N. Scott Momaday Oct 1993 American Indian Southwest Series

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**MARK:** Good evening again. I'm Mark Busby, the Director of the Center for the Study of the Southwest here at Southwest Texas State University, and I'd like to welcome you to this series.

It is a year-long series sponsored by the center entitled "The American Indians Out West: Abiding Earth, Restless Sky."

And this is the second major lecture in the series. There are lectures throughout the year, and I hope that each of you has picked up a copy of the program because the major lectures, the discussion series, and the film series, the reading series, all of the aspects of this program are listed in the program at the door.

We are particularly fortunate tonight to have with us one of the most distinguished writers in America.

N. Scott Momaday was born in February 1934 at the Kiowa and Comanche Indian Hospital in Lawton, Oklahoma. He moved to New Mexico with his parents in 1936, and he lived in Shiprock Hobbs. And then in 1946, he moved to Jemez Pueblo in New Mexico.

He has been educated widely.

He has a bachelor's from the University of New Mexico in political science, an MA and PhD from Stanford. He has won numerous awards, most notably the Guggenheim Fellowship Pulitzer Prize in 1969. He has taught previously at the University of California at Santa Barbara and Berkeley and New Mexico State University and at Stanford, and he presently teaches at the University of Arizona.

Among his works "House Made of Dawn" in 1968 was the groundbreaking novel, the novel that won the Pulitzer Prize and the novel that is generally pointed to as the novel that began the contemporary Renaissance in American Indian fiction.

He has also published "The Way to Rainy Mountain" in 1969, "The Names: A Memoir," 1976. He is also a poet and has published "Gourd Dancer" in 1976. His most recent works, a novel, "The Ancient Child" in 1989. And this year "In the Presence of the Sun" stories and poems, 1961 to 1991.

He is a writer who is keenly aware of his place, of his territory, of the landscape.

He wrote this.

"In a sense one's place and his experience of it is the only thing the writer has to write about. It is preeminently his subject. Certainly this is so in my case. With few exceptions, my writings are centered upon the Southwest. I can't think of a better geography upon which to center my writing, and I have seen much of the world. Finally, I suppose we have no choice in the matter. We write of our time and place and of our investment in that place and at that time.

Thank God.

That's the way it ought to be. If I could choose any landscape in the world to write about and nourish my writing, it would be that of the American Southwest."

Most interestingly, I read the description of him in the back of his newest work, "In the Presence of the Sun," and I thought that some of you might find it interesting because it presents the writer or the artist in a little bit different light.

And this is what it has to say.

"N. Scott Momaday is a poet, novelist, painter, playwright, and storyteller. He resides in the American Southwest, and he is Regents Professor of the Humanities at the University of Arizona.

Among his numerous awards are the Academy of American Poets Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, and the Premio Letterario Internationale 'Mondello.' He is a member of the Kiowa Gourd Dance Society and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

"He walks long distances, and he rides an Appaloosa male named Ma'am. At his best, he cooks. He is justly famous for a recipe named the Washita Crossing soup, the ingredients of which are in his words, simple, sacred, and secret. He is a bear."

So, we have with us a man of wide experience and abilities, a man who is known widely but let me say that this morning, a young man came into the office of the English department on campus and said that he had heard that a famous artist was to perform here tonight. And he wanted to know where F. Scott Marmalade could be found.

**(audience laughing)**

We're not in such a jam to have Mr. Marmalade with us, but we do have one of the most important American writers. And I'm pleased to present N. Scott Momaday.

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**(audience applauding)**

**MOMADAY:** Thank you very much and good evening to you. I was here some years ago, and I know a little bit about the hill country. And it is always a pleasure to return. So, I wanna thank you for asking me back, and I am truly pleased to be here, and I extended greetings to you.

It is true that I'm a cook. Probably that's, you know, if I do anything really well, that's it.

**(audience laughing)**

I cook. I cook soups and stews. Those are my, those are my specialties. I used to fix salads. I used to be a whiz kid at fixing salad. I don't do that anymore, and I'm not sure why. I have drifted in the direction of soups and stews.

And it is true that the Washita Crossing soup is legendary.

I'll tell you how I came to, I came by that name. I'm certainly not going to disclose the recipe, but I will tell you how the name came to be. My father, who was a full-blood Kiowa and who was a wonderful artist, and a wonderful man, told me that when he was little, his sister and his brothers and he used to go to the Washita Crossing.

There was a trellis, not a trellis. That's the wrong word.

What's the word?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Trestle.

**NOMADAY:** Trestle over the Washita River, just outside of Mountain View, Oklahoma, and my grandparents used to go to Chickasha and to Anadarko on the train. And they would do their shopping, you know, and then they would come back on the train. And the trains in those days, I guess, were open window affairs, you know.

So, my father and his siblings used to go to the Washita Crossing, and when the train came past, my grandfather would throw boxes of Cracker Jack out the window. And so, that made a big impression on me. No one ever threw boxes of Cracker Jack to me from a train, but I think that must be a wonderful experience. And so, I was very pleased to hear about that, and so I named the soup in honor of that event, which I guess happened many times.

I wanna talk to you a little bit this evening about some things which are of interest to all of us, I believe, and of importance to all of us. I wanna talk about the sacred nature of landscape and the power of the imagination in understanding that matter of the sacred. And I shall do this with reference to something that happened early in the century to begin with.

On the morning of August 29th, 1911, near the community of Oroville, California, dogs began to bark excitedly in the corral of a slaughter house. The din awakened the sleeping butchers, who went out into the dawn's light to investigate.

What they saw, what they saw must have caused their hearts to beat wildly, for in the vague recess, as in a dream, there crouched a prehistoric man.

He was nearly starved.

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But for a scrap of ancient canvas, which was draped above his bones, he was naked. As one might easily imagine, he was utterly terrified, and yet he was strangely composed and dignified too. In spite of his weakened condition and his desperate situation, he was surely in that time and place among the most helpless creatures on the face of the earth, he kept possession of himself.

This man was Ishi, the last Yana Indian.

The last Yana Indian.

He was a wild man, an anachronism, a curiosity, a sideshow attraction, an animal brought to extinction, an object of intense and relentless scrutiny. And by the way, a human being.

Five years after he appeared outside the slaughter house in Oroville, having come from the Stone Age into the 20th century, Ishi passed from life to death.

It is an irony for us to ponder that he died in a museum, the Museum of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley.

I would like you to hold the image of Ishi crouching in the corral. I would like you to hold that in your mind for a time, I will have occasion to come back to it.

But first I wanna tell you a story, and in order to tell you the story so that you can understand it, I’ll give you a little preliminary information.

Cosan, Cosan is the name of an old Kiowa woman I once met. We spent an afternoon together, she and I, and she told me wonderful stories. She was she reckoned a hundred years old at that time. According to their origin myth, the Kiowas entered the world through a hollow log.

Several hundred years ago, the Kiowas migrated from western Montana, from near the headwaters of the Yellowstone River. That's the earliest evidence we have of them.

Before that, they were probably farther north in Canada, but they migrated to the Southern Plains. This is the most recent migration of all on this continent. And for a time in the course of their migration, they lived in the Black Hills, the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming.

The Sun Dance, the Sun Dance was the chief religious ceremony of the Plain, of the Kiowa tribe, as it was with the other tribes on the Great Plains. The Kiowa Sun Dance was held once each year in the spring when the cotton began to fall from the cottonwoods. And on that occasion, all the bands of the tribe came together in one place.

They convened in love, in belief, in devotion and in celebration. It was a wonderful ceremony, a wonderful celebration.

We don't know all. We don't know enough about it now. We know bits and pieces.

The last Kiowa Sun Dance was held in 1887. Palo Duro Canyon, Texas was the last buffalo raid on the Southern Plains.

There the Kiowas sought refuge in the early 1870s, 1874, I believe it was, but the cavalry, the cavalry, the Seventh Cavalry out of Fort Sill came into the canyon. And the Kiowas panicked and left their stores to be pillaged there.

The fight at Palo Duro Canyon marked the end of the so-called golden age of the Kiowas and Comanches. The Plains culture fell in the Southern Plains.

All right, having given you this much information,

I tell you a story.

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One night, one night, a strange thing happened. I had written the greater part of "The Way to Rainy Mountain," all of it, in fact, except the epilogue. I had set down the last of the old Kiowa tales, and I had composed both the historical and autobiographical commentaries for it. I had the sense of being out of breath, of having said what it was in me to say on that subject.

The manuscript lay before me in the bright light, small to be sure but complete, or nearly so. I had written the second of the two poems in which that book is framed. I had uttered the last word as it were, and yet as I looked down, something was missing, a whole piece was missing.

And so I began again to write. This is what I wrote.

"During the first hours after midnight on the morning of November 13, 1833, it seemed that the world was coming to an end. Suddenly, the stillness of the night was broken. There were brilliant flashes of light in the sky, light of such intensity that people were awakened by it.

With the speed and density of a driving rain, stars were flowing in the universe. Some were brighter than Venus. One was said to be as large as the moon."

I went on to say that that, that strange event, the falling of the stars over the earth, that shower of Leonid meteors, which occurred well over 150 years ago now is among the earliest entries in the Kiowa calendars.

So deeply impressed upon the Kiowas is that old phenomenon that it is remembered still. It has become a part of the racial memory.

"The living memory," I wrote, and the verbal tradition which transcends it were brought together once and for all, for me, in the person of Cosan. It seemed eminently right that I should deal with that old woman Cosan. After all, she is among the most venerable people I have ever known. She spoke and sang to me one summer afternoon in Oklahoma. It was like a dream.

When I was born, she was already old. She was a grown woman when my grandparents came into the world. She sat perfectly still, folded over upon herself, and it did not seem possible to me that so many years, a century, could be so compacted and distilled.

Her voice shuttered, but it did not fail. Her songs were sad, an old whimsy, a delight in language, and in remembrance shown in her one good eye."

She had only one eye. She had lost an eye. God knows how it went.

"She conjured up the past, imagining perfectly the long continuity of her being. She imagined the lovely young girl, wild and vital she had been. She imagined the Sun Dance."

The last Kiowa Sun Dance, as I said, was held in 1887 at the great bend of the Washita. She had been there. She was a young girl. She had been there. I asked her to tell me about the Sun Dance.

"Grandmother, Grandmother, tell me. Tell me about the Sun Dance."

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"Oh," she said, "oh, don't, don't ask me about that. That is too far, too far away. No one knows anything about that now."

This is how she customarily met my questions, every one of them.

"Oh, don't ask about that."

**(audience laughing)**

"No one knows about that."

Having made this protestation, then she would proceed to tell me, you know, everything I wanted to know.

**(audience laughing)**

Well, this is what she said about the Sun Dance.

"Oh, Grandson, there was an old, old woman. She had something on her back, this old woman. The boys, the young boys of the Rabbit Society, they went out to see what it was she had on her back. The old woman had a bag full of earth on her back. It was a certain kind of sandy earth.

That is what they must have in the lodge. The dancers must dance on the sandy earth. The old woman held a digging tool in her hand. She turned towards the south, and she pointed with her lips.

It was like a kiss, and she began to sing. Now we have brought the earth. Now it is time to play. As old as I am, I still have the feel of play. And that is how the Sun Dance began. That is how it always began," Cosan said.

Well, by this time I was back into the book. Caught up completely in the act of writing, I had projected myself, imagined myself out of the room and out of time. I was there with Cosan in the Oklahoma July.

We laughed easily together. I felt that I had known her all my life and indeed all of hers. I didn't want to let go of her, but I had come to the end.

And I set down almost grudgingly the last sentences.

"It was," I wrote, "all of this and more a quest, a going forth upon the way to Rainy Mountain."

Probably Cosan too is dead now. In the quiet of evening, I think she must have wondered, dreaming, who she was, what she'd become in her sleep, that old purveyor of the sacred earth perhaps, that ancient one who old as she was still had the feeling of play.

And in her mind, at times, did she, did she see the falling stars? For some time I sat looking down at these words on the page, trying to deal with the emptiness that had come about inside of me. The words, words did not seem real. The longer I looked at them, the more unfamiliar they became.

At last I can scarcely believe that they made sense, that they had anything whatsoever to do with meaning. In a kind of nervous anxiety, I went back over the final paragraphs, backwards, forwards, hurriedly, and my eyes fell upon the name Cosan.

All at once, all at once, everything seemed to refer to that name. The name seemed to humanize the whole complexity of language before me. I had the sense, suddenly, all at once, absolutely, the sense of the magic of words and of names. "Cosan," I said.

And then it was. Then it was that that ancient one-eyed woman Cosan stepped out of the language and stood before me on the page. I was amazed, of course, and yet it seemed to be entirely appropriate that this should happen.

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"Yes, Grandson, what is it? What do you want?"

"Oh, um, oh, dear.

**(audience chuckling)**

I was just, I was just writing about you,” I said. "I thought. I thought. Forgive me, Grandmother. I thought that you were. I thought that you had."

"No," she said, and she cackled.

**(cackling)**

"You have imagined me well, Grandson. So I am. You have imagined that I dream, so I do. I have seen the falling stars."

"Yeah, yes, yes, yes, Grandmother, but all of, all of this, this imagining," I protested, "this has taken place, Grandmother, is taking place in my mind. You, Grandmother, you're not actually here. You're not really here in this room."

It occurred to me that I was being extremely rude,

**(audience laughing)**

but I couldn't help myself.

Anyway, she seemed to understand.

"Oh, be careful of your pronouncements, Grandson," she said. "You imagine that I am here in this room, do you not? That is worth something. I have existence. I have whole being in your imagination. Oh, it is but one kind of being, to be sure, but it is perhaps the best of all kinds.

If I am not here in this room, Grandson, then surely neither are you."

"Mmm hmm, yeah.

**(audience laughing)**

I think, I think I see what you mean, Grandmother."

I felt justly rebuked.

"Tell me, tell me, how old are you?"

"Oh, I do not know," she replied.

"There are times when I think that I'm the oldest woman in the world, the oldest woman in the world."

You know, Grandson, the Kiowas came into the world through a hollow log. In my mind's eye, I have seen them emerge one by one from the mouth of that log. I have seen them so clearly, how they were dressed, how delighted they were to see the world around them.

I must have been there. And I must have taken part in that old migration, Grandson, from the Yellowstone to the Southern Plains, for I have seen antelope bounding in the tall grass near the Big Horn River. I have the ghost forests of the Black Hills.

Once, Grandson, I saw the red cliffs of Palo Duro Canyon. I was with those who were camped in the Wichita Mountains when the stars fell."

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"You, you are indeed very old," I said, “and you have seen many things."

"Yes, yes, I imagine that I have," she said.

And then she turned slowly around and nodded once and receded into the language I had made. And I imagined that I was in the room alone.

Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape and his experience to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it.

He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind.

He ought to recollect the glare of noon and all the colors of the dawn and dusk. I must reflect upon Ishi and his life and death, for his story has profound meaning for me. And it has meaning for all of us, I believe.

Like Ishi, I too am an American Indian. The first home I knew was that of my Kiowa grandmother's. It stood on a rise of red earth in the Great Plains. There was no air conditioning, (chuckling) no heat other than a wood-burning stove, no plumbing, no electricity.

The house was built in 1913.

It was my Kiowa family's first house. When it was under construction, in fact, my father was born in a teepee near the northeast corner of the arbor, where the well, near the well where we drew our water.

How I loved the people there, my grandmother, the old women who came to laugh and gossip, the old men in their braids and blankets who could remember the old free time on the open plain, the horses, and the buffalo.

My father used to tell me about the old man, Dragonfly.

**(speaking in a foreign language)**

When my father was a boy of eight or 10 years, Dragonfly would come to the house on horseback. He was never announced. He would simply appear, and in the proper notion of a Kiowa visit, he would stay for days. Every morning, my father told me, Dragonfly would paint his wrinkled face, go out on the apron of the plain east of the house, raise his arms, and pray to the rising sun.

He would pray the sun up. My father watched from hiding, in fear and awe. I like to think of that old man. In my mind's eye, I can see him as he makes his prayer.

I know where he stands. I have stood there myself. I can see the rolling plains reaching eastward in the misty first light. I can see the great red-orange sun, the sun of the Talyi-da-i and of the Sun Dance, rising from the earth.

Here is, here is the vision of my quest, and I too am inspired to pray, to make a prayer.

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“Dear God,

When I was a child, I was confused by your names and images. I was taught that you were our Father and Jehovah and the Supreme Being and that you were a synthesis and a profound impenetrable mystery. You were absolute, and absolutely powerful, inscrutable, opaque, and impersonal. You were hopelessly beyond my comprehension, and yet I placed my child's faith, which is sacred, in You.

You became more and more remote to me, and I could not find you. You were not in cathedrals or tabernacles or the pages of a book, but now I have found you in the night sky and in the sound of wind and water, in the quiet of the desert at dusk, and in the cold brilliance of the dawn.

My Kiowa father used to tell me the story of the old man Dragonfly, how he would come to visit my grandparents. He would stay for days and days. And every morning, Dragonfly would paint his wrinkled face, go out on the apron of the plain, raise his arms, and pray aloud to the rising sun.

That reference is my favorite. Dragonfly's faith is my faith, and that manifestation of your being, God, great mystery, the eternal sun in the infinite sky, is the one that touches me at my center. I want to live out my life in Your pervasive presence. I want my life to be of Your life, my spirit to be of Your spirit, my whole being to be of Your whole being.

This is my prayer.

Cosan, and Dragonfly, and my father are dead now. In some sense, they died in the museum of my racial or cultural memory, but they are alive in that memory too. Without them, I have no cultural identity.

They define my spirit. They enable me to hold on to my idea of myself in the face of tidal, inconceivable change. I'm trying to suggest that cultural identity, the conviction of who we are in the deepest sense, is more crucial to our wellbeing than is our ability to establish dominion over the earth and its creatures, to make industrial revolution, to invent the tools of our own annihilation.

The man who crouches before the dogs at Oroville, in some strange warp of time, defines our own reflection. It may be that we too, the human race, will find death in a museum, the museum of our rememberer.

Some years ago when I was a student at Stanford, I had a teacher who was a remarkable man, and he wrote something that I would like to share with you. When I think of cultural identity, when I think of history, when I think of the past and how we proceed from it and go into another dimension, I'm reminded of these words.

He said, my teacher said, "Unless we remember, no, unless we understand the history which produced us, we are determined by that history. We may be determined in any event, but the understanding gives us a chance."

**00:40:16.330 --> 00:40:17.567**

I've always remembered that, and I would share it with you and ask you to remember it too.

I wanna tell you one other story. I wrote a book not long ago, which is called "In the Presence of the Sun," and one section of that book is a collection of shields, stories about shields, very short stories, and I have illustrated them.

So, rush right out and buy that book because it's truly beautiful, and it's just come out in paper so it's easily affordable now at 9.95.

**(audience laughing)**

I want to read you one of the shield stories and then talk about it for a minute because of wonderful thing happened that I'd like to share with you.

This story is called "The Shield That Came Back," and this is, this is how it goes.

"Turning Around tested his son, Yellow Grass.

‘You must kill 30 scissor tails and make me a fan of their feathers.'

'Must I make the whole fan?’ asked Yellow Tail or Yellow Grass.

'Must I do the bead work too?'

Yellow Grass had never made a fan.

'Yes, yes, you must do the bead work too, blue and black and white and orange.'

'Those are the colors of your shield,' said Yellow Grass.

Yellow Grass fretted over the making of his father's fan, but when at last it was finished, it was a fine, beautiful thing, the feathers tightly bunched and closely matched, their sheen like a rainbow. And yet, they could be spread wide in a disk like a shield, and the handle was beaded tightly.

The blue and the black and white and orange beads glittered in every light, and there was a long bunch of doeskin fringes at the handle's end. When Turning Around saw the fan, he said nothing, but he was full of pride and admiration.

And then he went off on a raiding expedition to the Pueblo country, and there he was killed. After that, Yellow Grass went among the pueblos and redeemed his father's shield, but the fan could not be found.

When he was an old man, Yellow Grass said to his grandson, Handsome Horse,

'You see, the shield was more powerful than the fan, for the shield came back, and the fan did not. Some things, if they are very powerful come back. Remember that for us in this camp, that is how to think of the world.'"

Well, I wrote that story out of my imagination, but something, you know how it is with stories.

Something had entered my mind. I don't know where it came from. I can't tell you what it was, but something had come into my mind. And I wrote that story, you see?

And then two summers ago, I went to the Gourd Dance at Carnegie, Oklahoma. I'm a member of the Gourd Dance Society in the Kiowa tribe, and I go there to the dance in July.

Not this summer, but the summer before I went there. And as I always do, I went to the camp of Fred Tsoodle, the old man who initiated me into the clan and who became my surrogate father and whom I deeply love. When I went into his camp, he said,

"Oh, Scott, you should have been here in April.”

And I said, "Why, what happened in April?"

And he said, "Satank's shield came home."

And I was stunned because I knew of Satank, one of the great chiefs in the Kiowa tribe, but I did not know of his shield.

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Satank was a man among men, an original, a man brave beyond reckoning. He was the leader of the Koitsenko Society, the Crazy Dogs, or the Dog Soldiers. And this society, the Koitsenko Society of the Kiowa tribe was comprised of 10 men only, and these were the 10 most brave, the *creme de la creme*, the elite warrior society in the tribe.

The Koitsenko warrior wore a sash that trailed to ground. He carried a sacred arrow, and in time of battle, he must impale his sash to the ground and stand his ground to the death. The Koitsenko Society had a song.

Only the Koitsenko warriors could sing it and only in the face of death.

Well, this old man, Satank, was the chief of that very special band of warriors. He had a favorite son who was killed on a raid in Texas. When Satank heard about it, he went to Texas, and he gathered up the bones of his son. And from that time on, he carried them. He put them on the back of a horse and led the horse around.

The horse bore the bones of his son on its back. At night he placed the bones in a special ceremonial teepee.

He'd go around to the people and say, "Come, my son is at home tonight. Come and pay your respects."

In his old age, and I think he lived only to be 60 or 65 something like that, near the time when he took part in the Medicine Treaty, he was imprisoned along with two other Kiowa chiefs for being implicated in the Warren Wagon Train fight.

He and the two other chiefs were brought to Fort Sill, and they were shackled and placed in prison there. They remained there for a time.

Then, it was decided that they should be removed to another prison in Texas. And so, they were placed in the bed of a wagon, back in the bed of a buckboard, shackled hand and foot. A cavalry sergeant drove the team, drove the wagon.

Two armed guards on horseback were on either side of the wagon, and the wagon started moving across the fort towards the railhead on a road that is now called Sitting Bear Road.

Satank means Sitting Bear. Satank began to sing the song of the Koitsenko Society.

(gasping) "What are you doing?"

The other chiefs were greatly alarmed.

"What are you doing? You can't sing that song. That's taboo. Something terrible will happen."

Satank said, "Do you see the tree there?"

There was a cottonwood by the side of the road ahead.

He said, "By the time we come to that tree, I will be dead." He pulled a knife.

All of this is, you know, clearly documented in the archives at Fort Sill. He pulled a knife, which he had somehow secreted on his person.

He stabbed a teamster in the leg, and the armed guard shot him dead in the bed of the wagon.

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He was true to his word. And the shield. When Satank, Sitting Bear, was killed at Fort Sill, his shield was confiscated by the commandant there, who retired and took the shield with him to the East where he lived, to New Jersey. And for all these years, Satank's shield has been in New Jersey.

Satank's shield does not belong in New Jersey.

**(audience laughing)**

Alice Marriott, a great anthropologistwho I understand is now dead.She must have died fairly recently,and she lived to be a very old woman.She had made the Kiowas a kind ofsubject of study for her whole career,and she wrote wonderful things about them,and she knew as much about themas they knew about themselves.

But she found out the whereabouts of Satank's shield, and so she started to, you know. She set in motion an effort to have the shield returned to the Kiowas. And it must be said to the credit of this soldier's descendants that when they were approached, they agreed right away.

They said, of course, of course. The shield, the shield belongs to the Kiowas, and it ought to be returned to them. So, they sent it back.

And Fred Tsoodle said, "Oh, Scott, you should have been there. When it, you know, when it came. A delegation of, of us old people, men and women, went to Fort Sill to welcome the shield home. And it was a great event. It's there now on exhibit. You must go and see it."

And I said, "Yes, of course I must."

He said, "You know the old women. Oh, Scott, you should have seen the old women. They were so glad to welcome the shield home, and they were so protective of it. They wouldn't let us old men get too close to it.

**(audience laughing)**

No, they said, 'Oh, you must've get too close. 'This is a powerful thing. You might get into trouble. You might steal some of its power. Something bad might happen to you if you come too close to this shield.'"

So, they took care of it. They wouldn't let the old man get too close. And then I went to see the shield, and it is a beautiful, beautiful shield, green in color with ancient eagle feathers attached to it and elongated bear paws around.

Sitting Bear. So isn't that, isn't that something? I had written about the shield that came home, and the prophecy was fulfilled as it were. Satank's shield came home.

It was a wonderful thing.

I want to read you as a final.

To end my remarks tonight, I'd like to read you a poem, which I wrote fairly recently, and it is dedicated to Satank.

The name of it is "Fort Sill." When I went to see the shield, I also visited Satank's grave. Satank's is the only Indian buried in the military cemetery at Fort Sill, and his is the only grave that has a chain.

There are four posts, and it's all connected by chain. And when I went there, I was shown the grave by a man who is a historian and is the head of the museum there.

I said, "Why the chain? What does that signify?"

And he said, "Well, I guess it means that he was shackled when he was killed. He was chained."

And so, to commemorate him, his grave is also marked by a chain. The only thing I need to explain about the poem before I read it is that it is a commemorative poem based upon Satank's death, or what we know of it, how he died, and beyond that, the fact that when the Kiowas were rounded up after their stand at Palo Duro Canyon, they were brought to Fort Sill.

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And they were imprisoned in the old stone corral which still stands as part of the museum now, and their horses were killed just outside the corral within their hearing.

800 horses were slaughtered there.

"You were riding in a wagon to the train. A tree took shape in the distance.

You began to sing. It was more than unseemly.

The words of your song were so powerful that nothing less than death could contain them. At times, many years later, I hear the song, not as it was but as it sounds across time.

Oh, my warrior, I love you to sing. The rattle of your breath rising to the sun

I hear among the screams of the hunting horses."

Aho.

**(audience applauding)**

**BUSBY:** I'd like to acknowledge the support of the University lecture series and the Cultural Art Center for their support in bringing N. Scott Momaday here. I hope that those of you who are here will examine the program and see that there are future ones to be presented, and I hope to see you at some of those in the future.

Again and again in the works that are written about N. Scott Momaday, these are works that he has written, he is described as a man of words, and certainly as he's demonstrated tonight, he is a man of very powerful words. And he's also a man of great substance, and I'd like to thank him for being here and thank you as well.

**(audience applauding)**

**(audience chattering)**