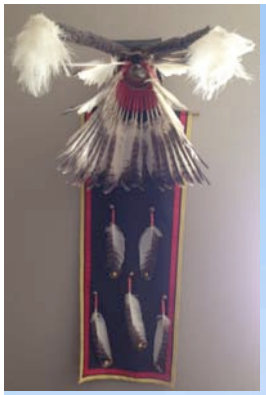


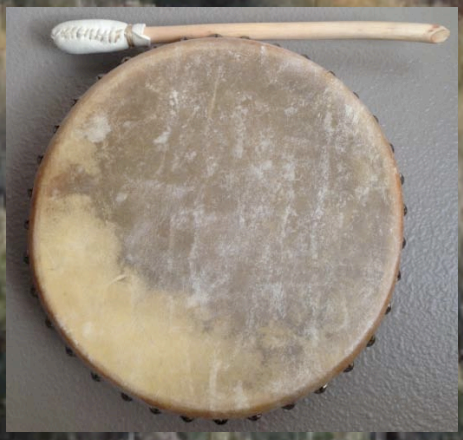
Andrea Woods

Great Basin Indian Archive

GBIA 008

Oral History Interview by

Norm Cavanaugh
June 20, 2006
Elko, NV



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GBIA 008
Interviewee: Andrea Woods
Interviewer: Norm Cavanaugh
Date: June 20, 2006

W: My name is Andrea Woods, maiden name Martínez. And I'm from the Wells Band of the Te-Moak Western Shoshone. And I was born and raised in Wells. My grandmother's name is Gimma Jones. And I'll start out by talking about her. She didn't read us "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" and "Little Red Riding Hood." She didn't read us nighttime stories. She told stories about her childhood, and how tough it was when she was growing up, and the Indian way. And she told us, those were bedtime stories to my brother and myself. So I'd like to tell some of the stories that she told. And my grandmother was born in Cherry Creek, Nevada, in mid-1800s. And she grew up there, and her mother died in childbirth. Her mother had twins. And my grandmother was the larger of the twins, and Indians didn't believe in twins. They thought that was a curse. So the other twin was stuffed in a badger hole. And my grandmother was raised by her grandmother, and her uncles and her grandpa. And my grandmother contracted smallpox as a child. Her grandmother didn't get smallpox, but she lived through the smallpox epidemic that hit all the Indians in Cherry Creek, and killed off a lot of them. And she had a pock-marked face, and she said the only thing that kept her going was her grandmother kept giving her salt water. And she said that she came through that and everything. And she only went to first grade, and learned how to count to ten and do her alphabet. And when she was playing with the white kids in Cherry Creek—her name was **Mynah Mike**—and her grandmother would call her. "*Kimma*!" So all the white kids thought that was her name. So she got to be called "Gimma." So she just kept that name Gimma. So, when she was twelve years old, and her grandmother's getting old, and everybody's getting old, she was sold. And so, they could get food and horses and other

things for her being sold. So she was sold. And then she said she started having her children at thirteen. And she had one daughter, and she had two more, a boy and a girl, but they died when they were young. And they died from measles. And chickenpox. And she didn't talk much about those two children. But then she would talk about when she was really young. When she was growing up with her grandma. She used to tell us stories about that. Because she didn't like to talk about the hard times right there, with the two deaths of her two children. So she would tell us stories like, in the wintertime the Indians migrated south. They migrated down to Las Vegas, Ash Springs, and the Meadows. Down there. And stayed the winter. Then, when it started getting spring, they would migrate up the eastern part of the state, and fish at the Ruby marshes. Get the fish, dry it, come on up, stop in Clover. Camp there, and keep on going up. And then they'd fish at Little Salmon, above Wells, at Contact. And then cross over and go over to Yellowstone. She said, where there was hot, bubbling water. Then they would trade their dried fish for buffalo. So I was talking to Jeff Mackey at the wildlife refuge, and he was wondering how come buffalo bones got into Ruby Valley when buffalo weren't of this area. So I told him the story, and he says, "Okay, now I know where the buffalo bones come. It's because the Indians bartered fish for buffalo meat." My grandmother said that, in that migration, she wore out a whole pair of moccasins. And then she'd get new ones when they got up to Yellowstone. And then wear them out by the time she got back down to Ash Springs. And then, when she was sold at 12, then she settled in Ruby Valley. And she was in Ruby Valley for a while. And she had hard times out there, and didn't like her spouse. So she left him, and went to Wells. And when she came to Wells, she was 14 years old. And they were building the railroad. And she said that she went to work for the

Chinese laundry. And she had a baby—she could keep a baby with her, and do the laundry and work. And she says, back then, Chinese and Indian were considered dirt. So, she worked with the Chinamen and learned how to do laundry, and press everything with creases, and make everything nice and pretty. And she lived in a little tent. And it was hard for her and stuff. And then she met my grandpa, Timothy Jones, who was from Contact. And he was Shoshone. And they got together, and then she had children with him. And he was a government trapper. And he went all over northeastern Nevada, trapping and getting hides and pelts and different things, and he'd sell them. And then, him and her started working on ranches. And he was cowboying, and she was cooking. And she learned how to be a *very*, very fancy cook. And learned how to set the table beautiful—she could set the table beautiful. And as I was growing up, we had to have the table set just so. We had to have our manners. We had to sit up straight. We weren't allowed to slurp, or—and, you know, she was really high on her manners, because that's the way she was taught working for these different ranchers. She could sew, bead, crochet, knit; she did all those. She learned how to do all those. And she was an excellent seamstress. She could take and measure you. Go like this with her fingers. And she could make—she made me clothes as a child. And she learned tatting. She put fancy collars on my little blouses, made my skirts, and made beautiful quilts. And all of her beading, and her moccasins, and her gloves, she would give them as Christmas gifts. And then she would—it took her a long time to make all her hides, because she cured her own hides. And I can remember going out and changing the water, which I did not like to do because it's not very—I don't know, it smells very *awful*. [Laughter] And so, she, it'd take her about six weeks to do the hides. Because she kept four hides going. And she cured them

and hung them out to dry, and then come back in and worked them, and made them nice and soft and fluffy like flannel. Then she would take and send you down to the local grocery store to go get tomato crates for the nice, soft wood. And then she'd make her kindling bucket, and tan the hides, and they were beautiful. Just the most beautiful color. And then she would cut them up and make her gloves, moccasins, and vests, and jackets. Bead them. She did beautiful work. And then, like, if she liked somebody, she would make them a nice purse. And totally cover it in beads. So, she always did a lot of handiwork that way. And, then she—at nighttime, when she'd tell us kids stories—we'd say, "Tell us a story, grandma!" And she'd say, "Okay." And then she told us all about her travels. And what it was like going with grandpa. Going out trapping, setting the traplines and getting the traps, and getting the pelts, working on them, stretching them. And camping out all the time, cooking over open campfires. And she says—I said, "What'd you do when you were going to have a baby?" She said, "I rode a horse all the time I was pregnant." She says, "I had your Aunt Ida out in the horsefield, north of Wells." I says, "Wasn't that hard?" She says, "Huh. I had my baby by myself."

C: What did her husband trap for, mainly? What type of animals?

W: Well, he got beaver, otter, and he went and got coyote pelts, because coyote pelts were used for lining the gloves. And then he got a lot of rabbits, because they were shipping them back east for the Easterners, for their coats and their gloves and their lining and all this stuff. He was getting anything and everything. He went all over. And then, Gram said that he made friends with this rancher, and the rancher sent back East for him to get two greyhounds. So he taught these two greyhounds to chase down the coyotes. And he'd chase down the coyotes, and then he'd get the coyotes. So, he could get them. And my

grandmother says that when we were going up towards Twin, up by the Little Salmon, she says, "We camped over here." And "We camped over there. And we had to camp here for a long time." And I says, "Wasn't it hard?" She says, "No. I had my dutch ovens, and I had my pots and pans, and I had my stuff." And I said, "Did you eat some of the rabbits? And kept the pelts?" And she says, "Of course!" And she said, "We went fishing all the time." Then she started having more children, carting the kids around with her, and then she said that Grandpa finally bought some property. He bought a subsection up there in Metropolis. So they were living up there, in Metropolis, up in Indian Hollow, which they call it now. On the Peavey Ranch, which my sister owns now. The property went from Grandpa, to the white man, back in the family again.

C: About what year was that, would you say?

W: Uh, turn of the century. Probably 19—it's turn of the century. And then Auntie Ruthie, who died last year, was 95. She was born up in Indian Hollow. So, it was turn of the century when Grandma's doing all this. And Gram and Grandpa had a hard time up there at Indian Hollow, because this white man wanted to have the property and didn't think an Indian should have the property. Burned them out quite a few times. Until Grandpa got a lawyer, and fought him in court. And won. And he got his property. So then when Grandpa died, Gram didn't have the money, so she sold the property and moved into town. But Grandpa'd already bought the property in town, and moved a house from the old Metropolis into town for Gram to live in.

C: So that old property, how large was it? Did he do farming, or…?

W: Yeah, they were going to have small ranch. They had a subsection, I think they had 160 acres. And so, yeah. So, now the property's back in the family again. And Gram said,

after Grandpa died, it was hard for her and the girls. They did cleaning houses and washing and doing anything and everything. Doing sewing for people, taking in ironing, anything they could do. Working motels, washing dishes. Everything was hard. And she said, during the Depression, she said there was, they got gas cards. So, they all got gas cards. And they all had one little car. Because Grandpa had a car. And then, they said that they did pretty good during the Depression, because they were working for the rich people, and they ate good. Whatever the rich people didn't want, they took. Gram remade the dresses over, altered them or whatever she had to do to make them look nice. My grandmother could take an old suit jacket and make a quilt out of it. I mean, she was very, very resourceful. And she still kept up her buckskin, and her beading, and everything art. In between all the working and doing—and then she had her victory garden. She had her own garden. So she grew her own vegetables and stuff. Then, when I was a little kid, I go, "How come we don't have a garden no more?" And she says, "I'm too old. It's too hard of work. We can go to the store and get it easier." I said, "Okay." So I never questioned her victory garden.

C: When she had her garden, what type of vegetables or plants did she grow?

W: She grew radishes, and onions, and carrots, and lettuce, and zucchini. She learned how to garden from the ranch ladies, so she had a nice garden. And we always had nice, fresh green salads. And then, she used to do a lot of canning. And when the peddler would come to town, she'd buy peaches, and apples, and oranges. The oranges we got to eat, but she got the peaches, and the pears, and all the fruit, she'd can. And so we'd have a lot of canned goods for the wintertime. But my favorite was her plums. Her plums were the best.

C: Can you elaborate on the peddler? What's a peddler?

W: It's some farmer that would come down out of Idaho and have a truckload of peaches, or apples, or stuff, and they'd sell them alongside the roadside. And he knew that my grandmother bought all this stuff, so he'd stop by. And say, "Here comes the peddler, now. We got to get some peaches, or apples, or whatever he has." So. And our grandmother raised chickens and sold the eggs down to the local grocery store, **Crowliss's**. We'd have to wash them and make them nice and clean and take them down, and she'd sell the eggs to him. And then… she worked her whole life really hard, and did all kind of things that people wouldn't even think of doing now.

When my grandmother was little, and when they traveled back and forth up the east side of the state of Nevada, she said they used to just play games, and frolic around, and chase each other, and—I don't know who she was playing with. I guess her cousins. She didn't ever say anything, if she had any brothers or sisters. And they would just play, and she had her own little cradleboard, and her baby doll. She said was made out of buckskin. She had her own baby doll, and her cradleboard. But she says when it came time for them to travel, each and every child had to do their part. And then, she says, like when they stopped to camp, the kids had to go gather wood, and when they stayed there for a long time with their tepees, the kids had to go pick sweetgrass. I guess we'd call that sheet grass now. Go pick that, and put it in between the outside layer and the inside layer. They had to stuff it down inside there for insulation. And then, like, in the summertime, they moved the flaps on the tepee so that it'd draw the air in, and then at the bottom, they would roll up the tepee so there would be circulation. And she says they did that at night so there'd be circulation, and then they'd have to put it back down when the wind would

come up, so the tepee wouldn't blow away. And she said that packing up and moving was hard work. She says everybody had to do their part. And she said she learned how to do—making jerky, drying the meat, drying the fish, scraping hides. Pulling hides with your teeth: she says after it got soft, you know, after they got done curing, she said they pulled it off their teeth to make it soft. And her teeth were wore down. Really worn down. And you could see the inside of her, the core of her teeth, because it was wore down from her working the buckskin when she was younger. And she, she said she learned a lot from her grandmother, by learning beading, and buckskin, and skinning rabbits. She'd just make four, five cuts and pull the hide off, and it was turned inside out. And then she said she had this naked carcass of the rabbit, and the little feets were still furry. She said all you do is make the four cuts, and… She showed me how to do that. I could do that at four.

C: So were the pelts of the rabbits also made into blankets?

W: Yes. I mean, if you had over 100 pelts, to make a blanket, you had a big rabbit pelt blanket, you were doing pretty good.

C: Did she ever say how the rabbit blanket was made? How the weaving was done, or how it was put together to—

W: It was put together, she said, in long strips. And then sewed together. And then it was almost, just, the little hides cut and stretched and sewed together, and then they just kept piecing them together, almost like a quilt now. But done in long strips. And she said that, with moccasins, she said they used the bucks. They used the tougher skin around the neck and the shoulders for the soles of her moccasins. She says different parts of the hide was used for different parts of the moccasins. And, like the babys' moccasins, she says, they

made of the softer part of the hide. She says, usually by the tail and stuff, they would make the moccasins for the babies.

C: And what type of animal was mainly used for the buckskin?

W: Mostly deer. And then, she said they had antelope hide, and then she said that they had—they didn't mess with the cattle. They didn't know how to work the cow hide, because that was just too stiff. And they didn't mess with cows. And she says they were, she didn't ever talk about fighting, or being mean, or anything. They just all worked together, and traveled together, and survived the elements of being out there in the weather. And then she says—they had their tepees, but then she says, when they had their little cedar wikiups when they'd get up here where there's a lot of sagebrush and the wind was high, they made them. And then she says, in the summertime, she liked her tule. Tule huts that they made.

C: And what type of, or what mode of transportation did they have, mainly?

W: Walking.

C: Did they have horses and wagon, or…?

W: No, not back, way back when. She says, from the time she was one to twelve, this is all walking. It's just nomads walking. And then, once she got with Grandpa, there was horses and a wagon. Buckboard.

C: About approximately what year would you say that was?

W: My grandmother? When she was a child, probably in 1850s-1860s. And then she elaborated on that the Union soldiers came out of Fort Ruby, and were going to Fort Hall. And on the way, they killed Indians eight miles east of Wells. They killed them up there when they were pine nutting. And then, another part of the band was up there at Bishop

Creek Reservoir, and they killed them up there, and went on to Fort Hall. So, she told about how the Union army come in and slaughtered, killed, ravished, plundered, whatever they ever did to the Indians back then. So she had no use for the Union army. And, how many kids can say their grandma cussed out Abraham Lincoln? My grandmother cussed Abraham Lincoln. She didn't think he was a good president. She didn't like the presidents that said no Indians should be east of the Mississippi. She couldn't read or nothing, but she was one of the smartest people I ever known.

C: Did she—when you said she cussed out Abraham Lincoln, did she meet him in person, or…?

W: No, she just probably heard politics and all. She says—what she said was, "He freed the black man, but what about us? What about us?" That's what she always says, "What about us?"

C: So in her time, was the Wells Colony—was that a reservation, or became a reservation, or was this way before?

W: No. Well, this was way before. There's barely even Wells. And Wells was called the town with no trees. And when she came to Wells, they were building a road. And Wells Colony didn't come until 1981. But, they had the Indian Camp, and they had squatter's rights. But that was up in 1982 or [19]83. Then they had to move off of that property. So, we're talking *way* back when. And then, my grandmother raised—they lived in a wagon for two winters. With a canvas top, and bedrolls, and huddled together trying to keep warm. My grandmother's house, we didn't have indoor plumbing, we didn't have no electricity, we had no running water. We had a pounded wood floor in the back bedroom with the linoleum over the top. And then her little house, it was warm. We had wood

stoves in the living room and in the kitchen. In wintertime, we didn't sleep in the back bedroom, because it was too cold. We set up a cot and stuff in the living room, divided the living room in half and made one part living room and the other part bedroom. And my grandmother, like I told you, she worked on the ranches. She was an excellent cook. And she did bake fancy cakes, eclairs, lady fingers, cream puffs; she could make London broil. I mean, she was a fancy cook. When I grew up, we ate good. I mean, we were poor, but my grandmother knew how to fix all these fancy foods that she learned how to cook from the ranches that she worked on. She was a good horseman, she could ride a horse like nobody's business. She could shoot a rifle.

C: What ranches did she work at, or were in existence back then, around the Wells area?

W: Oh, she worked up at the **Boyces'** ranch, north of Wells, and that's in the O'Neill, they worked up on the O'Neill ranches. And then she worked out in Starr Valley. And they worked on one out in Clover Valley, out at, I think it was the—God, I can't think of her name—Dalton Ranch, when they had her, Mrs. Dalton's parents' ranch. And Grandpa worked different ranches all around Wells. And my grandmother learned a lot from all the different ladies, and learned how to do so many different things. And churned butter, and made bread, cinnamon rolls, and she made her own icing—I mean, she learned how to do a lot. She was a good cook, good seamstress. She taught all her daughters, too. And what I remember the most about her is just making us clothes. I mean, they fit perfect. I had the cutest little blouses, and cutest little skirts. And they were made from wherever she got the material. And she wore moccasins all the time, and then when she had to go downtown, she'd put on her downtown shoes. She wore moccasins all the time at home. And she was very short. And she'd chop wood for the wood stove. We'd get a load of

coal. The man would come bring a load of coal, and then we had to put it in the coal bin for her. This is, you know, as I was a child. And we had that wood stove a-roaring all the time, and we had baking powder biscuits for breakfast, and bacon and eggs, and hash browns every morning. I mean, she fixed us a good, stout breakfast. And she always had coffee. And then we'd come home for lunchtime, we had a hot meal at lunchtime. And then we had a light dinner. She says—I said, "How come we don't eat much at dinnertime?" She says, "You don't need to go to bed with a whole bunch of food on your tummy." So. But, she was pretty versatile. She could—those just used to amaze me, some of the stuff she used to do. Beautiful beading work, was just *astounding*. Her beautiful quilts. And my one sister has one of her jackets that she made. She made my mother a driving jacket, and it has a big eagle on the back. And, beaded. She used to like beading a whole bunch of flowers. Mostly roses. She did exquisite beading. And then, in my display, I do have some of my grandmother's beading. So, I'll take you to see them.

C: Can the next—in concluding, can you maybe think of anything else that maybe you'd like to pass on in your oral history recording today that you would like people to know about your grandmother, and that you feel is really important?

W: That when she passed on, a lot of history went with her. A lot of history went with her. Because she was growing up when white man just first came to Nevada. A lot of history went with her when she passed on. And I was fifteen when she passed on. So, I got to know her better than my sisters and my brothers, because they were little. And they remember bits and pieces of her, but, by then she was old. And when she passed away, they didn't know how old she was, 85 or 105.

[End of recording]