



í am kwakkolí

By Bisco Hill

A few months after my tenth birthday, my dad began to talk to me about receiving my Indian name. He said this had to be done in a ceremony by a medicine person or an elder in our tribe. My older sister, Megan, had received her Indian name, Maquequay (Woman of the Woods), when she was only three. At that time my family lived on the Oneida Reservation just outside of Green Bay, Wisconsin. My grandfather was alive then, and he asked a medicine man friend of his to name her and made the arrangements. I always thought my sister's Indian name was so perfect for her. I was told the medicine man meditated for three days before the name came to him.

My family moved from Wisconsin to Colorado three years before I was born. My grandfather died when I was only two and a half, and both of these major events delayed my Naming Ceremony. My dad talked about naming me for several years, but it was hard to pull it together long distance. Because of the sacred and traditional aspects of this, it is not like anyone can just call and order a Naming Ceremony, like ordering a pizza! As it happened, my uncle Rick became the chairman of the tribe when I was ten, and he was able to talk to the right people and select the time. The right time was the summer solstice, near June 20, and it was also the time of the annual Strawberry Ceremony.

There are many traditions connected to the Naming Ceremony. For one thing, there are a limited number of names among the Oneida people. When a person

dies, their name returns to the "pool" of available names and can be given to someone else. The medicine person decides whose energy fits which available name, or a person may ask for a certain name. In my case, I was named after my grandfather through my Anglo name, but I also wanted to take his Indian name which was available and had been waiting for me for seven years. I felt that if I had both of his names, it made a full circle and I was wholly connected to him and to my family. The name that was his is "Kwakkoli," or "Whip-poorwill" in English.

A few days before the ceremony in June of 1990, my parents and I flew to the Oneida Reservation. A friend of my dad made me a beautiful "ribbon shirt." It was a shade of deep turquoise stitched with pink, purple and green ribbons. My family and I thought it was very special and that I looked good in it.

Two days before I was given my Indian name, my uncle Rick, my dad and I drove around and looked at certain landmarks on the Oneida Reservation. I saw where my dad had grown up. There is a statue in the middle of the reservation of my great-grandmother, Dr. Rosa Minoka Hill. She was the first female Indian physician in the United States.

Oneida is very small and different from any other city I have known. It has only one school, several baseball fields, a small convent, a store, a post office, two churches, three cemeteries, a tribal building, and about twenty houses. My dad and his brother knew the names of everyone. They knew who was married to whom and who everyone's grandparents and parents were. They remembered all kinds of funny stories and laughed a lot. I thought it must be nice to live in a small town where everyone knows everyone for all those years. It is also a place where everyone is connected by common heritage, customs and beliefs.

The night before the ceremony, I got very nervous.

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My stomach hurt as if I had the flu, but I think it was just butterflies. I finally fell asleep at about 3:30 in the morning. I don't know what I was afraid of—maybe just not knowing what was going to happen or what I would have to do. My mother could not come to the ceremony because only tribal members were allowed. We had just learned about this and I was upset that she couldn't come. She was disappointed, but told me to remember the details and tell her about it later.

After getting about four hours of sleep, I woke up to the sound of a shower running. I quickly put on my ribbon shirt, a pair of black pants and moccasins. The ceremony was set for 9:30 that morning, so we had to hurry.

On our short drive to the reservation, my stomach felt like it was going to explode! I had to at least get those butterflies flying in formation! I was pretty anxious, but really excited about getting my Indian name.

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**I wanted my grandfather's
Indian name, to be
wholly connected to him.**

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We arrived at the longhouse a little early and I sat with my dad and one of his friends while other people finished setting up tables and chairs.

The ceremony finally began. The Faithkeeper called up the three clans of the Oneida Tribe: the Bear, the Turtle and the Wolf. I am in the Turtle Clan, so I would be named in the second group. The Faithkeeper named all the children in the Bear Clan, then moved on to the Turtles. He named two people, then stepped in front of me. He spoke to me in Oneida. It is a language with unusual sounds like no other language I have ever heard. Most of the words were not understandable to me. He later translated them as: "You must try to learn the Oneida language and our ways. I would like you to come to some of the other ceremonies and events. You now have an Oneida name, 'Kwakkoli,' and the Creator will know you by that name." I was proud to have both my grandfather's names because he was an important man in our tribe.

The Faithkeeper named the others and we all sat down as the Chief said a few more prayers. After about an hour, we all danced to Indian songs and drum music. It was fun, but became tiring after a while.

Next, we ate and drank. One of the drinks was a kind of strawberry juice. It is sacred and part of the ceremony because the Creator gave this gift of the straw-

berry to the Oneida people. The drink was very good.

When it was time to go, we thanked the Faithkeeper and the Chief and gave them gifts. The gift that I received, and will be mine for life, is a very special name that runs through my family and connects me to my grandfather, whom I barely knew. My name also reminds me of the many traditions and beliefs that are part of my heritage and about which I have a lot to learn and understand. I look forward to visiting my reservation as I grow up. ★

The Death of a Daisy

A daisy died for you today.
"He loves me" or "he loves me not"
Was all it gave up life to say.
Each petal falling to the ground
Weighing what I wished to know,
Dropping it without a sound.
And when I saw that I was done
My broken heart brought me back
To where earlier I had begun.
Two daisies died for you today.
And when that final petal flew,
I thought, hey,
What do daisies know, anyway?

—Margaret Lynaugh,
Eighth grade, George Washington Middle School,
Ridgewood, New Jersey

**Nighttide at the Seaside
With an Old Man**

"Sea here, in hour time
Wee walked with tiny footprints
along the sand;
white waves, read cliffs
and moon shine on all
who sees my Quiet Feat
Jack's there, Name
rolling Silence into the waves,
Fire into the air"
In our mourning, here comes the son.

—Seth Myers,
Ninth grade, Bakersfield High School,
Bakersfield, California