HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mrs. Osecap, granddaughter of Chief Strike-Him-on-the-Back, was born in 1881 and died in April 1975. She has brought up six children and lived in various reserves in Saskatchewan (For complete biography, see p.2).
- Story of an evil spirit that visited her reserve just before an epidemic in which many people died.
- Describes early farming techniques.
- Sale of their reserve and subsequent moves to Sweet Grass Reserve and then to Moosomin Reserve at Jackfish Lake.

BIOGRAPHY OF MARIE OSECAP

Born on Strike-Him-On-The-Back Reserve in April 1881, Marie is the granddaughter of Chief Strike-Him-On-The-Back. Her mother, Sun Woman, being the daughter of the chief. Her father Mus-In-As (Stripe) is sometimes talked about by old Indian people, and the part he played in the Frog Lake incident of 1885.
In the fall or early winter of 1884, Chief Strike-Him-On-The-Back died, and the following spring his band moved a few miles southeast to Sweet Grass Reserve. Here, Marie grew to a big girl and she attended classes for several years at the Catholic day school. John Pritchard was her teacher.

At an early age she moved to still another reserve called Little Sweetgrass where she married Big Thunder, but Big Thunder died soon after, and Marie moved back to the home of her parents.

About the year 1906 she married Josie Osecap and they lived on the Moosomin Reserve, between the Battle and Saskatchewan rivers. They did not live here for long as the Moosomin people sold their reserve in 1909. The people moved to a new reserve near Jackfish Lake, but not the Osecaps. They moved to Sweet Grass.

For two years they remained, but not being members of the Sweet Grass band, the Indian agent would give them no help or provisions. He advised them to move to Jackfish where they would receive help when sick or in need. Also they could collect their share of money from the sale of their reserve.

In 1911 they moved and they lived for many years on the Moosomin Reserve near Jackfish Lake. They raised a family of four girls, three of whom are still living in 1975, and two boys both living at Moosomin Reserve. When Josie Osecap died in 1971, he was said to be one hundred years old.

On April the third, Marie died quietly at the North Battleford Indian Hospital at the age of ninety-four or very close to it. Both are buried in the Catholic cemetery at Moosomin Reserve.

A STRANGE STORY
by Marie Osecap

One time, when Marie's grandmother was alive, she was left to babysit a lot of children. Marie was very young at the time and so was OO-PA-CHAS-KEN. As the other children played around in the log house, Marie and OO-PA-CHAS-KEN were standing by the window looking out and they saw someone coming. Marie said to her grandmother, "The school teacher is here to visit, again!"

"But," I said to my grandmother who was the widow of Chief Strike-Him-On-The-Back (her name was PEE-SIM-OH-SQUWAYO, meaning Sun Woman), "The teacher must have dropped something and is looking for it because his lantern is hung on the fence. Come, grandma, and see for yourself!"

"Oh, stop your foolishness and come to bed," Grandma said.

After sitting away from the window for a while, I went back to see about this lantern. It was still in the same place. This was at night and we children were at home along with Grandma. Everyone else had gone to a Give-away some distance
away.

Grandma then came to the window to see for herself. "Granddaughter," she exclaimed in surprise, "that is not a lantern and there is nobody there."

She asked me to wake up a young lad who was spending the night with us. She said to the boy, "Run across the way and tell the teacher about this strange fire hanging on the fence, and tell the priest too."

The boy ran to the teacher's house and he came out to see this mysterious ball of fire. The priest also came.

The other children were all scared and in bed with the covers pulled over their heads. Even the girl my age who was spending the night with me did not see this ball of fire. Years later she used to tell this story. She used to tell people she saw it. She did not see it. She did not see it; she was scared stiff in bed with the covers over her head.

I kept looking out. I was a curious girl. Then I saw them coming toward the strange fire. The teacher came first, then the lad who was my sister's son, followed by the priest. They stopped close to the strange object, then backed away again. They then came into our house.

"Something is very wrong," said the priest. "Do not let the children go outside. That ball of fire out there is an evil spirit," the priest said looking out the window. He said, "It has moved, it is now farther south on the fence."

The priest then went outside with some holy water and a hatchet. As he stooped to go under the fence, the light disappeared. In any case, he threw the holy water and the hatchet at the spot where he had last seen the evil spirit. He then came back to our house and bolted the door. As we were sitting there not saying very much, someone knocked at the door. It was my mother. We heard her say outside, "Why do these silly people bolt the door?"

Both the priest and the teacher spoke Cree.

The priest unhooked the door and mother came in. "You are a very brave woman," he told my mother. "We just saw an evil spirit and here you came walking home from the dance all alone."

After a bit of talking, the priest and the teacher made to go home and asked my nephew to go to sleep in their house.

"You go sleep over there," Grandma told the boy.

My mother said she came home early from the Give-away dance, because my baby sister kept crying and would not keep quiet. Closer to home she said she heard a noise and was very
frightened. She did not dare look up. She kept her head down looking only at the footpath in front of her feet. She thought if she looked up she might see something.

The time of which I speak there were many people on Sweet Grass. Their cabins and lodges were many and built close together. Now, today, the people of Sweet Grass are few. Some of the houses in these days had small cellars.

There were houses where there are bushes and trees today. After we had seen the evil spirit it was like the people said, "Let's go," and they died at an alarming rate. Every day someone was buried. Sometimes two, three or even four buried.

There were many old people then. They lived along the creek and at the foot of the hill and they died in numbers. So we would hear someone is sick. Almost daily someone would come to our house with news of someone's death. They got sick and died. What they died of I do not know but they died, children too.

At this time there was no such thing as wire. The fences were of wooden rails.

The people planted their crops by hand. A man would carry a bag of seed grain over his shoulder and scatter the seed by hand. There were no binders to cut the grain in the fall either. They would use a big knife on the end of a long handle. I sometimes see them in a second hand store and museums. They cut hay with them, too, and women came behind and put the hay into piles. They did this with a forked stick and they also tied the wheat. The men cut in this fashion the sheaves when dry and then threshed by hand. Then it was put in bags and hauled to Battleford to be ground into flour. There was a flour mill in Battleford at the time, about a little west of the old bridge along the river.

The Indians made a fair living in spite of their lack of tools to work with. I saw the mill in Battleford. I am old now and I have seen many things in my time. They also had a fanning mill to clean their grain.

The men were good workers in those days. All work was done by hand. My grandfather was one of the first on this reserve. His name was Strike-Him-On-The-Back.

When I got married, we lived in Moosomin for a little while between the Saskatchewan and Battle Rivers. Then we were told to move to Jackfish Lake on the north side. People started moving. There were many Saulteaux people there and they had to move too. They did not own the land and they had many houses they had to leave when they were forced to move. The Saulteaux people were mad at the Moosomin people for moving in and crowding them out but they could do nothing but leave.

Already white men were beginning to boss the Indians
The Moosomin people built their own houses further north, a place called Little Jackfish Lake. This was late in the fall. There were many fish in that little lake, mostly Sturgeon. White men used to come and they often tried to stop the Indians from fishing in this small lake but this lake is in the reserve. We did not listen to them.

A creek runs out of this small lake and into big Jackfish Lake. At a certain time of the year, this creek would be full of sturgeon and the men would wade into the creek and throw the fish on the bank for the women to catch. I know - we camped beside this creek on numerous occasions.

The Saulteaux people stayed mad at us for a long time. They kept moving further north as more Moosomin people moved in. They thought we were squatters but the land was ours. This land and money was given to us in exchange for our land between the rivers.

After the land between the rivers was sold, my husband and I stayed on Sweet Grass for two winters. But then my mother and uncle and my other relatives urged us to move to Jackfish. In doing so we would get money from the Indian Agent; our share of money for the land we sold between the river. We took their advice and so we moved to the reserve at Jackfish Lake. We stopped at the agency in Battleford for our share of the money paid to Moosomin people.

My husband bought a mower for cutting hay and a rake for raking up hay. We then left for our new home on our new reserve. We crossed the broad Saskatchewan River by steam boat. It would carry two or three teams and wagons at one crossing. We also bought a couple of horses and other useful items with the money we got for our reserve.

If we had not taken the money, I suppose we would have stayed in Sweet Grass and eventually become members of this band. If we had stayed there, we would be here today.

Of all the old timers on Sweet Grass, I am the only one living today. The rest of the old people have passed away, the ones I used to know. The children I grew up with have also passed away. My two cousins, Oo-Pay-Chas-Ikayo and Frank Knife lived to be very old. I grew up with them but they are gone now.

Many people came from the United States when I was growing up. Some came to Sweet Grass and stayed. Fineday's brother came from the States and stayed on Sweet Grass for a while. He went back to the States and died over there. He was my uncle. There were many people on Sweet Grass a long time ago but most of them have passed away.

The story I was telling you about the evil spirit that we saw, not very many people saw it. Most of the people were at the Give-away dance. My grandmother, my cousin, a boy of 11 or
12, a priest, the teacher and myself saw the evil spirit. The others of the house did not dare get out of bed. They were too frightened. I suppose this evil spirit we saw that night had something to do with all the people who died soon after. Almost every single night my folks would attend a wake for someone who had died. They also went to many funerals almost daily.

West of where we lived, halfway up the hill, there is a kind of a hill. On this hill were many houses. One I remember was a very long house. There was a root cellar there, too. It was very big. The people used it for storing vegetables. They would put them there in the fall and take them out in the spring. In the fall, they kept what they needed for the winter in a cellar under their own houses.

A few years ago, while picking berries, we went to see this old root cellar. There is a hole there but it is overgrown with trees and weeds. If I were there today, I would still be able to find this old root cellar. It took lots of vegetables to feed so many people, but they sometimes died two or three in one day.

There were no coffins so the Indians were buried in a favorite shawl or blanket. The Indians did not even have nails, let alone lumber to make a coffin.

There was a cemetery west of the agency house. That is where they were buried. Some are not visible because the trees and bushes have grown there. It is on the north side of the creek up the hill a little ways. We lived along the creek below the cemetery in a house my father had built for us.

(The tape ran out but Marie added this:)

The priest would come to bury the dead, it must have kept him very busy. The priest also drew a picture of the evil spirit. Afterwards he would show this drawing to the people. I saw it a number of times. It had a big ear leaning forward like that of a cow and curved horns. It also had eyes, nose and a mouth without lips and very long teeth. It also had scales across its chest.

I think if someone would look around and ask about this picture, it could be found. The priest who drew it must have kept it.

(END OF SIDE A)

(END OF TAPE)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEX TERM</th>
<th>IH NUMBER</th>
<th>DOC NAME</th>
<th>DISC #</th>
<th>PAGE #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGRICULTURE</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-equipment</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGRICULTURE</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-farming</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEATH</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-burial</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISEASE AND ILLNESS</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-epidemics</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(unspecified)</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FISHING</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-techniques</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOD</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESERVES</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sale of</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIRITS</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3,4,6,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-evil</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3,4,6,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STORIES AND STORYTELLING (GENERAL)</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3,4,6,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-omens, warnings</td>
<td>IH-066</td>
<td>MARIE OSECAP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3,4,6,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>