



KOOYOOE TUKADU:
PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE KIT



◆ WE ARE ALL PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH

In hopes of preserving its original text, the following story comes from:
Survival Arts of the Primitive Paiutes by Margaret M. Wheat.

“Most of Wuzzie’s people were Cattail-eaters who had always lived by the marshes at the sink of the Carson River. However, she explained that her grandfather’s father was a Trout-eater who had walked to the land of the Cattail-eaters to join a rabbit drive long before anyone had seen a white man. During the days of dancing, he met a Cattail-eater girl and married her. He lived with her and her people until their two children were old enough to travel with him back to his own tribe on the shores of Walker Lake. In his own territory, he married again and when more babies began to arrive, his new wife wanted the Cattail-eater children returned to their mother. That is how Wuzzie happened to have cousins among the Trout-eaters.

One of these Cattail-eater children, Wuzzie’s grandfather, was the man called Stovepipe by white people. Wuzzie claimed that Stovepipe was a good hunter because he made obsidian arrowheads and then pounded them fine and ate the chips. She wondered why it did not make him sick, but Stovepipe said that it made him feel good. Stovepipe married Mattie, who was almost grown before she saw a man with ‘white eyes’ and much hair on his face. She had seen two of them riding south on horses and she had been terrified.

...Mattie and Stovepipe had five children, Wuzzie said, three boys and two girls. The oldest girl was called Mattie like her mother. She was much older than her sister Suzie, and when she grew up she married Sam Dick. Many years later, when Suzie was old enough to marry, she saw what a good provider Sam Dick was...she also became his wife. Wuzzie was the daughter of Suzie and Sam Dick.

By the time Wuzzie was born, about 1883, all the Cattail-eaters had moved out of the marshes and had attached themselves to the ranches at Stillwater, often adopting the names of the ranchers for whom they worked, and buying their clothes and flour at Jim Richards’ store. Wuzzie was born one cold night in the mountains during pinenut time. The morning after her birth, her father broke the ice at the spring and took a bath to show that he was not ‘lazy.’ He didn’t sleep for ten days, Wuzzie recounted, but kept the fire burning. He didn’t hunt for ten days, either. Then he left the first thing he killed where it was, as ‘a kind of payment.’

Besides being a good hunter, according to Wuzzie, Sam Dick was a good worker. He earned bacon, flour, and some money when he worked for white people, so there was always food for his family, including Mattie and Stovepipe. From the White man he learned to build a small house, ‘a kind of cellar’ of sticks and mud to keep ducks, geese, mudhens, wild pigs, and horse meat from spoiling. But her grandmother preferred to bury the eggs in the cool, moist sand in the old fashioned pits.

Wuzzie George



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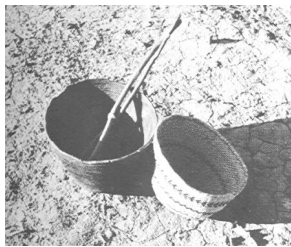
...When Wuzzie was a little girl, her grandmother Mattie [wife of Stovetop] took care of her while her mother washed dishes in the hotel at Stillwater. Every day old Mattie and Wuzzie went to the hard, salty flats where the biggest greasewood grew, to gather fuel for the kitchen stove in the hotel where Suzie worked. The hotel people gave them breakfast in exchange for the wood. Other Indians had to pay fifteen cents a meal when they ate at the hotel. While she was gathering the wood, Mattie always watched for the greasewood worms which lived in the roots of the plants. They were inch-long white grubs with dark heads. She dug them out of the roots with a stick, tied them up in a rag and took them home. After she had roasted them in hot coals she shared them with Wuzzie. Wuzzie remembered they tasted greasy. They could be found only in the summer because the cold weather drove them too deep into the ground.

Wuzzie and Mattie walked wherever they went because Mattie and Stovepipe never owned a horse and wagon. They walked to go fishing in the sloughs, to gather berries and dig roots in the river bottoms, to pull pale green tule stems and white cattail roots in the marshes, to collect pine pollen in the mountains and honeydew from the cane that grew by the springs. In summer when they visited friends far away they traveled mostly in the cool of the night, sleeping by the trail in the day.

After the leaves fell, they walked to the places where the willows grew straight and tall, and Mattie cut as many as she could carry home on her back in huge bundles. Wuzzie often sat with Mattie in the winter sun behind an old canvas windbreak, talking of Old Things while sorting and preparing the willows for future use.

Mattie made willow water jugs, shaped like fat bottles, woven so fine that they scarcely leaked even without the coating of red clay and hot pitch which she smeared on the outside. Mattie and Wuzzie always carried jugs of this sort when they went into the desert. They were lightweight and unbreakable. Moisture seeping through the willow-work evaporated and kept the water cool for drinking. Wuzzie said that some jugs were big, holding five gallons or more.

The greatest skill of all, however, was needed in making the close-woven cooking baskets.



Unlike water jugs, they could not be coated with pitch because the heat would melt the pitch. Since a basket would burn if placed directly upon the fire, the Paiutes dropped hot rocks into the liquid to boil their food. Wuzzie never learned to weave cooking baskets because Suzie, her mother, used the heavy iron frying pans and dutch



ovens that were available at Jim Richards' store. But she watched Mattie make cooking baskets and helped her bend and tie green willows into loops with handles for stirring sticks.

Wuzzie's George





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Following the trail she had walked with her grandmother many years before, Wuzzie led her friends and me to the place where Mattie had gathered the roots of the Indian potato and where, as a child, Wuzzie had nibbled on the peeled stems of the thistle. The Old Ladies always carried long walking sticks for ease in climbing the hills and to guard against snakes. They put red rags or red paint on their shoes because, they said, ‘Rattlesnakes don’t like red.’

Red paint was also considered to cure many ailments and to prevent many more. The Old People painted their faces for decoration, others put it on babies’ chafed bottoms, and, because they believed it had a magic power, the Indians painted arrows, caves, and their own bodies with red paint. Wuzzie learned of its uses from Mattie; she still prepares paint for herself and her friends. One day we went to a bright red outcrop on the mountain to fill boxes and bags with the raw, brick-colored earth, and I watched her make it into balls. This was the same quarry where Jack Wilson, the famous Ghost Dance leader, gathered the paint which he mailed to his followers all over the United States.

Wuzzie’s first work in the white people’s homes was ironing towels. She was so little she had to stand on a box to reach the ironing board. Sometimes she watched a small band of sheep, and the white lady gave her ten cents a day, which she always used to buy candy at Jim Richards’ store. She was a ‘big girl’ when her mother died, and she was taken to the Indian school at Stewart, eighty miles away. She was at the school only half a year when there was an epidemic of measles and some of the children died. Fearing that Wuzzie would also die, her father came with a horse and buggy and took her home. ‘That is why I never got my schooling,’ she said. So Wuzzie’s education in the Old Ways continued under her grandmother.

After leaving school Wuzzie lived in the new town of Fallon, because ‘all of the Indians go to Fallon when Jim Richards move his store there.’ They lived in tents, rag-covered frames of willow, and one-room, board-and-batten shacks on the outskirts of town. Then one of their group died of smallpox, and the townspeople insisted that the Indians move their community further away.

By this time Stovepipe had died and Mattie was getting very old. Wuzzie and her sister-cousin Mamie took care of Mattie while they both worked at a ‘Chinaman’s restaurant.’ Wuzzie tells how, in May, 1910, a fire started in a nearby saloon. The restaurant and many other buildings went up in smoke that night. There were two monkeys in the bar. One was burned to death but the other escaped and amused Mattie all summer in the cottonwood trees above the Indians’ gambling area. After the fire the ‘Chinaman’ went away, and Wuzzie started working on a ranch.

Wuzzie George



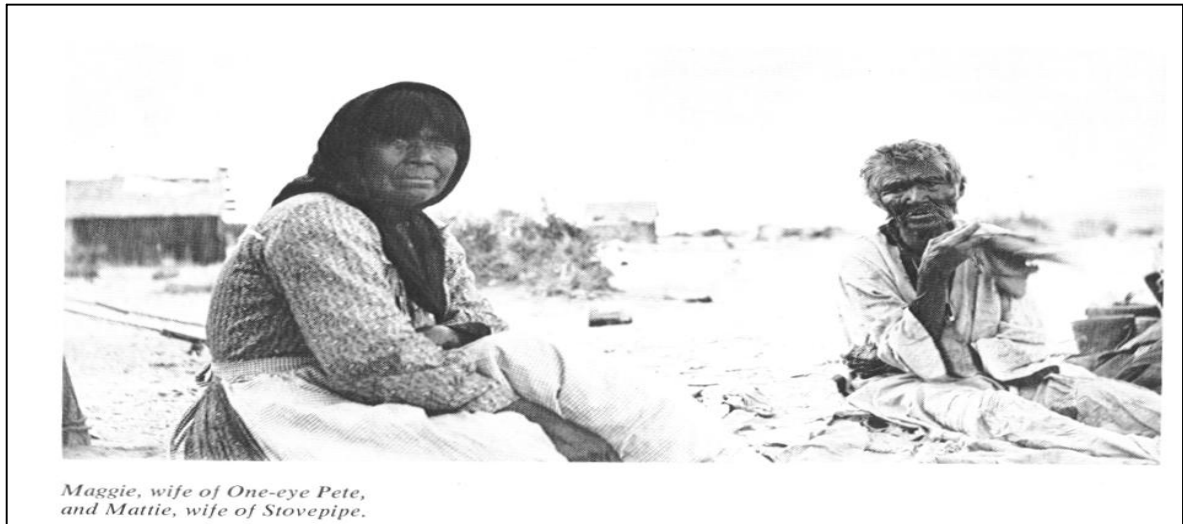
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Mattie died in the mountains while they were all out gathering pinenuts one fall. Wuzzie said she was not sick-just tired. She thought that Mattie was ‘maybe 80, 90 years old.’ In a box of old negatives which had come to me were many pictures of Indians taken by Mr. Roly Ham, an early Nevada Photographer. One photo, copyrighted in 1902, shows two women seated on the ground near a scattering of Indian houses typical of the early days of transition. The younger woman is dignified and a little resentful of the photographer’s intrusion; the older woman, fanning away the flies with a bit of cloth, is weary and resigned. Wuzzie stared at the photograph for a long time. Then she said quietly, ‘Him, my aunt; and him, my grandma.’ This, then, was the little old lady, Mattie, wife of Stovepipe...”

(Wheat 21-28)



*Maggie, wife of One-eye Pete,
and Mattie, wife of Stovepipe.*

Wuzzie George

