

## STORY OF OSKAY DE NO TAH "The Flying Fighter"

A noted Tonto Apache Indian Scout who rendered splendid service for our government during the Indian troubles between the years 1873 and 1884, inclusive, and served one year after that in the San Carlos Indian Police force.

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I was enlisted as one of twenty Indian Scouts at Camp Verde in 1873 by General Crook, who came from Prescott for that purpose. Previous to this I had been a renegade and a broncho, but after this enlistment I kept faith with the government in every way. At that time the San Carlos Reservation was being established, with Camp San Carlos as headquarters, and a big drive was on in an attempt to put and keep the Tontos, my people, the Mojaves and the Yumas on the reserve.

Previous to this time these Indians had roamed and raided wherever they pleased, and they resisted removal as long as possible.

Al Sieber was our Chief of Scouts, and Captain Chaffee, Sixth Cavalry, was in command of the post at Camp Verde.

Captain Chaffee and his "Gray Horse Troop" were famous, and Chaffee afterwards became a general in the Spanish-American War.

Of the twenty scouts enlisted, nearly sixty years ago, only two besides myself are living now—HOSKA-ETAH-CZE, ("Always standing by a fighter"), living at Gisela, and TE-PAY-NA-GA, (Carrying the sheep), now blind, living in Pleasant Valley. We were constantly in the field rounding up small bands and killing many.

Chief Del-Shay and his band of Tontos who lived in the beautiful Del-Shay Basin, a nook in the Sierra Anchas, fought us to a finish until practically every warrior and many of their women were killed. While fighting Del-Shay, Sieber discovered and located some promising gold claims in this basin which he held and worked until his death in 1907. Across Tonto Creek, on the Four Peaks side, in what is known as the MADAZEL Mountains, Charley Pan with a large band of Tontos surrendered after we had repeatedly jumped them, killing a

number each time. We were soon reinforced by forty more scouts, recruited from all tribes at San Carlos, and with the aid of these, as well as occasional companies of infantry and an occasional troop of cavalry, we rapidly swept up the country of the hostiles. All scouting those days and up into 1887 was done on foot, and on one occasion in the spring of '74 we jumped a band, killing twenty, capturing none. In retaliation they killed one of our scouts, Rock Squirrel, (or Thazza-CUZZY), and wounded another. We then went after them again, killing thirty men, women and children, and soon after captured two squaws who said they were the only surviving members of this band. Shortly afterwards we were sent into the hills after a troublesome band of Tontos who scattered like quail into ones and twos when pursued, and after a long hard chase we succeeded in capturing two, a buck and a squaw. About that time Captain Townsend rode out and ordered our outfit, under Chief of Scouts Sieber, back into the post with instructions to let the prisoners ride. As we had a march of forty miles to make, without a drop of water enroute, it rather peevd the outfit to have to walk and at the same time furnish a ride for our prisoners, but orders were orders, so Sieber went to Chief Packer, Long Jim Cook, and told him to furnish a mount for the prisoners from among his pack mules. Cook being full of devilment told Sieber to bring his two prisoners, and choosing a wild young Missouri mule, the prisoners were well rolled in heavy canvass to protect them from the pack ropes and were placed up on the mule, one on either side; the ropes were tightened, and when all was in readiness, Cook jerked the blind from the pack mule's eyes and with a loud yell slapped the mule over the tail with his sombrero. The mule, terrified by its strange surroundings, the smell of the Indians and their grunts, started away on the dead run. No particular attention was paid to this as it was always customary for pack mules to return to the train, but this mule was the exception; it did not return, and after waiting a reasonable time Sieber sent some trailers out after it. They returned and reported that it was continuing directly away from them at a high rate of speed and was in a very rough country. As I said before, the scout detachment was obliged to march over a forty-mile waterless desert waste, and they had no time for further search and turned toward camp all feeling bad over what was intended as a harmless prank. Neither the mule nor Indians were ever heard of again and it is presumed that the mule in its mad flight fell or jumped over some precipice with its living load.

Soon afterward we were marched a long way past Prescott to the Colorado River, and Captain Chaffee with his gray horse troop and Al Sieber were along. On reaching the Colorado River we were all loaded on a steamer and taken a long way down stream and finally unloaded on the California side. Sieber told us that the CHEMEHUEVI Indians had killed some white men, and while we had brought the troop of cavalry along it would be useless in that arid country and he hoped to get the Indians by strategy. An Apache-Mojave runner was found and sent to their camp, a hard three-day trip, with a message to their chief to send in the guilty men. On the sixth day this runner returned with a curt reply of "Come and get us" from the chief.

Another courier was immediately sent with a little stronger message, and on the following sixth day he returned with practically the same reply. Two more runners were used, the last one carrying an ultimatum that unless the chief brought in the murderers the whole tribe would be considered as murderers and treated accordingly. This had the desired effect for on the sixth day after the message was dispatched the chief appeared in our camp with the three guilty men. These three Indians were turned over to the California authorities and Chaffee's troop and we scouts were again loaded on the steamer, taken up stream, unloaded and marched back to Verde. We were soon returned to San Carlos and mustered out, most of us re-enlisting in a company of forty more scouts which Sieber marched back to Verde.

Shortly after this enlistment the Battle of the CIBICU took place wherein Captain Hentig, Sixth Cavalry, and about seven of his troopers were killed. This was in the summer of 1881. This trouble was caused by a "Messiah" or Medicine Man who was going to recall the dead and expel the whites. In this engagement Indian Scouts joined the fray against the troops and three of them were hung at Ft. Grant, and others imprisoned for their mutiny. We made a rapid march from the Verde to the scene of this trouble but a company of Wallapai Scouts was there ahead of us. We scouted around that locality for seven days, but the Indians had scattered in all directions in small bands, one band going down Upper Cherry Creek where they attacked the Middleton ranch, killing two men, Turner and Moody. During our scouting around there we captured a troop pack mule fully loaded with thousands of rounds of rifle ammunition. Had this fallen into the hands of the hostiles it would have cost many white lives.

In this Cibicu fight the cause of all of the trouble, the medicine man, was killed by a cavalryman at the opening of hostilities. Word came to us that the Chiricahua Apaches, under their war chiefs, Geronimo, Chihuahua and Natches, had again gone on the war-path; Chief of Scouts Sterling had been killed at San Carlos, together with his trusty Scout Sagotel. Up thru the Gila Bonita they went, killing ten or eleven Mexicans there. Near Morenci, six Americans were killed. We trailed them down to near Solomonville, and on an upward swing to near Ft. Bayard, New Mexico, where we were joined by a troop of Cavalry, then farther north where we came to the Gila River in flood, where all of the scouts and the pack-mules were crossed by a wire tramway. Then on to a railroad station where Scouts and pack-mules were loaded on cars and taken to El Paso, where we camped ten days awaiting orders. We were then ordered to Deming by train where our party, consisting of one troop of Cavalry, forty Indian Scouts, forty pack-mules, eight packers and our Chief of Scouts Al Sieber, crossed the International line into Mexico. We passed a point where American soldiers had recently fought the hostiles, and we camped for two days near the Mexican town of Bavispe, then scouted down the canyon a few miles and over the range to a point known to the scouts as Oyata, then scouted for ten days thru a wilderness without finding any sign of the hostiles. We returned to Oyata near which town some Mexican wood choppers fired on us killing one of our White Mountain scouts.

From Oyata we went to a point directly across from where Douglas now stands, and we found a lot of our soldiers and learned that the hostiles had passed along the night before, but a heavy rain had totally obliterated their trail. The next day we came to where eight head of cattle had been killed by the hostiles whom we were able to see thru our field glasses.

The notorious Chief Chatto, who was so often a renegade himself, was then one of our leading scouts and, choosing five Indians to accompany him, crept around the hostiles, opened fire on them driving them down our way where we killed three of their number. In this melee one of Chatto's Scouts was wounded in the arm. From this point we trailed the band into the Sierra Madre Mountains, where another bunch of us, under Chief By-lass, engaged them, killing at least one whose body we found. At this point the hostiles scattered, and leaving the main body of the command and taking only five pack mules loaded with flour we went on until we came to a big river at

the foot of the Sierra Madres. Finding no Indian sign there we crossed the stream, and after scouting several days without results we made camp and shot a beef.

Without knowing it we were in the immediate vicinity of the hostiles, who had killed nine head of cattle a few days before and were in camp resting up. On hearing our shots they abandoned camp and fled to the high points leaving everything behind. We trailed them and found they had only one horse, which they killed the next day, and then they scattered.

Returning to the camp where we had left our main command, we found that the Mexican soldiers had captured it, throwing the lieutenant, first sergeant, six scouts and four packers in jail, but they were all released on our demand. We then went back to where we had left the trail of the hostiles and found that they had killed some Mexican sheepherders.

The next day we came to the canyon in which Chief Victoria and his band had been ambushed and destroyed by Mexican soldiers some time before.

Shortly afterward we came to a boiling spring.

During the latter part of this trip we had been short of food, and as our pack mules were getting very weak and emaciated by the hard service they had been put to, we were obliged to abandon them all here and go on without them. Our shoes and clothes were worn out as well. We headed for El Paso and were obliged to hike for two days before reaching that point, during which hike we were entirely without food. Sam Hill, an old prospector now living at Payson, Arizona, was one of our packers on this trip.

Reaching El Paso nearly starved we were given rations and a five day's rest, and then entrained for Ft. Bowie. From Ft. Bowie we went to San Carlos where I was mustered out, and then I joined and served on the San Carlos Agency Police force for one year.

When my year as a policeman was up Al Sieber tried to get me to re-enlist as a scout, but I felt that I had done my duty and I wanted a rest; besides, I now had five wives to manage, which was a man's job.

During my twelve enlistments as an Indian scout I have served the United States faithfully and have actually killed eight renegades and wounded many more. Now that I am old,

feeble and dependent I ask the government to give me the pension I was promised and have so well earned.

(signed) Oskay-de-notah,  
(The flying fighter)

Oct. 8, 1926.

(Told to and translated by Dan R. Williamson, now state historian. Judge Williamson was an employe of the government continuously from 1888 to 1894, and has a good working knowledge of the Apache language.)