

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Rosabel Sylestine

COLLECTION: 4700.0511

IDENTIFICATION: A woman of Coushatta heritage who made baskets for the Acadian Handicraft Project

INTERVIEWERS: Pam Rabalais and Yvonne Olivier

SERIES: Acadian Handicraft Project

INTERVIEW DATE: September 2, 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1950s – 1960s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 733, Side A

Introduction of Rosabel Sylestine; Interviewer asks for her Coushatta [Native American tribe of which a portion live in Louisiana] name, she does not know it; Listed the names of her husband, mother and father; Sylestine was born and raised in Elton, Louisiana; when she was born; how many children [3] and grandchildren [11] she had; Sylestine's mother taught her how to weave baskets; Sylestine had eleven siblings, discussion of how many were still alive and where they lived; Sylestine's mother made cane baskets and pine needle baskets to sell; Sylestine only knows how to make pine needle baskets; Pine needle baskets are made by Coushatta Indians; discussion of baskets on Sylestine's wall, elbow-basket; discussion of how Louise Olivier [Olivier worked for the Acadian Handicraft Project] found Sylestine and her baskets; Sylestine sold baskets to a man from South Carolina circa 1970; Sylestine taught her children to weave but they don't weave anymore because they all work or go to school; Sylestine began working for the Acadian Handicraft Project at about the age of thirty-five; discuss when Sylestine would have had time to weave since she had small children and a family at the time; discussion of the materials to make pine needle baskets, pine needles and raffia; Sylestine's mother and grandmother made the same kind of baskets that she made; discuss what Sylestine did with the money she earned for the sale of her baskets; discuss the price of the baskets; Sylestine sold her baskets to many groups including the Acadian Handicraft Project; Sylestine's mother would travel to town in a wagon to sell her baskets; her parents lived nearby; discussion of several letters regarding the Acadian Handicraft Project; interviewer asks for Sylestine's address; discussion of time it takes to make a basket; discussion of additional designs of the pine needle baskets; two types of stiches, wheat and plain; discussion of the different shapes of baskets, animals, round, with or without lid; discussion of the baskets in Sylestine's home are already sold and not available for purchase; discuss baskets made from grass made by Sylestine's granddaughter; Sylestine made a variety of baskets for the Acadian Handicraft Project; Sylestine tells the interviewer the name of a basket in Coushatta; discussion of the death of Louise Olivier; discussion about Sylestine's trip to St. Martinville to the Acadian Bicentennial Celebration

Tape 733, Side B

Discussion of gathering the pine needles to make the baskets; older baskets tend to darken in color; discussion of the measuring and weaving a basket; Sylestine's husband worked in Lake Charles, Louisiana; further discussion of the man from South Carolina who bought Sylestine's baskets; discussion of the other states where Sylestine's baskets can be found; discussion of artisan labels with their names on the baskets; one of the baskets had a label with Sylestine's name on it; Sylestine's baskets were in an exhibit at the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana; Sylestine does not know any mystical stories related to the baskets; Interviewer and Sylestine share the same birthday; Interviewer asks Sylestine to respond to several questions in the Coshatta language.

TAPES: 1 (T733)**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour, 3 minutes**# PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 59 pages**OTHER MATERIALS:** None**RESTRICTIONS:** None