

## We Didn't Just Fall off the Turnip Truck

by Vinita "Cookie" Clark

Hello, there world just riding in my turnip truck down the highway of life. This week, I want you all to remember Bessie Locklear in your prayers. She is a really good friend of mine and the oldest living great granddaughter of Henry Berry Lowrie. Over the years, she has been an inspiration to me and many others. And the only thing she doesn't know is exactly where his grave is. If she does, she won't tell anybody. Miss Bessie has been diagnosed with a weak heart and is over the age of 85. To say that she is a dedicated Christian is an understatement. I wish all of us could be as humble as her. Miss Bessie never wanted to make an issue about "what really happened to her great grandfather Henry Berry Lowrie." Her grandmother Polly who is buried at White Hill Church where it clearly states on her tombstone that she is the daughter of Henry Berry Lowrie. Polly told Bessie ever since she was a child just what happened to Henry and she had been carrying it around with her for years. We put it down word for word in our book "Our Strike at the Wind Memories." And we realize that it got some people "upset." But, I understand how Miss Bessie wanted to tell everyone the truth so that when she left this world and got to heaven that her folks would say "we are proud of you." If a person can't understand that then they just don't have a compassionate bone in their bodies. And from her point of view and her brothers and sisters they have truly been discriminated against by many and even by their own people. We need to state for the record that Henry and Rhoda has three children and their home was located between the Sandcut and the Cabinet Shop Road. Polly's mother died in childbirth and she was raised by Rhoda. We know that Henry was an older man as Polly was around the age of five the last time she saw him. Honestly, I don't know just how "twisted" the script for the outdoor drama was until Miss Bessie spoke. And I was told by a reliable source that over 300 people were interviewed about Henry. It makes me wonder "why didn't anyone have enough respect to ask these 8 great grandchildren of Henry?" Were they intimidated? Were they scared? My father told me if I ever wanted an answer to a question "to quit messing around with the little dogs and go straight to the top of the totem pole." Finally, that is exactly what I did. If his daughter Polly didn't know, "Then who did?" I know he had about 11 siblings and even a half sister. I know they had children and their children had children. This is where some of the rumors began. If these rumors hadn't started then there would have been no mystery. But, now that Miss Bessie has spoken the mystery is over. The school teacher from Pembroke who came and borrowed her Granny's Bible never to return it died several years ago. But, Miss Bessie states there was a "trick to the Bible." The events which were written in the front, the Lowrie gang was accused of and never did. And the ones in the back were the events the gang were responsible for. Which only goes to prove that "some people still don't know what they are talking about." With the drama not being held this summer perhaps those who attend

the Lumbee Homecoming will take the time to get one of our books and keep Miss Bessie's memory alive. I don't know exactly where I will be at the Lumbee Homecoming. I will have the books with me and will be honored if you will take one home with you. You will be amazed at what you read, because I was amazed when it was told to me by Miss Bessie. See you at the Lumbee Homecoming! Travel safely.

## The Way I See It

by Dr. Dean Chavers, Director of Catching the Dream

Getting fired is an unpleasant experience, and one that is humbling. But it should teach us lessons, since so many of us get fired. In Indian Country, we should have more firings than we do have. My generation, the one that went to college in the 1960s and 1970s, produced a lot of incompetent people. Our kids are much brighter than we are. I used to watch people from this generation move from place to place, lasting six months to a year in each place before they got fired again. Some of them are still doing that 30 years later. One guy I know has had over 25 jobs in the last 35 years. That may not be a record, but it is certainly a really high average. One of them was fired by one college as a financial aid counselor because he was incompetent. He went to another college in that state and got hired as the assistant director of financial aid! On his next move, he was hired as the director of financial aid at a third college!! Talk about the Peter Principle. Mess up and move up. I have been fired three times in my life. Two were minor, but one was gut-wrenching. The first time I was fired was in grammar school. I worked on the serving line serving students as they came through. For that, I got my lunch costing 15 cents free. The principal fired me one day when he saw me bring my hand up to my mouth while I was serving. No one had explained what the rules were to us. They just put us on the serving line and told us to go to work. I didn't resent being fired from that job. As I learned later in college, busing dishes is one of the nastiest jobs imaginable. I could not get the food smell off my hands after I had bused dishes for a couple of hours. Don't ask me to work in a restaurant. The next time I was fired I was 28 years old. I was driving a Yellow Cab in Oakland, going to college at UC Berkeley. Then some crazy people from Berkeley and San Francisco State decided to take over Alcatraz Island, and I went along the next day. I never went back to Yellow Cab, or to Berkeley that quarter, since I was spending all my time on Alcatraz business. A month later Yellow Cab fired me for not showing up, something I had forgotten. The third time was the killer. I had been hired to be President of Bacone College in Muskogee, OK. When I was hired, I told the board the only way I wanted to come there would be if they supported the concept of Bacone becoming a National Indian University, something we still don't have and something we still need. They agreed, and the first year I was there, my vice president, Dr. George Stroud, and I did a feasibility study on the idea. We concluded that it was feasible, but Bacone would have to grow in many ways for it to happen. The base was clearly there. With the help of Roy and Alice Spinks, a couple who spent over 50 years working at Bacone, we found that over 25% of all Indians in the U.S. with college degrees had attended Bacone. The number of tribes with graduates from Bacone was huge, over 300. So there was a presence within almost all the large tribes of Bacone alumni. We submitted the feasibility study to the board, and they approved it. I don't think there was one negative vote. But the board also said we then needed a plan to make it happen. I searched around the American Baptist world and found a

planner who had just retired in West Virginia, and talked him onto coming for a year. His name was Dr. Ervin Peter Young Simpson, and he was originally from New Zealand. Eppy, as we called him, did a magnificent job with the plan, which the board also approved the second year I was there. We were sailing along fat dumb and happy, thinking it would really happen. But I had laid the seeds of my own destruction in the meantime. When I got to Bacone in 1978, there were only four Indians on the faculty of 68 people. By the time I left in 1981, I had raised the number to 24. I hired Dr. George Ballard away from the English Department at UCLA! He was willing to come back to Bacone because he was an alumnus who loved the place. The same thing applied to Dr. George Stevens, who came in from Tennessee to head the Music Department. But the hiring of so many Indians caused a reaction from the old guard. Imagine you are a person with a Master's degree, head of the department, a non-Indian, and suddenly you have a colleague who has a doctorate. It would make you nervous, to say the least. I had no clue to some of the things that were going on, but got enough of them to be aware that a reaction was setting in. My main clue happened the third year, when the board voted to put the plans to expand from a junior college to a senior college on hold. They also voted to put the fund raising for a new Student Center on hold, even though we had most of \$1.2 million in hand already. What a disappointment! I had to return a check for \$300,000 to a Tulsa foundation. That broke my heart. I hate to give money back. I had also hired a couple of deans who were subversive. One of them was slick, and the other one was mean and nasty. He would go around the campus insulting people, and would demand that they call him with his title, "Doctor." If someone called him by his first name, he would come unglued and blast the person with venom. The slick one wanted to be president, and fed all kinds of untrue things to the Board of Directors behind my back. I thought it was very unprofessional of the board to operate this way, and still do. But they were mainly minister's wives from the Midwest. While they thought of themselves as being sophisticated, they were often anything but sophisticated. The next thing I knew, the chairman of the board called me one day and told me he thought I should resign. He told me if I did not, the board would probably fire me at the next meeting. I went along, but if I had to do it over, I would not have resigned. The board was getting all kinds of late night calls and letters from the old guard on the faculty, the kind of people who thought of themselves as missionaries trying to save the souls of the poor Indian savages. There were even at least two anonymous letters circulating, accusing me of misusing money (not true), of having affairs with women (not true), and several other slanderous things. We Indians, on the other hand, did not think of ourselves as savages or as needing to be saved by anyone. The ironic thing is that five years after I left, Bacone finally realized that they needed to go out and raise some serious money after all, and really improve the campus.

They hired one of the national fundraising firms, and raised more than their goal of \$5 million. It is also ironic that Bacone now has four bachelor's degree programs, in nursing, business, education, and computers, which were part of Eppy's original plan. And it is ironic that the enrollment has doubled. When I was there, we would have 500 to 525 students each fall. Now Bacone has over 1,000 each fall. I was told, it took me a good five years to get over being fired from Bacone. This is the first time I have ever admitted it. I did not even admit it to my wife. But I am over it now, and happily engaged in getting Indian students into the best colleges in the U.S. My heart soars like an eagle every time one of our students gets a degree in medicine, or a teaching credential, or an engineer's license, or a permit as an architect. I should probably thank Bacone for firing me.

### DOUBLE TROUBLE™ DOUBLE TROUBLE

Using letters outside of box, make words of four or more letters. Letters outside of box are first letter of word - which is formed either horizontally or vertically following letter outside of box. Each letter can only be used once, and all letters will be used.

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D	A	A	N	A	S	T	O	Y	N
F	H	C	Y	N	H	E	T	R	Y
G	D	O	R	T	O	T	I	O	N
H	B	T	L	N	E	S	I	O	E
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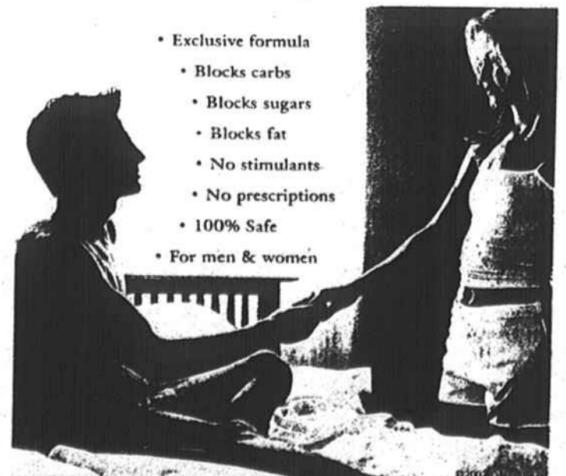
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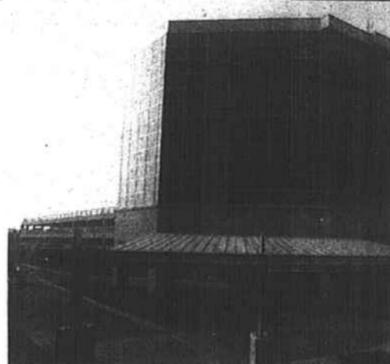
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