

DIED--At Fort Myers, Florida, on Sunday night, October 22, 1922, MRS. ANNIE WILLIE, widow of Coffee Tiger (who died some years ago) and Qsquaw" of Sammie Willie, who by the laws of the Seminoles has been separated from her for about five years, for years she has not been in good health and has made her home with her cousin Josie Billie and his family, for the past few weeks she has steadily been getting worse and contracted "Dengue Fever" a few days ago, was removed to the Lee Memorial Hospital where at about Sunday midnight she was called by the "Great Spirit" and started on the "HOPIE WAY YONDER ACROSS PRAIRIE", burial was at 10:30 Monday October 23rd at City Cemetery, Fort Myers, Florida. Funeral services were conducted by Rev. Dr. O. A. Thrower, Pastor of First Methodist Church, burial under direction of Undertaker Englehart. She leaves to mourn for her one son, Mickey, her uncle, Conapachee Billie, and family, also one sister who is the wife of Frank Billie, and a number of relatives. She was one of the "Camp of Conapachee Billie, which is one of the largest families of the remaining Seminoles."

The substance of the above appeared in the Fort Myers Press of October 23rd and special mention was made of the fact that here is one of the few if not the only instance of a Seminole Indian being buried in "the white mans Burying Ground, and by white people and with Christian services by a Minister of a Christian Church; among those who attended the services were Josie Billie (a first cousin of the deceased and one of the "Council" of the remaining Seminoles, his squaw and family), her brother Girtman Billie and Ingraham Charlie, a well known Fort Myers Indian, James E. Hendry Jr. (whose uncle educated in Fort Myers many years ago Conapachee Billie uncle of the deceased), Mr. and Mrs. O. C. Boseman, Captain J. F. Jaudon, Samuel H. Thompson and the late F. E. Harrison.

A reporter for the _____ noticing Captain Jaudon among those present and knowing that he was familiar with the customs and tribal rites of the Seminoles asked him for an interview on this subject, which will no doubt be of interest to the readers of the _____; Captain Jaudon said that the funeral rites of the Seminoles as observed by them in their camps and villages and the customs or observations of a death and the meaning and interpretation of "Death" to the Seminoles are so sacred to them that he hesitates in giving same to the press, but after securing the consent of Joe Billie that same be published, said in substance:

"The "Great Spirit" sends "Big Sleep" to the Seminole, and he she starts on "Hopie" "Way yonder beyond across prairie", immediately after death the body is prepared for burial, and the corpse dressed in his or her best, in the instance of a woman as in this case, all her personal belongings at the place of death are gathered together (a Seminole "individually owns", they own nothing in "common") every ring (and all Seminole women have magnificent rings, most of them beaten out by hand by her sweetheart, if unmarried, and her husband, brother, or father, from silver dollars, half dollars, quarters, and sometimes dimes, gold pieces are often shaped into fine rings and there is hardly any Seminole woman but that has a half dozen or more handsome and valuable rings, these are placed on her fingers just as she wore them, and all her beads are strung around her neck or laid in a neat heap on top of each shoulder, in fact, each and every thing owned by the dead is placed either on them or around them, and in a neat bundle is placed "three days rations" or "Buckeba" to last them on the journey to "Happy Hunting Grounds", their custom is to select a place near some favorite locality of the dead, to lay the body on top the ground, and build a house or enclosure around the body about five feet wide and a little longer than the body, this enclosure is made of logs and large timbers and on top of some is laid the remaining personal belongings of the dead, lanterns, tent, beddings, farming, implements, household goods, in fact, everything of a portable nature, in the instance of the dead owning a canoe, wagon, or boat the Seminoles never fall heir to such but it is left to decay and go back to mother earth just as the dead left it, many times one sees in the woods or on the streams and creeks such articles as above and you ask a Seminole "who canoe belong to", they answer "think so (such or such Indian giving name) gone Big Sleep. Any animals left such as horses, cows, hogs, dogs, are always left to the wife, if a married man, if not, to the oldest male relation. If the dead owned a camp or house, immediately after death it is again, thus in going in the woods many times with Indians you come to a deserted Indian village or house of thatched palmetto, you ask, "who owns um house" if they know (and most often they don't as these deserted houses stand for many years, sometimes beyond the average life of man), they say, "Think so (giving name of some dead

Indian or such village) his house".

Whenever a Seminole Indians tells you "think so" you can rest assured he is telling the truth, but if they say, "don't know, you can also rest assured that they really don't know.

"About three days after "go into Big Sleep" the dead rises, takes up their pack, and such things as he, the "Great Spirit tells them they will need, and start on "Hopie to "Happy Hunting Ground", "pretty soon he or she (if a child or baby they immediately after death go to their "Papa or Mamma") come to big river, Indian must swim um, or walk across on slippery log; if have been bad Indian big Alligator sure catch um and end um up but if good Indian they make the passage safely to the other shore", and take up walk on "High Mountain to top" and on this walk "Great Big Bird" tries to catch and eat or fly away with Indian and does so if Indian has not been good (NOTE: Alligator gets them if they have been bad, and Big Bird gets them if they have not been GOOD), but if Indian has not been "BAD" and has been "GOOD" they "Make um safe to Happy Hunting Ground" where they meet and mingle with those who have "beat them there" and then they "Live For-ever and for-ever" - "All Time".

About four weeks after an Indian has died all the relative or friends visit the "Grave" and deposit any belongings that may have been impossible to get at the time of burial, they then offer up "talk to Great Spirit" and invariably they weep and mourn in this ceremony for three days, and they see "big smoke", they think they can hear him or her shout, and they say he has "hyephused" to "Happy Hunting Ground". The relatives and friends never again visit the burial place.

If the deceased leaves a widow she upon hearing of the death of her husband takes down her hair and does not again braid or arrange it on their head, as is their custom, for one year, she also removes all rings, beads, and any gaudy trinkets, and arrays herself in a black dress, and for a whole year following the death of her husband she is thus dressed; in the instance of the wife dying and leaving a husband, he immediately changes his dress to more somber hues, and as soon as the body of his wife is buried he isolates himself from all the people in the world and does not look into the face of a living soul for a period of four months, unless from illness he must visit a camp for food.

Ceremonies are again held for the dead at the annual "Green Corn Dance", which is had at some central place in "The Big Cypress" and a like ceremony is held by the Seminoles living in the Kissimmee Valley

the tribal laws, punishments are inflicted, marriages are consummated and celebrated, and the Council passes judgement on all the acts of commission or omission, that may have transpired since the last Green Corn Dance, The Big Cypress, and the Cow Creek ceremonials are held on different dates so that one of the Council of each can attend (or officiate) the ceremonial of the other---and "But" -- Hold on, said Captain Jaudon, I was to only to tell you of the burial ceremonies of this fast disappearing race of First Families of America, a Race that holds the virtue of their women above all other things, who punishes severely for lying, and more severely for stealing, and a race that never begs, and protects and cares of any of their race or Tribe until The Great Spirit calls them to The Happy Hunting Ground."

Captain Jaudon said that Captain George W. Storter of Everglades Florida, enumerated a great deal of the above to him while they were making a fifty miles "Hike" from Flag Landing in Southern Lee County to Miami in July of last year, and that this article has been read by Josie Billie and is approved for publication. There are a number of Seminoles that read, write and speak English very well indeed, among them Josie Billie, Comapachee Billie, Willie Willie, Tony Tommie and Charlie Tiger-tail.

Josie Billie say that "in about four week family and friends will go visit grave of Annie Willie and "maybe so" take um up and carry her her body to "The Big Cypress".
