

THE MYSTERY OF ANDERSON JONES:
ON RACISM AND FAMILY SECRETS
August 6, 2006

A Sermon By
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Reading: "Parricide," Jonesboro Gazette, Vol. 33, No. 5, P. 3, April 8, 1882 (see attached – end of sermon)

My family had a secret when I was growing up. It wasn't that my great, great, great grandfather had killed his son. I didn't even know the name Anderson Jones until a few years ago, and I didn't know that Anderson had killed his son until Dad mentioned it, sort of in passing last spring as we talked about going on this genealogy trip in Illinois and Tennessee which we were planning for June before General Assembly. Dad wanted to find the newspaper article describing it, and as you have heard, we did in all its gory detail, as they say.

But the secret that my family had was not really a secret, because we talked about it, but we didn't talk about it in a way that made sense to me. Or I was too young for it to have meaning until my own children expressed curiosity about their heritage. Why were they so dark? Why did people comment on it all the time? I'd say, well you got it from both of us, because there's supposedly Native American blood on both Curtiss' side and mine. And, I'd tell them, people said the same thing to me growing up when the summer sun would turn my skin darker than even my African American friend. You take after me, I'd say.

The secret wasn't that we had Native American blood. The secret was that my great grandmother, Leona Inscore Manker, felt so bad about it, or worried about it so much, that she wouldn't talk about it with any of her sons until, as I heard it, she was on her deathbed in 1958. Now, you know how family stories go, so my parents, when they read this (and they will because I'm sending it to them), may say, "No, no, it didn't happen that way." But this is how I remember hearing it. So, as I heard it, my great uncles and my grandfather gathered at her bedside and tried to get her to tell them about their heritage. And in the end she did. She said her mother, Emmaline Permelia Jones Inscore, was Delaware.

So, to my mind, there was this Native American blood, and it came down to me through my father giving me darker skin and dark eyes, and would have given me darker hair except my blond-haired, blue-eyed mother gave me blond locks for my first two years of life. These things I knew all my life, but the story of this ancestor, and why she would be ashamed of being Native American, I didn't understand until I was older. And what I thought I understood as an adult wasn't even close to what I understand after going on this summer trip with my parents and daughter in search of Emmaline's father, Anderson Jones.

I thought it would be cool, as long as we were going all the way to St. Louis for General Assembly, otherwise known as GA, to visit these places where my ancestors

were from, and to do it with my mother and father, who have done genealogy research and written up family stories for us, and also, to do it with my daughter, Kat, since she had to travel to GA with me anyway. We were three generations searching through the generations.

Before we left, I went up to my parents' house in Phoenix and we pored over maps while my Dad told us where his various ancestors had lived and I asked questions and heard stories I had heard before, but not really, and not in that way:

Why are we looking for Anderson Jones? I asked. "Oh, I heard from a distant relative that he'd killed his son, William, and I want to find the newspaper article about it," my Dad said.

Who was William? I asked. "Well, he made this box in prison," my dad said, holding a beautiful intricate inlaid wooden box which I'd seen all my life on the shelf because it looked like a book and had a secret latch to open it.

Why was he in prison? I asked. "Because he refused to fight against his cousins in the Civil War."

Why did Anderson Jones kill him? I asked. "That's what I want to find out," said my dad.

Questions and answers—if I asked the right questions at the right time, and this was. It was like peeling an onion, only more interesting.

I pointed to the Cherokee reservation on the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains in North Carolina and said I wanted to go there, because my sister had gone there to try to find out if Anderson Jones was on the Cherokee roles, but he wasn't. And then I pointed to Oklahoma and asked if they thought we might get that far and see where my grandfather went to school. My parents didn't think we could do all that in the time we had. But that got me remembering another story my father had told us only in the last few years: that my grandfather, Charles Manker, had gone to school on the reservation in Oklahoma, and that he had been "adopted" by his friends there and called Little Running Deer because he ran so fast on the track team. So, Dad, I said, don't you think there's a connection here? Why was your father on the reservation in the first place if there wasn't a sense of identification there or a heritage? I don't know that he had thought about it that way.

An interesting thing I'm learning about my Dad is that he's full of surprising secrets, which aren't really secrets, but just weren't shared until recently, like this story of Little Running Deer. But he really did share a secret with us on this trip, one I think he had totally forgotten about, because it was a secret his parents had told him never to tell. So he didn't, and he's eighty-one years old.

We were sitting in a Chinese restaurant in Cherokee and I was writing down our family genealogy on one page so I could get it straight, and I asked Dad what his father's name was. He stumbled!

"Charles George, no Charles Clarence Manker," he said. "He went by Charles George to avoid the police, I think." OK, I said, what's this story? "Well, my father was a wheeler dealer during the depression and his cousin was suing him, probably something to do with investing in their shoe factory. So my father Charles changed his middle name to George and they spelled Manker "M-a-n-c-o-u-r" and moved to Portland. I went to school there for two years under the name Raymond George Mancour. After that, I think my father thought it was safe to return to Santa Monica."

My mother, who has been married to my father for fifty-seven years—her mouth was open, her eyes big. Flabbergasted, she was! She had never heard this either! So, I wrote it down.

I found out my grandfather, Charles Clarence Manker, had grown up on the reservation in Salisaw, Oklahoma. It was Indian territory then, and he went to college in Talequah. Why, I wondered, if they were living on the reservation, would my great grandmother not want to talk about being Delaware?

When I think about it now, this moment in time, it occurs to me that secret-keeping can last a lifetime, especially if started when one is young. We know about repressed memories that occur in cases of child abuse. It must be similar. It could be that my Dad could keep a secret for seventy-five years because his parents impressed it into his psyche that to talk about this secret was dangerous, and perhaps that kept him from thinking about it openly long, long, long after the danger was past. How my great grandmother could keep a secret for her lifetime is that someone or something impressed it into her psyche that to talk about being Native American was dangerous. And I, not really understanding the mentality of that era, had to learn why.

As we drove through the green tree-filled countryside in our rental car toward Anna, Illinois, I asked my dad to tell me again why we were confused about being Delaware. “Well,” he said, “In the census of 1860, Anderson Jones’ mother was listed as living with him and was eighty years old. Then, in the census of 1880, Anderson Jones’ father is listed as being from North Carolina and his mother from Italy.” Why would he list her as being from Italy? “Around the middle of that century,” my dad said, “President Andrew Jackson got a law passed that said any white man could take the property of a man who was a quarter Indian or more. So he probably said his mother was Italian to explain his dark skin.”

On an aside, I asked my sister about that when we went to Christopher Creek together two weeks ago, and she thinks that Dad misunderstood the census roles. When she was reading them, if a person was born in Indian Territory it was abbreviated “IT.” Indian Territory, not Italy.

In any case, the fact that land could be taken from Indians that way, individually as opposed to through government confiscation, was something I hadn’t heard. When we got to Cherokee, I bought Helen Hunt Jackson’s book *A Century of Dishonor*, which chronicles the broken treaties and promises the United States government made to the Indians. She was a Unitarian, I found out later, who wrote passionately about the plight of the Indians in 1881, the year before William died. Her chapter on the Delaware tells of how they were pushed from New York and Pennsylvania to Ohio and Indiana and then to Illinois and finally into Missouri and Kansas. Every time payment was made for land, or, at least, promises of payment. And over that time, many Delaware were absorbed into the general populace. But a large enough group ended up being forced, really, to “trade” their lands east of the Mississippi for lands west of the river in that Act of Congress my father had mentioned. The history book on the Delaware that I also bought says that that Act was passed in 1830.

So if Anderson Jones and his mother were to admit being Delaware, they would lose their home. Anderson, by the way, was a name favored by Delaware parents, who named their sons in those days after the great Delaware Chief Anderson. And Delaware society was matrilineal, so Anderson would be of the tribe of his mother.

We know nothing about his father, even though he was from North Carolina and Jones is a common Cherokee name. On our travels, we learned that Anna, Illinois, where Anderson Jones lived, was along the Trail of Tears. How did they end up living in that town, albeit twenty years later? And if they were hiding in plain sight, what might their arguments have been about? What tension were they under having watched the plight of their kin, or almost kin, and how deeply motivated were his children to blend in, if they could, to the families of those they married? Was Anderson Jones' struggle with his son in the saloon in Anna in 1882 over horse-trading, or over something trivial, or over William's decision twenty years earlier not to fight in the war, or over their heritage and decisions they made based on that, or what? I will never know, but it was interesting to read the newspaper account and discover that Anderson Jones was represented by his daughter's father-in-law, the Honorable M. J. Inscore, my other great, great, grandfather. We think.

In the library in Anna, a kind librarian directed us to the Southern Illinois University library, which was up the road in Carbondale where we had just spent the night, so we drove back and found the library under construction and roped off, but the archives were gathered on the first floor and the librarian there was absolutely wonderful. She helped us find the microfiche of the *Jonesboro Gazette* and showed us how to copy it to my little key-ring sized thingy which I had never used. That's where we found the story of William's parricide. We also found the story of Anderson's death:

Jonesboro Gazette, July 22, 1882. "An Awful Accident: A Clean Sweep Made of Horse and Rider"

On last Monday evening about five o'clock Mr. Baronoski, of Grand Tower, driving two horses hitched to a light spring wagon, stopped at the brewery. He hired a little boy of Peter Tharp's, giving him a nickel, to hold his team, remarking as he did so, that one of his horses was rather wild, and that he thought it best to not hitch them. He had been in the brewery but a few minutes, when he was called out by the cries of the boy, and on reaching the door beheld his team flying up Main Street towards Anna, having been frightened by a train. The team kept the Anna road as far as Heacock Street, down which they went at break neck speed. The road here for some hundred yards is down hill, lined on either side with deep gullies. About fifty yards from the junction of the roads, when the team turned the corner, was Mr. Anderson Jones, of Anna, riding horseback, in the same direction. He immediately saw his danger, and, according to eye-witnesses, tried to avert it by riding his horse into one of the gullies, and was struggling to do so when his horse was struck with such terrible force by the runaway team that the tongue of the vehicle, entering at the back point of the hip, passed, clean through and emerging just behind the shoulder, killing the horse instantly. Mr. Jones was hurled violently to the ground, falling on his head and left arm, receiving on the former a severe cut and lacerating the latter in a terrible manner. When we reached the place of accident a scene of bloodshed met our view. Mr. Jones was lying under a shade tree by the roadside, bruised in the manner described, bleeding at the mouth and ears, gasping for breath, and apparently dying. In the middle of the road, impaled on the wagon tongue, was

the horse stretched in death. And the road and sward were dyed with blood, making a scene not easily forgotten.

Mr. Jones languished unconsciously until the next day about two o'clock, when he died, having received the best of medical aid. He was about sixty years of age, and was the man who killed his son about three months ago in self-defense. Thus he met about as terrible a death as he dealt his son. The coroner's jury attaches the blame, we believe, to the owner of the team.

They didn't have TV back then, so newspapers had to provide all the description we get visually today. I think it's fascinating to read, even though they're about the terrible deaths of my ancestors. I didn't know them, but their blood flows in my veins, and it is quite possible that their eyes look out at mine every morning from the bathroom mirror. It's too bad we lose these connections, have to search for these stories, and guess about lives which were just as full as ours with wonder and adventure and danger and discrimination, and secrets taken to the deathbed. Almost.

It's also something to learn about the ways so many Native Americans have lost their heritage through centuries of abuse, discrimination and displacement. These same arguments about skin color and heritage and rights to land and possessions are still going on all over the world. Another reason to learn the depths to which humans can go for greed and hatred, as well as the heights we can pursue for peace and justice.

Reading:

The Jonesboro Gazette
Vol 33, No 5, p. 3
4-8-1882

PARRICIDE

“A Son's Life-blood Flows in Torrents from a Knife Wound Inflicted by His Own Father”

This shocking tragedy occurred on Friday of last week, not many minutes before or after the hour of 1 o'clock p.m., in the saloon of Messrs. Sams & Brown. There were very few people on the square at the time, and the affair created very little excitement. Indeed, it was not generally known that anything serious had occurred until 20, or perhaps 30, minutes had elapsed. The attention of a Gazette reporter was attracted by the sight of Dr. D. R. Sanders running hastily across the square and entering the saloon. The reporter followed, but with no idea that anything of a tragical nature had occurred. On entering the saloon, the first man encountered was Anderson Jones, with blood on his hands. Proceeding to the next room, a great pool of blood was found on the floor, and in the third and last room the startled gaze rested on the spectacle of William Jones, a son of Anderson Jones, prostrate on the floor, with blood drenched shirt and blood dripping

from his beard and hair. Kneeling near his head was Dr. Sanders, who had with his fingers arrested the spurting tide from a cruel gash under the left arm, almost in the armpit, which had completely severed the main artery. Had it not been for the doctor's opportune presence the man must necessarily have bled to death within a very few minutes. As it was, gouts and pools of blood were everywhere on the floor and walls. He was also bleeding profusely from wounds over the left eye and a cut on the chin. He was for some moments in a state of semi-consciousness, when he revived and asked that Dr. Ives be called and a messenger was immediately dispatched for that gentleman. Dr. Sanders applied ligatures and on the arrival of Dr. Ives all the cuts were dressed, and the patient made so comfortable that the inexperienced observer supposed that recovery was sure. But medical skill could only prolong life. He was removed to his home in Anna, and on the Sunday following, at 4 o'clock p.m., being a little more than 48 hours from the time he was stabbed, William Jones was a corpse.

THE FATHER, Anderson Jones made no attempt to escape, and submitted quietly to arrest. He was taken to jail, and from there telephoned immediately to Anna for his lawyer, Hon. M. J. Inscore. Up to this time he would have nothing definite to say in regard to the affair, and it was evident from bruises on his head and body that he had been severely handled. At the preliminary examination on Saturday, before Squire Dougherty, he told a straightforward story, testifying that William was beating him with a chair, and that he committed the deed in self-defense. No evidence being given in rebuttal, the prisoner was discharged. And at the coroner's inquest held in Anna the verdict of the jury was justifiable homicide.

THE PARTICULARS, as we have been able to gather them, are that the old man Jones was sitting front of Sams & Brown's saloon, when the son rode up on horseback and a colloquy ensued between the two in regard to horse-swapping, which led to quarreling. The old man, who is very small of stature, and about 72 years of age, soon retired into the saloon, followed by the younger Jones: a stalwart man in the prime of life. No attention was paid to their movements by the few persons in the vicinity, and when the short death struggle occurred, not a single witness appeared on the scene until all was over, with a result as stated above.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature," and the evidence in this case develops nothing contrary to the old man's statement. He is said to be deeply affected. The Jones family have lived in Anna for years, and originally hailed from Tennessee. They were considered shrewd horse dealers, and were quick to come to blows over any injury, no distinction being made between relative, friend or foe. To this unfortunate propensity for fighting the present crime may be charged.