

Parlez-vous Cherokee? Cherokee Broadcast on WUNF

by Bill Mebane
UNC-A Public Information Director

Jim Richeson has fair skin, blue eyes, and sandy, curly hair. But one of his early American ancestors was a full-blooded Cherokee Indian of the Cherokee nation, near Missouri.

That background, and a friendship with a Choctaw from Oklahoma in the army, was enough to inspire Richeson to learn the Cherokee language. That has led, in turn, to what Richeson believes is the first and only regular radio broadcast in a native American Indian language in the eastern United States.

The half-hour program is a feature of WUNF-FM, the student radio station at UNC-A, where Richeson is a full-time grounds keeper and part-time student. It is broadcast at 5:30 p.m. each Thursday at 88.1 on the FM band. Though the station's modest 10-watt power limits reception to about five miles from the campus, the station's news director, Patricia Davies, hopes to make tapes available for rebroadcast in Western North Carolina counties where a good many Cherokees live.

Richeson admits his ability as a speaker of Cherokee, learned in two courses at Western Carolina University, is "only enough to carry on a simple conversation," but that is enough to get his Cherokee guests talking, and they take it

from there.

The language itself is pleasing to the ear, soft and musical. For the great majority of other citizens who don't happen to speak Cherokee, Richeson and his guest will speak English part of the time.

Some programs will be mostly in English.

Richeson's admiration for the Cherokees reaches farther into the mists of time than his Indian ancestor.

"The Cherokee language," he said, "frames an outlook that is fundamentally spiritual, moral and ethical. For instance, the idea of the interrelation of all life, including those things inanimate in Western thought, is a constant theme.

"I believe this sense of oneness, the kinship of all existence, is important to achieving a quality of life we all want."

Richeson said he hopes his Cherokee program will communicate these values and inspire younger members of the Cherokee tribe to take their language seriously enough to learn it.

For his non-Indian listeners, Richeson said, "I hope learning a little more about Cherokee culture will help erase the stereotypes about Indians that are so fixed in our minds."



Jim Richeson on the air.

Photo by L. Pope

On his first broadcasts, Richeson has interviewed such guests from the Cherokee Reservation as Jerry Wolf, who lives near Boundary Tree, and Gee George, from Hoot Owl Cove.

Richeson's other guests will follow their lead in telling stories of Cherokee history and legend. There will be explanations of primitive technology and ways to prepare traditional Cherokee meals.

Richeson and the people operating WUNF aren't worried that they might lose a substantial part of their small audience with a half-hour of Cherokee conversation. They believe the broadcast has the fascination of the unusual.

When he's not broadcasting on WUNF or working on the campus grounds, Richeson likes to write poems on Indian themes. One was published last fall in the university poetry journal, "The Locust Post," and another in "The Rag and Bone."

Richeson has a garden where he grows Indian beans and Indian corn. He also has a four-month-old bird dog named Ujjad, which is Cherokee for corn tassel. Richeson is teaching him to sit, stand and come to Cherokee commands. The dog won't be bilingual, like his master.

"He only speaks Cherokee," said Richeson.

Student Center-Dorm Complex Cited for Completion in May '82

by Dana Murdock

The residence hall and student facility presently under construction across from the Ramsey Science Building will be the newest addition to the UNC-A campus. The completion date for the complex is set for May 1982, with the opening of the dormitories the first priority, according to Mr. Samuel J. Millar, Plant Engineer.

The cost of the new residence hall is just under \$5 million and will house 300 students in 150 double occupancy rooms, with facilities for handicapped students. Also located in the new complex will be the office of the resident manager, mail facilities, student government offices, campus security, study areas, lounges, and the campus bookstore and cafeteria. Access to the facility will be from University Heights as well as from W.T. Weaver Boulevard.

The seven floor dormitory, containing 105,000 square feet of floor space was designed by Mr. J. Bertram King, F.A.I.A. Mr. King is also credited with designing other buildings on campus, including the Carol Belk Theatre, The Charles D. Owen Art and Management Building, the Zageir Social Science Building and the Carmichael Humanities Building and Lecture Hall.

Mr. King began drawing plans for the complex in 1978. Excavation began in June 1980, by Buncombe Construction Company.

The present dormitory village may be converted into housing for married students, and the present cafeteria and bookstore located in Lipinsky Student Center may be renovated into classrooms or office space, depending on state funding.

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