

Major, Lottie  
Wichita Falls

(no)

Felix L. Lindsey (nongegenarian) known as a soldier of fortune, a balloon jumper and a master housecleaner, expects to live to be 100 years old. He lives at 800 Jalonic St. in the "Colored Addition." He is a tall negro with a neat white beard. He is an interesting talker, and was recently interviewed by a reporter for the Wichita Post, concerning his balloon jump of 1866.

After much persuasion, he told us the story.

"I was borned in Rocket Branch, Kentucky, October 10, 1847. My mother was a half breed Creek Indian. Her name was Charity; she died about 1853. My father's name was Faithful. He was a full blood Creek. He was killed in the war between Mexico and the United States.

"When I was seven years old I went to live with Jefferson and Emmaeline Peaks. I was raised up by them. It was slavery time, but Mr. Peakshe didn't believe in slaves. They lived in Oakland Ridge Kentucky and they raised me like their own.

"When I was seventeen, Mr. Peaks sent me to Cincinnati to learn business. I went up and down the Ohio River and I bought up tobacco and sorghum, and cotton and pigs and cattle. I got my market quotation by mail boat United States. Then Mr. Peaks employed me to buy tobacco and be a trader for him.

"One time a traveling show came to Oakland Ridge. There was all sorts of attractions. The mostest one was a balloon ascension. The show people wanted some one to go up and make the jump

with the parachute. People was pretty excited, but they didn't nobody want to go up. Ev'body wanted somebody else to do it-- just like those things go, you know. So the show people, they offer fifty dollars to anybody what would make the jump. It seem like that fifty dollars look pretty good to me. I got to thinkin' mo' about that fifty dollars and less about the ride so I say, 'All right, I'll go.'

"We fly so high, the folks on the ground they look about two inches high. The balloon began to go down; we was right over the Ohio River. I jes' couldn't make up my mind to jump but it look like I have to if I don't want to get all tangled up in the ropes and have the balloon fall on me.

"So I swung the basket back and forth, back and forth. We was about 200 feet above the water. I picked out the part of the river what was about fifty feet deep and I dived.

"My feets hit the bottom but I come up for air and I swim to the New Port side and I climbed out and got my fifty. You'd ought to hear them yell.

"After that I didn't want to settle down no mo' so I joined the army in 1882. I wanted to see the world. I came out west to Texas in 1882, and I fit all around the border. I was stationed at Fort Davis several years and then I went Fort Sill. I was injured in the legs, and I couldn't work much so I was in the Hospital Corps, but my legs kept getting worser so I asked to be dismissed--so they brought me to Wichita Falls.

"I then went into the house cleaning business. I was overseer or supervisor (what they calls it now). I couldn't do no work, but I hired other colored men. So I built up quite a business.

"I married a Tennessee girl when I was 46 and we was doin' fine till the 'pression so I gave up my business an' went to work for the gov'ment. I was special delivery agent for the post office in Wichita Falls. Mr. Otis B. Bacon was postmaster then (in 1900). I got the job 'cause I was a soldier so long and my record was good.

"About ten years ago my health got bad so I was sick in bed a long time. I'm better now and I supervises my family."

Widders, DeLois, P. W.  
Wichita Falls, Wichita

Felix Lindsey

"I was born in Rocky Branch, Kentucky, on October 10th, 1847. My mother's name was Charity; her nationality was a half-breed Creek Indian. She died long about 1853.

"My father's name was Faithful. His nationality was a full blood Creek. He was killed in the war between Mexico and the United States.

"I have one sister and her name is Betsy. As near as I can recall she is near one-hundred years old. She was living somewhere in Indiana last time I heard of her.

"After I was seven years old I went to live with a family by the name of Jefferson and Emeline Peek. I was taken in as one of the family and raised as the same. They lived in Oakland Ridge, Kentucky. Although I was born during the time of slavery and in a slave state the Peek's didn't believe in slaves. From my earliest memory I can 'member different ones that were owners of slaves. Mr. Epps, he was a cruel man to his slaves, so much so until the people of the community forced him to move away.

It was the custom of the slave owners to buy the slaves at auction at the highest bid. Naturally the younger slaves brought a higher price than the older ones, because they was physically stronger and better able to do the task set them by their master.

"From time to time the slave holders would go around to different plantations seeking to buy or trade slaves or making an exchange of something of value for some slave that they desired.

"The duties of the slaves was hard and their hours were long. Some slave owners was so cruel that they would assign a slave or a group to a certain task and should they fall short of that assignment they were brought in at night and assessed a punishment of so many lashes from a bullwhip at the hands of the owner or whoever he should designate. It was said of Mr. Epps that there was nothing too cruel for him to do to his slaves.

"Education of the slaves was scant until about the year of 1864. Prior to 1864 what education the slaves might obtain was by selection. When a slave was ambitious and desirous of obtaining an education he was severely punished. Their only chance for obtaining any knowledge was to hide out and to obtain it that way.

"Sometimes they were caught and they were punished for their reward. It was the purpose and the intentions of the slave owners to keep the slaves ignorant. Some slave owners were so cruel that the slaves would attempt to escape, those that were not fortunate enough to get away were caught and severely beaten. At times as an added punishment they were either traded or sold to some other slave owner who would be crueller to them.

"There are so many things I could relate on this subject that it would require a deal of time and space will not permit me to do

so. As I mention earlier in my narrative though I was fortunate enough to live in that day and time and witness the things mention I was also fortunate enough not to be a slave. My life from seven years until young manhood was spent with the Peeks."

Major, Lettie  
Wichita Falls, Texas

October 22, 1937

ADVENTURES WITH GERONIMO

Geronimo, ill-famed Apache chief, was the cause of no little misery and trouble. Felix Lindsey, Wichita Falls negro, had the dubious honor of being singled out by Geronimo on one occasion. Felix, who is ninety years old, clearly remembers the meeting, which occurred in 1886. This was shortly before Geronimo surrendered to Gen. Nelson A. Miles. Felix recalled this meeting.

"I wasn't as dark as I am now, but kind of red like, and when Geronimo saw me he said, 'You ain't no nigger, you're an Indian.'

"My father may have been an Indian, but I'm a nigger because that's the race of my mother and the race I chose,' I said.

"He got mad and said if he ever caught me out alone he would kill me and then I got kind of mad and told him that I was a sharp shooter and if he ever caught me out alone I was sure liable to kill him.

"Geronimo,' I said, 'Unless you surrender, I'm not going to be happy until you are dead.'"

Felix, who was born near Warsaw, Kentucky, joined the army in 1882. He admits that the blue uniforms, brass buttons, and brass bands lured him more than the desire to defend his country.

In 1885, he was sent to Arizona to take part in the hunt for

Geronimo. Felix stated that he was most scared on one occasion when the company ran into an ambush while chasing Geronimo.

The soldiers were advancing single file, through a narrow mountain pass. Felix said, "Bullets, almost as long as your finger, began saying, 'Too sweet, too close,' and I thought I was a goner. We couldn't go forward and we couldn't go back. We had to leave the trail and crawl up the mountainside and fire down at the Indians. That stopped their fun."

In a skirmish on the plains, Felix felt a bullet crease his stomach. While he was gathering nerve to look down and see how badly he was hurt, another bullet clipped a furrow along his head, knocking him unconscious.

Illness forced Felix's retirement from the army in 1890. He came to Wichita Falls and has lived here since that time.

Adapted from story in Wichita Daily Times, October 10, 1937.



Major, Lettie  
Wichita Falls

November 2, 1937  
(no)

Felix L. Lindsey resides at 804 Jalonic Street in the Colored Addition. Over ninety years old and afflicted with dropsy, he is unable to work, though he owns his own place which comprises a neat little six-room house with built in features and modern conveniences and a yard full of fine chickens in which he takes great pride. Felix is a tall Negro with white wool and a neat white beard. He is famed as a soldier of fortune, a balloon jumper, an Indian fighter, and a master house cleaner. He worked in the Post Office, delivering special delivery packages in 1911-13.

"Why I don't tell dese 'ventures at one time is case I can't think of it all at same time. Didn't all happen same time did it? Well den dah you is. I'se mo' Injun mix dan I is nigger, but makes no diffence. I'se a nigger. You all knows how dat is. I's proud of it.

"I was borned in Rocky Branch, Kentucky on October 10, 1847. My mother was half breed Creek Injun--half negro, half Injun. Her name was Charity. She died 'long 'bout 1853. My father's name was Faithful. He was a full blood Creek. He was killed in the wah 'tween Mexico an' 'Nited States.

"I'se got one sistah named Betsey, livin' some whah in Injanny, las' I heah from her. Near as I can 'member she's 'bout one hundred.

"Af'er I was sebben yeahs ole I go live wiv family by name of Jefferson an' Emeline Peak. Did dey buy me? I don't know-- de Peaks, dey don' believe in slavery. Mebbe so dey buy me an' set me free, an' sort o' 'dopted me. Anyhow, I'se tooked in as one of family an' raised as de same.

"Of co'se I'se bown in slave state in time of slavery, I know all 'bout it. But de Peaks wouldn't keep slaves. Dat's de way dey felt so dey wouldn't go 'gainst conscience.

"From my earliest recollections I can 'member diffe'nt ones what was slave ownahs.

"Mr. Epps, he cruel man to his slaves, so much so till people of community fo'ce him move away. People say warn't nuffin' too cruel for Mr. Epps to do to his slaves. He would 'sign a slave or lots of slaves a task--hard tasks, take long time to do an' should dey fall short of what dey s'pose to do, dey was brought in at night and received so many lashes wiv a bull whip at hands of overseer, or whoever he should designate.

"It was custom to buy slaves at auction to one what makes highest bid. Nachelly, young ones, bein' mo' physically stronger and mo' able to do tasks set dem, bring high price. Ole feeble slaves come cheaper.

"Time to time ownahs go round diff'ent plantations seekin' to buy or trade slaves or make an exchange of something of value for some slave what dey desire.

"Education of slaves was scant till about year 1864. Prior to 1864, what education slaves get was by hidin' out and larnin' on sly. Some time dey was cotched and punished for they reward.

"Purpose an' 'tention of slave ownahs was keep slaves ign-'ant. Some po' slaves can't stand pressure no mo'--dey tries to 'scape. Dey is fotched back an' severly beaten. As added punishment dey was traded or sold to anudder slave ownah what was crueller dan fust one.

"Time I'se seventeen Mr. Peak done sent me to Cincinnati to learn business. I's to go up an' down Ohio River an' buy up tobacco an' cattle. Got my market quotations by mail boat "United States." Time I catch on a little Mr. Peak employed me to buy tobacco and be a trader for him. I got to be expert. Tell tobacco by smell. I trade with bofe armies (No'th an' Souf).

"One time traveling show come to Oakland Ridge--all kinds of 'traction. De mostes' one was a b'loon 'scenchion. Show people want some one to go up an' make jump with the parachute. People's pretty 'cited, but dey didn't nobody want to go up. Ev'body want somebody else to go, ju' like those things go.

"Show people dey say 'We give fifty dollars to anybody what will make de jump.' It seem dat fifty dollars look pretty good to me. I got thinkin' mo' and mo' 'bout dat fifty dollars an' less and less 'bout dat ride an' ah say, 'All right, hyah I is --I'se ready to go.' So I goes.

"I goes up an' up--fly so high, folks on ground dey look 'bout two inches high. Look lak dolls walkin' 'roun'. Den de b'loon begin go down. I was right over de Ohio River, just couldn't make up my min' to jump, but it look lak I's boun' to jump or have the b'loon fall on top of me. I'se swingin' de basket back an' fo'th, back an' fo'th, till I'se 'bout 200 foot 'bove de watah. Den ah pick out part of river what was 'bout fifty foot deep an' ah dive.

"My foot hit bottom, but ah come up for air an' swim to New Port side and clim' out and got my fifty. You'd ought to hear 'em yell.

"Atter dat I didn't want settle down no mo'. I jine army in 1882. Want to see de worl'. Come out to Texas in 1882, an' fit all 'round 'de border. Stationed at Fo't Davis sev'l yeahs, den went Fo't Sill. Join de army case I lake blue uniforms, brass buttons, lak de brass ban' too.

"I see ole' Geronimo jus' befo' he s'render to Gen'l Miles. I wasn't as dark as ah is now, mo' red like. Geronimo see me, he say 'You ain't no nigger. You's an Injun.' Ah say, 'My fathah may been Injun, but my mother's a nigger an' 'at's the race I chose.'

"He got mad. He say 'Ef me catch you out alone, me kill you.' I say, 'Hush you mouf ole debbil. Ah's a sharp shooter. Catch you out alone, ah sho' lible kill you.' 'Geronimo,' I say, 'les-sen you s'render ah isn't goin' to be happy 'till you is daid.'

"In 1885, ah was sent to Arizona to he'p hunt fo' Geronimo. One time we's ma'chin' single file over narrow mountain pass--knowed Injuns was shootin' from ambush--nebber was so near scared to death. Bullets went 'tween my laigs--hit mountain side--pow! Like dat! Bullets long as yo' little finger saying, 'too close! too close.' Sound lake dey say, 'Get you dis time!'--Thought sho' my time had come. Dah we was, couldn't go back, couldn't go fo'th.

"Man doubled up in front of me. Ah pass him--never stop. Pack mule fall off ledge--drop several hundred feet into river. Lef' trail--crawl up--up on mountain. Den we look down an' could see Injuns. Dat stop Injun's fun fo' long time.

"Nudder time on de plains a bullet crease my stomach. Ah trying to get nerve 'nuff look down see how bad I's hurt. Nudder bullet came long. My haid was in way of progress of bullet. Nex' ah know, ah was't knowin' nuffin' 'tall. Bullet clip furrow right top my haid--see? After dat, ah got injured in de laigs--couldn't do mo'long marchin'. So ah was put in hospital corps but my laigs gettin' worser' so ah could get dismissed--so dey bring me to Wichita Falls. Den ah goes into business. Ah starts house cleanin' business. Couldn't do no wo'k myself but ah hires othah niggers. Ah builds up big business.

"Ah weds a Tennessee girl when I's forty six, an' we gets 'long fine till dey has what dey calls 'pression--hard times--so

I quits my business an' goes to wo'k foh gov'ment. Ah was special 'livery agent foh pos' office in Wichita Falls. Otis T. Bacon was pos'mastah 'bout 1900. Ah got de job case ah was sojer so long an' has a good record.

"Bout ten yeahs ago my health failed me. Was sick in haid long, long time. I's some bettah now an ah supervises my family.

FOOTNOTE: My last interview with the old romancer. I wanted to see if he would tell the same things twice. I got practically the same story as that comprised in the three Felix Lindsey stories. He has told them so much he believes them himself.