved to Taos, New Mexico. Was that a fun thing for you? Tell me what you were feeling about that?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: I've always been interested in life. And whatever was being presented to me as the next thing that was coming along with the family unit.

JE: Yeah.

MCH: I don't recall having any trouble incorporating that or moving along with it.

JE: You moved then to Taos, New Mexico. What was the draw to Taos?

MCH: He had traveled there with Thomas Gilcrease and purchased from some of the Taos founders, which became right at the core Taos School in Gilcrease Collection. And he had been there before traveling when he was with Bacone and with the dance troop. He was already familiar with the area, knew it, loved it, and knew a lot of people. And recognized it as an arts community. I think that that was the strongest draw was the arts community.

JE: Sure. Right.

MCH: He also lived much better with his sinuses out there. He suffered from the humidity back here so that helped a lot. But it was the arts community.

JE: Going back to Gilcrease, he was artist in residence so Mr. Gilcrease was paying him not by the piece, I suppose, but maybe by the month?

MCH: Stipend.

JE: A stipend?

MCH: A living, stipend.

JE: And just paint as many as you can.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And that's what I want you here to do.

MCH: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

JE: Just to paint and I will take care of your family.

MCH: As it happened, he had a self-starter and he didn't have to come in and say, "What's happening? How's it going? Let me see what you're doing." Nope, he just got, fed them.

JE: That was a wonderful investment.

MCH: Yes.

JE: In a man who you said—

MCH: Yes.

JE: Had to be painting at eight o'clock every morning.

MCH: It was a wonderful partnership.

JE: And every six days there was a new painting?

MCH: Yes.

JE: Wow.

MCH: yes.

JE: Great partnership.

MCH: Yeah.

JE: Have you met any Gilcrease descendants?

MCH: Yes.

JE: And are you in touch with them?

MCH: Yes.

JE: Even to this day?

MCH: Yes.

JE: You have a relationship with them?

MCH: Yes.

JE: So you moved to Taos, New Mexico, living there until 1960, when he then joined the staff of the El Paso Art Museum in El Paso as a curator. And then from '65 to '68 he served as assistant director. What are your recollections of living in Taos and probably going to school at this time then, right?

MCH: I, uh—well, it wasn't that much of a change for me because it was still the arts community it was just broader. It was a change to come to know the Taos Pueblo and the Taos Pueblo people and in New Mexico it was different in that it was a large Hispanic population there. The food, the weather was different, you had more severe winters. It was a vital expansion of my world.

JE: Well, you're obviously getting older here because by 1960 I think you were about seventeen years old. So you'd gone through high school then in Taos, New Mexico?

MCH: Lots in between there.

JE: Come on back, come on back and fill me in on some of the blanks.

MCH: Okay. At a certain point when we were in Taos the family spent a couple of years in Arizona. And my mother taught at Keams Canyon School, it was a boarding school up to the eighth grade. Keams Canyon served the Hopi and the Navajo reservations, so there was students from both. And my father painted. We lived in government housing there and went to school. That was another broadening, a very great broadening of my life. At the mouth of the canyon, Keams Canyon, which is a historical canyon in the area that Kit Carson visited, and Coronado visited and scratched their names. Carson was there around the time of the Bosque Redondo and the removal of the Navajo from Canyon De Chelly and that area. So it had historic significance and was visited quite a bit,

enough so that at the mouth of the canyon there were two trading posts. They were the Lees and the Magees. And they only had rows of wagons that were drawn up to them for years. For years students would be brought in to the school in wagons. Or families would come in to buy provisions at the trading posts and trade, perhaps weavings, perhaps jewelry for supplies. I remember those rows and rows of wagons drawn up there, no cars. So I went to school there for a couple of years, only a couple of years.

JE: How old were you then?

MCH: Eleven. During that time some of my playmates came from the family who were the descendants from Quannah Parker.

JE: Hmm.

MCH: The Parkers lived there and were working there. After a couple of years the family decided to move to Oak Creek Canyon, Sedona, where my father opened the first gallery in Sedona. The first one. It was just a village then, it was not much there. Mother didn't teach, I went to school, and really loved the area, I really loved Sedona a lot. The red rocks were beautiful. I've loved all of my travels, every place they've ever been. Because the Mother Earth is beautiful everywhere.

JE: At that age had you gone beyond scratching on a piece of paper to actually doing some work?

MCH: No.

JE: Not yet?

MCH: No.

JE: How long were you in Sedona?

MCH: Two years, I think. Two to three years.

JE: And people are taken with your father's work? He has become somewhat of a celebrity I suppose by that time?

MCH: It didn't matter whether people knew him or not, his work was always recognized the purchased.

Chapter 08 - 4:30

Three Dollar Investment

John Erling: In 1954, he ordered a mineral identification kit for three dollars from a catalog and started prospecting with Max Evans, who was a Western artist. Can you tell me what became of that three dollar investment?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Well, my father was an amateur prospector. Mining was the interest that essentially was grounded in love of the Mother Earth and getting out of town in a jeep, with a skillet and a folding table.

JE: So that was a getaway probably from his painting?

MCH: Let me re-language that a little bit. The getaway was not so much from the painting, no, he never wanted to get away from the painting. There was just other things to do in life. Our father was a well-rounded individual.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: You just can't do something all the time.

JE: Right.

MCH: Now it's good if you have other interests, so his appreciation of the beauty and the culture of the Mother Earth and all of us that live upon it was manifested in his love of rocks and the mining. And there was also some new associations there, possibly some formal mining interest to pursue, but that was never the principal objective.

JE: But in a couple of years they discovered deposits of uranium, copper—

MCH: They did.

JE: And this became a nice financial gain for him and for his family?

MCH: Never much.

JE: Oh not much?

MCH: Never much.

JE: So it didn't become something—

MCH: No.

JE: So that he could be independent?

MCH: No, no, it was never an objective of his. I remember he used to come into the house and he'd have those canvas bags, you know the prospectors have those canvas bags, and he'd pull out these bright yellow rocks. Pure uranium ore, and run the Geiger counter over it. Dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit, you know. And we'd touch them, hand them around, put them back in, whatever. There's all kinds of stories about mining deposits in the land and so forth, but when it comes right down to it our father found a lot of things and he let them all. Because, number one, he never wanted to get rich. He always felt like it took him off of his spiritual edge. To get rich means that you get fat and puffy somewhere along the way, and he would have lost his edge. He preferred to be on the leading edge of his life and move in mind, heart, body, spirit into the great mystery and the unknown with who he was and what he had in correlation with spirit. And he didn't want a bunch of givens and knowns and protections around him. Secondly, I don't think that he ever really intended to pursue any serious excavation and sales of the body of the Mother Earth.

JE: Would he have thought that was a violation?

MCH: Not so much a violation as just not the way that he wanted to live.

JE: He wanted to, you said, live on the edge. He was two, three pieces away from “I need this to happen” on that kind of edge. Is that what you’re saying?

MCH: Well, those things always flicker in and out of the consciousness of a commercial nation, it’s unavoidable, but I don’t think that it was ever a factor very largely. Fortunately, we nearly always had my mother’s income to provide stability for the family.

JE: So that was the steady monthly check?

MCH: Yes it was.

JE: Because his work could go up and down?

MCH: And he moved with inspiration and also pursued his mining interests. Those were his two principal interests. Call it mining interest is not really correct, it was more just his interest of living back out on the land again. Spending a lot of time out on the land.

JE: What was he looking for though?

MCH: Heaven, heaven.

JE: He was looking for heaven? And?

MCH: You step out of town and you’re there.

JE: The wide open spaces?

MCH: Right, that was his church.

JE: Yeah. He probably, out there, got inspired to do some great work.

MCH: Probably or refreshed, at any rate, renewed.

JE: Right. Didn’t he introduce oil painting more to Native Americans? He was the leader of that?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative). Tempera was used more commonly and then water color. He introduced that and he introduced copper plate etching and the serigraph, or the silk screen process.

Chapter 09 - 3:00

Spirit Horse

John Erling: I hold this up to you, this Spirit Horse, that you see here. This was a silk screen serigraph.

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: It was an original oil painting before.

JE: Oh it was?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative). Lost, I have no idea where it is. It's been gone a long time.

JE: This Spirit Horse?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative). From the Taos studio, been gone a long time.

JE: And no one knows where it is? Originally?

MCH: No, no.

JE: But prints have been made of this?

MCH: Well, he then did the silk screen print. When he had a design that worked for him well he would explore that. For instance, Spirit Talk, I'm utilizing Spirit Talk in my book Spirit Talk. Now as an early rendition, probably done in the '30s and then his last rendition of it was one of the last pieces he did before he transitioned. So . . .

JE: Oh he had various renditions of Spirit Talk?

MCH: Oh yes, oh yes. Different colors, orientations, and then, of course, there's the Ghost Horse, which is a vertical presentation. This is the horizontal presentation. The Ghost Horse is up like this instead of out like that.

JE: Tell us about the spirit of this. It wasn't meant to be, obviously, a real horse; it's blue, and that blue was important, wasn't it? That color?

MCH: Spirit color.

JE: Wait a minute.

MCH: The difference between the way we view a regular horse, you might say—

JE: Yes.

MCH: Or the horse that has the white mane and tail flowing like that, if I could just draw a little alliteration here of the horse as we know it is our father at town at the drawing table and the spirit horse is him out on the land.

JE: Right.

MCH: If you will.

JE: Spirit Horse. Remember when that came in his life?

MCH: That would have been very early, probably in the '30s. This is our father out in the jeep. This is our father at the drawing table.

JE: You're talking about a Returning Warrior that's an etching—

MCH: Yes.

JE: Of a warrior—

MCH: Very beautiful piece.

JE: On a—

MCH: Incredible piece. Life, success, winning, and we don't know whether that warrior is returning to the spirit world or to the physical world. But there is success, joy, and abundance in that Returning Warrior etching.

JE: Do you know where the original of that is?

MCH: No. I don't know where any of those etching plates are. Now when we come to the serigraphs I have all of the screens that those were produced with. But etchings wear out, the copper plate etchings. He etched all of them in copper plate, and as they're rolled the rough edges, the burrs, degenerate and actually disappear. At a certain point he would have some of those plates chromed and they lasted quite a bit longer. The reason you don't see too many etchings around is those plates just don't last long.

JE: Okay. That is his attempt to make prints so that the common man—he wanted as many people as possible to be able to afford his work.

MCH: That—

JE: And it wasn't just for the wealthy.

MCH: Right, and to standardize the artist's income; multiples provide stability to the artist's income. One piece isn't done and gone but there can be a number more.

Chapter 10 - 4:45

Eagle Dancer

John Erling: Let's talk about Eagle Dancer. You know, when you see Woody's work his colors or the way he uses them are just so brilliant and they just stand out. In ways that maybe many others of his time didn't. What do you know about this Eagle Dancer and what it meant?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: We have to go back to what the eagle is. The eagle is a symbol of leadership and connection with the Creator. And carried our prayers to the Creator. So it represents man's relationship with the eagle and the oneness with that eagle and the readiness, willingness, and ability to move in spirit and to send our prayers up through the intermediary of the eagle. It's an honoring of the eagle. Eagles were never killed. They weren't sport-shot, they weren't poisoned. The feathers would be collected, different peoples would capture an eagle and keep it and accept the feathers as they were dropped, maybe take one or two here and there, I don't know. That wasn't my culture. But to wear an eagle feather had to be earned. Or to be gifted with one it would have been an honoring; somehow you would have earned it.

JE: This is oil on canvas. And where is that today?

MCH: I don't know whose collection that is. But because the eagle carried our prayers to the Creator doing the Eagle Dance, especially for the young men, was an aspect of training the young men in helping him to forge the qualities necessary to build character,

strength, endurance, love, humility, compassion, courage, bravery. This was one of the training tools. You see powwow dancing, which we wouldn't see a lot of tribal dances because they happen on reservations or reserves or pueblos or whatever. But when the boarding schools came along you had a lot of intertribal marriage. So there would be sharing of cultures, and some of it would be urban powwows, others, school powwows or town powwows. But these were not necessarily ceremonial or religious functions. But they were celebrations of culture. And the eagle came through both of those types. It transitioned and moved easily from ceremony to the powwow circuit as an understandable symbol of leadership.

JE: This was done in 1951, and that was when you were living then in Taos, New Mexico. Do you remember this on the easel?

MCH: Oh, oh yes.

JE: Do you remember while he was painting it?

MCH: Yes.

JE: You can remember him working on this?

MCH: Our front room was where the etching press was. It's like having the stove in your house; you know it's going on and you see it and you look at it. And those wonderful dishes reside with you all the time whether it's beans and rice or cassoulet or crème brulee or corn pudding, that's the context of your life and it's all there in the mix. And it's just your food that's the food of your life. So this is what was on the drawing table. We had a gallery in town on Kit Carson Road, right next to the old Kit Carson house, which is the museum now. It's the last boardwalk in Taos. And the gallery, when my father took it over, he renovated it completely and put carved wooden posts out front. I don't know if you've been to Taos and you've seen that building that has the last boardwalk, carved, wooden columns going up? Well, he commissioned those from an Hispanic carver in town by the name of Luce Martinez. He did the top with the cloud and the rain design that's painted all of that. The whole façade of the Horse Feathers Trading Post, it's called now, was designed by our father and it's still in place. His studio was at the back of that. At the front was a gallery and gift shop. At that time there was so much wonderful jewelry that was being produced. The family ran the gift shop. My Aunt Hazel moved out from Oklahoma, she was a teacher also. All the girls became teachers. She and my mother ran the gift shop. And then next door to that was the shop where they produced all of the serigraphs. He invited as many people as was required to produce all of those serigraphs from the population of the Taos Pueblo. And they came in and produced all those award-winning series with no training whatsoever in art or drawing or use of that technique. But I remember when all of these pieces were done.

Chapter 11 - 2:45**Spotted Wolves**

John Erling: Here we have Spotted Wolves Last Request. I guess one of his most famous paintings but it's a tribute to all Native American soldiers. Here we are on Veteran's Day—

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Right.

JE: Eleven/fourteen.

MCH: Right, right.

JE: Probably appropriate to talk about this. What do you see here? Can you talk to us about it?

MCH: PFC Clarence Spotted Wolf died in Luxemburg and left a letter to his parents that he wanted to be buried as an American patriot but in the traditional Indian manner. You see there a scaffolded burial draped by the flag. You see below the scaffolded burial that his horse has been killed and is resting beneath him. And the two of them are riding together into the Morning Star, the heavens. But he carries a flag aloft in his right hand, and then in his left hand he carries the old symbol of Indian warfare, scalp. There's a big drum in front with brothers and sisters in the center. On the left we see grandparents, we see a Peyote altar, which tells us that he was a follower and a participant of the Peyote religion. That fanned out symbol that you see on the ground in front of the horse is a stylized Peyote altar and someone is standing above it that has a bag in their right hand and the left hand extended, and he's feeding that fire. You also see almost exactly that same figure here.

JE: Here holding the cover of the Woody Crumbo.

MCH: Yes in this painting. I don't know that I can get to it right now.

JE: Yeah.

MCH: But that figure feeding the fire of the Peyote ceremony. On the right you see standing is mother and father. And in front of them in the far lower right is a sweat lodge—

JE: A sweat—

MCH: Behind the two dancers. You can just see a little bit of it back here.

JE: A sweat lodge?

MCH: It's a lodge of purification and renewal; it's a place where rocks would be heated and brought in and someone or ones would go in and meet the elements and pray and receive purification and renewal. It's a way that's come down through the ages and actually the sweat lodge, or versions of it, are found all over the world. I have one on the land.

JE: On your land?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: This was in 1955, Spotted Wolves Last Request, what a beautiful piece.

MCH: Yes it is. That is in the permanent collection of the Koshare Indian Museum in La Junta, Colorado.

Chapter 12 - 2:40

Bent's Fort

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: He spent a number of years there after this painting was done. There is an Eagle Scout group that was founded by Buck Burshears, Francis Buck Burshears. He brought these boys forward in a very beautiful manner and sponsored them in learning about Indian ways, dance, culture. They traveled around, they learned to dance, observing at different pueblos and with different tribes. And then they came back and built a very beautiful performance area for themselves. And it's still in use. One of the better-kept secrets in the whole Southwest is the Koshare Indian dancers, Eagle Scout group. And it comes down now, they have now brought the age down, the very youngest Scouts can participate in that. And girls from the town, females that dance in that now. One of the nicest, most fabulous things that one can do in this whole part of the country is to visit a performance of the Koshare Indian dancers in La Junta, Colorado. You have to go there on purpose, you're not coming from anywhere. It's east of Pueblo if you're going north and south from, say, Dallas to Denver. And then near that is a re-creation of Bent's Fort. Bent's Fort had degenerated greatly from the time that Ceran St. Vrain and later Governor Bent, first governor of New Mexico, built their commercial fort outside of La Junta, on the Old Santa Fe Trail. Ceran St. Vrain was a refugee, an aristocratic refugee from the French Revolution that showed up in the Americas. Came West and found his fortune here, in terms of the people that he found to be of interest and the things that he wanted to do. Which was the Santa Fe Trail trading western expansion and manifest destiny. He was way, way into that. So the state of Colorado has rebuilt Bent's Fort, which is fabulous, absolutely fabulous endeavor. The craftsmanship that has gone into it, the historical fidelity with which they approached every single thing. There are things of historical quality there that we won't even recognize. Decisions have been made on how different things were built and put up and so forth. So a visit to the La Junta area and Bent's Fort is a very, very rich experience.

John Erling: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: The train goes from Albuquerque. Spend a couple of days, that's about all there is to do.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: But they are stellar.

Chapter 13 - 3:12

Peyote Religion

John Erling: You referred to the Peyote religion. What is that? And your father and your family, were they of that religion?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Yes, to the second. Firstly, the Peyote religion is a synthesis of Christianity and Indian ways. It's a church meeting in a teepee. A lot of the people engaging in the Peyote religion may be Christians and they may not be. Or they can be any degree in between; it doesn't matter. There's no qualifying because those boundaries are constantly shifting anyway. And they are impermanent and they indefinable. And we can only find the roots of those preferences and infinities by taking the path further back to the original point of spirit. And then differentiation is not called for.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: It's not necessary anymore.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: So it was a way for people to sit in the teepee meetings, what they're commonly called, and pray. My father sat that way, he went that way, he painted a lot from the Peyote tradition. I have and do go that way. It's a very beautiful way.

JE: What is Peyote?

MCH: It's a cactus.

JE: And how is it used?

MCH: It's used as the host, as the host like the sacrament, it's eaten.

JE: So in a teepee meeting then, what happens? Is there a leader?

MCH: Yes there's a leader, that's your chief that runs the meeting. And it's a very specific way that it's run. The drum and the staff, the singing, all of that passes around to people that know the songs and that are qualified. There will be a lot of people that are in there for physical healings or to celebrate a birthday, anniversary, or a veteran coming back or

getting ready to go out. There are morning observances regarding the sunrise and then there's feasting afterward. There's a very, very specific order that's followed.

JE: Was there a book that is a teaching tool?

MCH: No, but the Bible's likely to be in there.

JE: And grew up in that then, didn't you?

MCH: I did not grow up in it, peripherally because of my father's interest, yes, but I didn't start going that way until I was in my thirties.

JE: That's difficult to continue today, I guess?

MCH: No. You have to want to do it.

JE: And do you do that now?

MCH: No.

JE: All right. I'm trying to find here, was it in Bacone College where he did a glass window piece?

MCH: Oh, well, the Rose Window, he called it.

JE: The Rose Window at Bacone College.

MCH: It was very nice. And it had Peyote symbolism incorporated into it.

JE: And that's a Baptist school?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Which is kind of interesting, the combination of a Peyote religion in the Baptist school. I wonder if they knew that was happening?

MCH: No I don't think they did, but, you know, I mean, you can't expect a religion to go out that's not going to come back at you influenced by the people that came in and out. Religion is a living thing. It looks like the people that participate with it and sit with it. Those are all different things, and changing all the time.

JE: Yes.

MCH: Not static. It may look different now and in five minutes it can be something else.

Chapter 14 - 4:00

Portraits by Minisa

John Erling: When is it that you realize that this is going to be a career for you as well?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Early thirties.

JE: People were commenting on your work?

MCH: I realized I'd better go to school. So I enrolled in the Tulsa Academy of Fine Arts. I

had a couple of friends who were running the school there, came to be my friends. I recognized that there were some things that I wanted to do and I hoped that there was some opportunity and gift there. But I also knew, I knew and I know I don't have my father's gift. He was an unique individual that was inspired and gifted by the grace of God to do the work that he did. And that's him and I am me. And I needed to go to school.

JE: Did you try to copy him?

MCH: No, no.

JE: Did he encourage you in your work? Do you think he saw a talent?

MCH: He did, and my talent at the time that he remarked on that was encouraging for me early on was my work with portraits. Everyone seems to have different areas that they have. I was going into doing a lot of portraits at that time. And for some reason I didn't find it difficult at all to do portraits, and to secure the likeness of people and the spirit entity that flowed out of them, which gave a recognizable quality of who that person really was, not just what they looked like. So I was doing a lot of that at the time.

JE: You also did a portrait of your father.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Did he sit for you or was he—

MCH: He did. He did. I was so happy that he did that. I was drawing and painting, mostly drawing with mixed media. He was visiting, I was living in Taos. Had my studio there and he was visiting one time. And every one that came into my life, I'm telling you, there wasn't anyone could come through my living room without me saying, "Could I draw your portrait?" And I had a little portable setup that I could anyone anytime and it went with me everywhere. So he said yes. And as it happened, he had his roach with him, which was serendipity. So he tied it on and put on his little, black, silk tie that he used to wear with the slide. Sat down for me and I did it. And I'm so glad that I did because it's the only one that I have of him.

JE: And you have it?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: How long did it take you?

MCH: Oh, about an hour.

JE: And he had no problem doing that?

MCH: No.

JE: So was that early on that you were doing portraits?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: How old?

MCH: Thirty.

JE: And then did you sell them?

MCH: Oh yeah.

JE: So it became a—

MCH: I sold a lot.

JE: Source of income, then?

MCH: Oh yes.

JE: You could do one in a half hour maybe? Or an hour?

MCH: Well, I could get the likeness done. Give it two hours. I like to give it two to three hours for the face and get the whole thing sketched in. And I could take longer with individual features, hair, background, clothing, regalia, anything extra. And I might spend a couple of days after that if I had to go in with color—water color or oil, is another matter. But I could do it in a couple of days. If it wasn't done in a couple of days it was because I didn't have anything more to put into it. I would need more information, more time with the person.

JE: Isn't it interesting that this took till you were thirty-some before you realized you were good at that? You didn't try it when you were younger, did you?

MCH: I had small children, I was a wife and mother.

JE: What was Woody Max's talent?

MCH: He is an incredible silversmith, incredible silversmith. I worked with him. We had a studio in the house at a certain point. I had a lot of room in that house for him to expand into and so he had a shop down there and he was very successful. Whenever he needed help he'd call for me sometime and I'd run over. That's how I learned to do basic silversmithing. And then a couple of years ago, just five years ago, I went back and took a course here in town and brought my silversmithing schools back up, which I'm back in the shop with it now. I enjoy working with silver very much.

JE: Where is he working?

MCH: Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

JE: He has a gallery there?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Chapter 15 - 4:40**Russia**

John Erling: You did an exhibition in Moscow in 1978. How old were you when you were there?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Thirty-six.

JE: How did this come about?

MCH: Well, the Russian delegation that was touring with the Ministry of Culture came to Las Vegas at Roy Clark's invitation. And Jim had taken Roy, booked him into Las Vegas. And so he and Roy were watching TV one night and Roy said, "We ought to invite them to come to the show." Jim said, "Why don't you do that?" So he got on the phone and invited the folks that came in and they enjoyed the show enormously. And an invitation for Roy to tour the Soviet Union was forthcoming. So in between that time that he went they visited here and Jim was doing some things with the ranch party. And I had an exhibition at that time and they saw the art and said, "Well, why don't you come too?" So my accent and began working toward that exhibition, which was going to be two years in the future. And was completely noncommercial. It was a little bit of a stretch because they didn't want anyone coming to exhibit there with any idea of making any money on that tour. So I had to hold things back for that exhibition. It could sell them but then people couldn't take the piece because they'd have to have it in that was going to be gone for a year on the exhibition. So I had to hold things. And that was okay, I liked that just fine. They really went along with that all right. "You can come and exhibit here but you can't take any money." I understand that completely. With artists it's chicken and feathers. It's chicken one day and guts and feathers the next anyway. So it's like, "Hey, you know."

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: That equation makes perfect sense to me.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: And then, of course, it was good for my career when I came back. That's how that came to pass.

JE: How many pieces did you take over there?

MCH: Thirty-five.

JE: And in what forms?

MCH: Mostly portraits. Almost life-size portraits, which was very, very well-received because it was the time of the Cold War. And the Soviets are very interested in arts and culture of all kind. But at that time there was a deep hunger to look into the eyes of the American public and plumb our depths and find out who we were and what was going on. So I had Indians, Hispanics, Anglos, all kinds of people represented, ages, regalia, costume,

clothing, definitive, accompanied by some poetry, and some pieces, a few, which weren't portraits. But most were portraits. People would stand in front of the pieces for hours and commune with them. Now a little background. The reason they were able to stand and commune with those paintings is because it was designed that way. When I received the invitation to go over there I did a lot of Indian portraits. And that's a very delicate approach there and the whole concept of bringing the word capture ran in all that comes back in. So when I asked them to sit for me I told them what the project was going to be. That the pieces were going to the Soviet Union. And this is the way I brought it forward. I asked them if they would lend an aspect of themselves to the drawing so that people could see who they were. And those who said yes were in the show.

JE: Lend an aspect of themselves. What does that mean?

MCH: Their spirit, part of their reality, personality, so when you look at a piece you come to know something of who they are.

JE: And how would they do that?

MCH: By saying yes. If they weren't going to do it they just wouldn't participate in the program. So then there was the additional element of the conscious definition of intent. Why they were there. What was proposed to be accomplished with this activity. So the drawings were very alive. When the Soviets would stand in front of the pieces the line moved slowly because that person was there and they would connect. And it was quite an experience. Quite an experience.

JE: You'd never seen that before perhaps, how people would just connect with those pictures?

MCH: Oh that's what I always put into my pieces, otherwise they're not alive.

JE: But maybe they did it more so in the Soviet Union because they're so removed from us.

MCH: Right, right, and they were curious and hungry. And had been fed a line of propaganda just like we had. So when I got home I returned all those people back home and they got the drawing.

JE: They—

MCH: Walk in the door with it. "Here you are. Thank you very much." Put it down. And they walk away and they're like, "Hey, nice, thanks."

JE: And you were not paid for them?

MCH: No I was not paid.

JE: Didn't any of them pay you for it?

MCH: No, no.

JE: They should have.

MCH: No, no, no, no, they were doing me a favor.

JE: Right.

Chapter 16 – 6:00**Don't Care**

John Erling: The time leading up to the opening of the door for the first time the Soviets were going to see this, were you nervous about how they were going to accept it? Any of that angst go into it?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: No.

JE: No nervous trepidation?

MCH: I knew my work was good.

JE: Yeah? What—

MCH: My work was good and the people were there. But let me take that back a little bit. One of my first teachers said one of the most important things when I was still studying with him. He came and stood in front of one of my pieces and I said, “What do you think?” And he looked at me and he said, “It can never matter what I or anyone else thinks about your work. Do not ever let it matter. A critique or a teaching is one thing, but they have their experience of what you’ve done and you have your experience of what you have done. Some people will like it and some people won’t. Don’t let it matter. Stop caring. Never care what anyone thinks or feels about your work. Don’t care, it will influence and affect you, and you don’t want that. You’ve lost the whole story if you are influenced or affected. You are not you. You’ve lost your vision, you’ve lost your liberty, you’ve lost your freedom of choice, you’ve lost your expression, you’ve lost the whole story if you allow yourself to care about what they say. Or think about your things.” So it took a little bit. And along with that, he said, “Also when you get ready to sell your things,” he said, “you’ve got to detach from them also. You are in love with your piece, you have your relationship with it, when you let it go, you got to let it go. Otherwise, you haven’t let it go and it doesn’t really belong to them and you’re bleeding energy because you’re connected to something that you let go of and didn’t really sever the ties. And then your energy is not free to put into something else because you’re still bleeding to death over this piece that you let go over here but didn’t let it go. “And then the person that bought it didn’t really get it because you haven’t let it go.” I mean, it just goes, “Chick, chick, chick, chick,” on down the line. So when my things got there, shoot, I’ve been working for two years on that anyway. I was just glad to get it shipped and out and on the wall. What was interesting for me about the Russian experience, shortly before the exhibit opened they had a meeting called. I went in and there was a big board table of people sitting there. Fortunately, for some reason, I had dressed for the event, because it was a very high level event. It was one of those occasions where you really want to be dressed for success. I don’t like to dress for success.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: But I do recognize that there is a time and a place for it. So there were all of these high-ranking people from the Ministry of Culture and who knows where else. They began to interview me and I absolutely loved it. Because the way that they perceived art and perceived it at that time in the Soviet Union was a completely different way than it's perceived in—it's perceived differently in every country. The United States, the artist is a lot of times viewed as a Bohemian and written off a little bit. If you're not entertained or it doesn't fit over the sofa, you know. There are a few artists that really achieve a lot of notoriety with the public but nine times out of ten it's based on how much the artist sell them for. Growing up with our father was an opportunity to grow up with excellence. There was only one way to do it and it was excellence. It didn't even matter, again, what anyone thought of his work because it was great. You know? It was so—however people received it and got it, that was just fine. I grew up with that dichotomy of excellence and the Bohemian experience. Because the majority of Americans when they find out that you're an artist, it's like, "Yeah, well, you know." And you probably spend a lot of time partying or whatever and an indulgent lifestyle or whatever. And while I'm not refuting that any and all of that is present, there are so many shades of it. And I had never been taken seriously as an artist before, before I got to the Soviet Union. And they took me very, very seriously. And it was a very serious meeting. And they questioned me in depth on a lot of things, which I loved. Just, "Let's talk. Come on, let's talk about these things." Wonderful, I love it. But the reason that they were talking so seriously about it is because the Soviet Union was and is an officially godless society, more so than now. And they counted on the artists to feed the spirits of the people. It was a knee-buckling, impossible assignment.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative)

MCH: And they wanted to know if I was up to it and where I was coming from in spirit. And if the people were going to grow from looking at my things. And I said, "Oh yeah." I would never be asked that here except I am now. You know what I mean.

JE: Yeah. In fact, this was June of '79, Soviet Life, and they did a nice story on you with your pictures and all. The Observer wrote, "I saw the Metropolitan Museum exhibit in Moscow, but I found the paintings of the great Indian people by Minisa Crumbo even more interesting. Her works are very appealing." Now I know you said earlier you just do them and you don't care. But you must care if somebody says something nice or a compliment about your work.

MCH: I don't really.

JE: You don't go looking for it I know, but doesn't it feel good to know that somebody has written this? Or for people to say, "I saw that great work."

MCH: I'm happy for them.

JE: It's not about you?

MCH: It's not about me and that's likely to be a PR piece.

Chapter 17 - 4:18

Jim-Minisa Meet

John Erling: About Jim and you, Jim Halsey, the impresario, promoter, he has the legendary Roy Clark and the Oak Ridge Boys and others too, how did you two meet?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: We met in spirit first. We knew one another when we saw one another. 'Cause we had both dreamed of one another, we recognized one another.

JE: Really?

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Where was this meeting?

MCH: The dream meeting?

JE: I knew you were going to ask that question.

MCH: I saw that coming too.

JE: Okay, the dream meeting. And then how long did it take before the reality?

MCH: About six weeks.

JE: Wow. Did you have a dream that you actually saw? Yes?

MCH: It was him, oh yes. Same curly hair, same little tummy, same legs, feet, it was him.

JE: Okay, where did you meet him?

MCH: There was a gallery on South Louis, Dr. Ron Coleman had a wonderful Indian art gallery at that time. He invited me to come and exhibit, so I did. Jim struck out one day alone for lunch and ended up a block from the place, London Square, he was at. And they had the PA system going, talking about the exhibit. And he said, "Oh I just missed it by a couple of doors. That's where I'm supposed to be." So he turned around and came back. I was going to go for a sandwich so I was walking down the sidewalk as he was backing his car with the big old Lincoln Continental kit on the back. So I'm going down the sidewalk and here's this car backing in like this. And I knew it was him, I knew the person from the dream had arrived. So I went ahead and I had my sandwich and I came back. And then I met him. He was getting ready to leave for the Soviet Union and I was leaving for Italy right after that. I was telling this story to someone later and they said, "You were pretty darn sure that he was going to be there when you got back, weren't

you?” And I said, “Well, yeah.”

JE: You mean when you went off to have that sandwich?

MCH: Yeah.

JE: And came back, right?

MCH: Yeah, and checked in. I knew he wasn't going anywhere.

JE: Why?

MCH: Just knew it. That was the dream, we were supposed to meet. And he had come and it was unfolding. I didn't have to run back and chase it, it was arising.

JE: So do you approach him? Does he approach you?

MCH: Dr. Coleman introduces us.

JE: Okay, so—

MCH: He buys a painting, we visit, and he meets Mom and Dad, my brother, everyone was there and so forth. And then he invited me over to the office, this office, in fact. He was getting ready to leave for the Soviet tour with Roy. My brother and eleven-year-old daughter, Chrissie, we were getting ready to leave for Italy. We had winter coming up on us in Taos and just decided to go somewhere and do it different. A lot of our friends would go to Mexico for the winter but my brother wanted to go to Italy. And I had been to Italy and liked it a lot, so that was fine with me. So we got everything together and I came in and said hello. And he was just getting ready to go. And I was getting ready to go. And then we came back here and met later in the spring when we both got home.

JE: When did you say to each other, “I dreamt about you six weeks ago”? Did you say that upon the first meeting?

MCH: No. But not too long after that. And he said he had too. But we didn't need to say it because we knew it.

JE: Both of you felt a spirit attachment right there upon that first meeting?

MCH: Yeah.

JE: And then you both went off on your separate journeys. So how long was it before you met again?

MCH: About two months.

JE: Were you communicating at all?

MCH: No.

JE: But you knew the bond was there?

MCH: Yeah.

JE: And when they come back—

MCH: Yeah.

JE: Then the romance took off?

MCH: Yeah.

- JE:** That's great. How many years have you been married now?
- MCH:** Thirty-five.
- JE:** Was he always—
- MCH:** You know how I am with time though.
- JE:** Was he interested in the world of artists and—
- MCH:** Oh he had been collecting for years.
- JE:** He had been collecting?
- MCH:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Okay. That wasn't new to him then you are an artist. Then he introduced you to the music world, I guess? And you became—
- MCH:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** Interested in his work. And I'm sure you've had an interesting journey with him. With these great musicians—
- MCH:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** That he's been with.
- MCH:** It's mostly just us though.
- JE:** Just the two of you?
- MCH:** Yeah.
- JE:** Yeah.
- MCH:** And he has his interests and, you know, he runs his business and I have my interests. We don't interface on one another's worlds a whole lot except as companion.
- JE:** When he's off doing a concert you don't have to be at that concert?
- MCH:** No. I like to be a lot.

Chapter 18 - 3:36

Describe Father's Work

- John Erling:** What words would you use to describe your father's great work?
- Minisa Crumbo Halsey:** I would say that the Creator moved through him and gave him a gift that he could produce on paper and canvas that would give the people a will to live.
- JE:** His work—
- MCH:** His life.
- JE:** Yeah. He painted murals inside the US Department of Interior. Hundreds of his pieces acquired by museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian. It

doesn't make any difference where you are or what little town or little village or where you live, if it's meant to be, people spot it and it becomes great. And he didn't have to promote any of that at all.

MCH: That's because the Creator's energy was flowing behind all of it. He didn't have to do anything. He was a great talker and conversationalist. And he could talk on just about anything. And he was well-met by everyone. There wasn't anyone that he didn't feel like he could visit with. And there is an art to that.

JE: So he was an easygoing—

MCH: Oh very easygoing, very easy to talk to, great conversationalist. Very social.

JE: Would younger artists be attracted to him? And did he have time—

MCH: Yes.

JE: Did he have time for younger artists?

MCH: Absolutely.

JE: Did they come around?

MCH: Absolutely. He really was mentor to anyone that wanted to be mentored. He encouraged the young artists, absolutely.

JE: What would you say to young artists of today that are listening to this? What would your advice be to them?

MCH: Well, that's a pretty broad subject. It would depend in large part what your interest was, what you viewed your opportunities, gifts, and abilities as being. The next would be education, mentoring, lessons. And then thirdly, with no emphasis on any one of the three, whatever it is you're interested in doing, do it. Establish a discipline, establish a program, and do it. Don't censor yourself because there is always room for improvement. And things will always be changing with the degree in quality of whatever you're doing. But you must really set the time aside. Make a dedication and set an intention to do that as a process, not a destination, necessarily. And not with even success as a goal. Because the success is in the doing and the living of it.

JE: Hmm. The journey.

MCH: Um-hmm (affirmative). Do it, find some help along the way. Establish what it is that you want to do. Of course, it always comes into my conversation, basically what I want to do in my work no matter what it is, I want to feel like my essence is originating from and connecting with the Creator. That's what art is. There was no word for art in indigenous languages because everything originated from utility and necessity or the expression of something or another. And that all came from life. And life, back it up, life comes from the Creator. So it can't be separated. Dad always said that he never started a piece or sat back down at the drawing table that he wasn't in prayer. He didn't even have to say a prayer, he was in the studio spirit.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: And that's why it's important to not do anything in the studio except that, because that's what there is the spirit, the spirit of life is there. However you've elected to define that. It doesn't matter what you're doing, you want to have it connected with the spirit of life.

JE: Yeah.

MCH: It doesn't matter what you do.

Chapter 19 - 1:50

Remembering Woody

John Erling: You said you drew from your mother education. What about your father? Maybe even beyond the art world? As Dad, as Father, a word or two.

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: He was a loving father.

JE: How would you like people to remember him?

MCH: Oh my. Through the art. I don't think that he would be cared to be remembered as a person so much as a spirit entity. We all need to be given the right to be a human being with all that that entails. And not have judgment passed on anything or opinion or likes or dislikes or affinities or any of that. Because in the end, with the individual too it's the same as with artwork. I don't care if anyone likes me or wants me or whatever it is. I mean, yeah, it's nice and all right and so forth. And I like to have some friends and so forth. But sooner or later you're going to fail everyone, one way or another. By failing them I mean you're not going to please them and you're not going to do what they want. That's why we work out, you know, compromise and conversation and agreements and all of that. But a person's essential connection with humanity, themselves, and the Creator, that's what we have to hold in trust with each relationship. It's the highest vision of one another's intention, intent. And then let everyone else be a human being. You know, I don't have to approve of you, you don't have to approve of me. We'll have some fun talking about life and the way it is and how it went and so forth. But what we're really talking about is, "Hey, what's your connection with the Creator? What are your greatest mentors? How do you want to be remembered?" I want to be remembered as, you know, a person whose work was aligned with spirit. All of his work was aligned with spirit.

JE: Yeah.

MCH: All of it. I'm fond of saying that every painting is a portrait of the artist. Yeah.

Chapter 20 - 3:15**Woody Leaves Gilcrease**

John Erling: Let me just throw out—Charles Banks Wilson. Does that mean anything to the family or to your father?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Oh great guy. C. B. Wilson was wonderful. A little-known story: You know that the old entrance to the Gilcrease Museum had the Woody Crumbo Peyote Bird that was over it?

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

MCH: Well, it was very well-known. It's been removed now because it's got the new entrance that comes out. I didn't know this until the last couple of years but when it came time for Dad to leave Oklahoma, and it was all of a sudden, you know, I think it came across quite suddenly, actually. Whatever contract in spirit that needed to be met between him and Thomas Gilcrease was met and accomplished. You can point to 150, 160, 170 pieces and say, "Well, you know, that was part of it, but it's just part of it, you know." There was an exchange of energies, heart, life, maybe just some time for a couple of guys to walk together for a while through life and draw inspiration from. But when it was accomplished, I think it happened quite fast and he needed to go.

JE: Happened quite fast?

MCH: It was accomplished for that.

JE: The leaving, the leaving.

MCH: It was accomplished.

JE: He just knew it?

MCH: Yes. The time was accomplished. You know, a lot of the time things are completed or accomplished and we know what the schedule is, and a lot of times we don't. Or a lot of times we know and take it on out because we have a reason for taking it on out. Anyway, I think it happened quite fast.

JE: Your father and Thomas, were they close?

MCH: They were tight.

JE: They were tight?

MCH: Yeah.

JE: So when you talked about that quick exit from Gilcrease, that came about not because Thomas wanted him to go?

MCH: No I don't think there was any quarrel at all. No, no, no it was simply a personal schedule with Dad. He wasn't going to stay there the rest of his life and produce.

JE: Right.

MCH: Everyone knows that. Artist in residence is there for a while and it has the timetable, it

- does, because no one can be expected to stay in that position and perform it for long. I mean, a year? Two years? Six months? You know, whatever you want to call it.
- JE:** Yeah.
- MCH:** Yeah. They didn't have a timetable set for it so it revealed itself.
- JE:** It may have been amazing it lasted three years.
- MCH:** Exactly. So he was working on that big Peyote Bird over the entrance and he had it all roughed in and all that. And he left and C. B. came in and finished it. C. B. painted it.
- JE:** Oh, your father started it?
- MCH:** Yes. And he had the small painting that he was doing it from, which is in their collection. And he had it all going up there and it was one of those things, you know, when Dad was moving in response to spirit he didn't answer to anyone.
- JE:** But then Charles Banks Wilson came to finish it, and did he do a good job?
- MCH:** Oh superb, he's a great artist.
- JE:** Yeah. I interviewed him.
- MCH:** Oh okay.
- JE:** And he's heard here on the website as well.
- MCH:** Oh right.
- JE:** I found him a very enjoyable—
- MCH:** Um-hmm (affirmative). Lovely.
- JE:** And loved his red socks. And he had, should I say, almost a sarcasm to him that was very fun and appealing.
- MCH:** It was, it was fresh.
- JE:** Yeah. I went to his home in Arkansas and interviewed him there—
- MCH:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** And he was a delight.

Chapter 21 - 9:10

Removal

John Erling: You know, your journey as a Native American is different than some of these who have been actually tried to be moved. Like I interviewed Wilma Mankiller, and she talked about the Cherokees and the removal. She was removed to San Francisco and they thought they were just going to take the culture of the Indians away from them. You were able to escape that removal of the Potawatomis?

Minisa Crumbo Halsey: Oh no, oh no.

JE: Okay.

MCH: It's all there.

JE: So they too were in on that removal. But you, your personal life, wasn't affected by it—

MCH: Oh it is.

JE: Okay, tell me then.

MCH: Well, all the way through, all the way through. And it's a continuing story. I'm not an activist, I had a look at that. I found that I was a person that—a peace chief group, I've come from the peace chief camp, I've found. So I don't talk about that very much. I only touched on it a little bit with Shalako because it was part of Dad's things. I'm a forward looker, a present looker and a forward looker to spirit. Mind, heart, and body are a rough road and I like to walk the spirit path. Potawatomi were removed from the Great Lakes area. It's a rougher story than the Cherokees, in a way, they're all rough. And, of course, the Creeks were removed at the same time the Cherokees were. But the Potawatomi were removed and they went to a place in Iowa called the Bluffs area first, some there. Sent some down to Mayetta area and Prairie Band was settled. Ultimately in Kansas, north of Topeka, but they were shunted around for a little bit. Osawatomie, a couple of other places. Dang it was hard to take care of us. And get us gone and out of the way and all that and have it work, dang. You know how to do this, and we didn't cooperate and it didn't work and all that. And then, the Kansas Band, there was a lot of intermarriage of people that came from Indiana and went to Kansas. And then Dad and his group came from Indiana to Oklahoma, through Kansas. So the people that had intermarried were really invited to locate in Oklahoma. Yeah.

JE: Hmm.

MCH: So we are citizen Potawatomi Band, and we took citizenship and moved out of tribal status, per se, yeah. So there was an ensuing loss of culture—

JE: Yeah.

MCH: Because you didn't have two people bringing along a culture, but you only had one, and the dominant culture usually won out. Because it was the one that went to work and had ownership and had citizenship. It's a long, old story. The removals, the thing about removals is that it creates an angst in the population that never goes away when you're off of your home land. Not relating to a place in the United States or America as a point of origin for your culture. It really can only be maybe referred back to in terms of nostalgia for Ireland or Germany or Italy, Sicily. There's a lot more of that appreciation that's coming forward now because a lot of people are finding, oh I'd say, the cult of the individual and the oppression, the European oppression that created that. Created a legacy that we are all struggling with still today. Because that oppression created a

political atmosphere where the American public largely does not want to know or be involved in the political process. And look what we have, look what we have created for ourselves. An apathetic voter public. Uninformed, one that does not want to be informed. It's not ignorant but ignorant by affinity, not even choice. Choice never came into it, it's an affinity, going way, way back to unspeakable tragedy in Europe. The majority of Americans that came had horrible histories. I think that's why we see the resurgence of culinary art schools where people are learning how to cook French, German, Spanish, Italian, English, Irish foods again. And some of the crafts and skills are coming forward that were necessary and valuable in that time. I think the cult of the individual grew up in part from the systematic theft of the tribal identity that was not so far in the past of most Europeans, the theft of it.

JE: Yeah.

MCH: It ended up creating a bit of a poverty mentality. Which is so rank. To identify with poverty instead of simplicity, what a toll that takes.

JE: Hmm. Are you concerned that the younger children, let's say of the Potawatomis, are they being taught what ancestors went through? Removal and what you just talked about? Or are they not interested?

MCH: Some are and some aren't. We nearly lost the language, like a lot of tribes, due to the boarding school experience and assimilation policies. In recent years there's been a resurgence, a vast and important and profound resurgence in learning the languages. Because when you lose the language the culture is gone. And they knew what they were doing by sending you. Because when you lose the language, you've lost it. And I mean, you've lost the line of thought and you've lost the line of connection with the Creator through ceremony, through socializing, through all the different orders. I've been happy to be a part of that process in the last number of years because I've initiated the study of Potawatomi myself. The majority of the bands are still in Wisconsin, Michigan, Canada that didn't leave. We travel back there once a year, all the bands gather and catch up on what's going on. And in the last couple of years the expansion of the language studies are phenomenal. Phenomenal. There's been a generation come in, which is the seventh generation. The prophet said when the Americas were colonized that when the seventh generation came along colonization was going to be all over. The scars of colonization would begin to fade and people would find new ways to move on. It's happened, I'm happy to say.

JE: Hmm.

MCH: The seventh generation is getting a grip. Yes! So I see a lot of the language that's being re-instituted. Now when I'm up there I see little kids walking around talking Potawatomi and their parents can't. And others have the stamp, but we're getting there, we're

working really hard. I'm studying online, at this point, with a very good teacher three days a week and alternate weeks another class. When I go to Michigan, one of the things that I notice and one of the reasons they've been able to keep what they have and to renew from that is because they were not removed. The ones of us that nearly lost it the most were the ones that were removed. So I'm happy to see the Cherokee, the Creek, you know, all the different language studies coming back. Because it's an enrichment process. And I'm so happy to see French, German, and Spanish taught in schools because there's a genetic connection that goes back to our ancestors that we deny at our peril. We can live without them but it's a little amputated. And it's not honoring.

JE: Yeah. In Potawatomi, can you say a parting greeting here?

MCH: Oh, sure. Bozho, bozho nikan. The medicine that's built into bozho nikan, which says hello, bozho is "hello," and nikan means "my bone." Which acknowledges we are the same bone. So when I say, "Bozho nikan" to you, it's a brother-sister greeting and not just hello or hi.

JE: Very nice, thank you.

MCH: Ndezhnkas boks kwe. My name is Wa Boks Kwe. It means dawn woman. Wa boks kwe, wa boks, the dawn, it's the white dawn before the light comes into the sky fully. And kwe is woman. Wa Boks Kwe. Bamah he, until we come together again. Migwesh womanni getcha migwesh, thank you. Thank you very, very much, John Erling.

JE: Thank you, that was fun. I enjoyed this very, very much. Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts.

Chapter 22 - 0:33

Conclusion

Announcer: (music) This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on VoicesofOklahoma.com.