

SUSAN {SUSIE} SHAGONABY
Verbal Historian
&
Chief Blackbird Museum 1957 - 1963

HARBOR SPRINGS, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

OBITUARY

SUSAN SHAGONABY, 74

Funeral Mass for **Susan Shagonaby**, 74, of Harbor Springs, will be held Monday at 10 a.m. at the Holy Childhood Catholic Church. **Fr. Regis Watts**, OFM. Will officiate and interment will be in Holy Childhood Cemetery.

Mrs. Shagonaby died early this morning at Lockwood-MacDonald Division of Northern Michigan Hospitals, where she had been a patient for three weeks.

The former **Susan Kiogima** was born Sept. 16, 1906 in Harbor Springs.

Mrs. Shagonaby was curator at the Blackbird Museum in Harbor Springs for many years. She retired as curator two years ago.

She was married to **Charles Shagonaby** who preceded her in death in 1967.

Survivors include two sons, **Charles** of Grand Rapids and **Robert** of Harbor Springs; two daughters, **Evelyn Andrews** of Petoskey and **Kathleen Shepard** of Grand Rapids; nine grandchildren.

Friends may call at the Gillian-Erwin Funeral Chapel in Harbor Springs beginning noon on Saturday.

A scripture service will be held at the funeral chapel at 8 p.m. Sunday.

**Extracted from Greenwood Cemetery Records
Newspaper date Friday, December 15, 1978**

Susie Shagonaby Studies Indians' Past, Looks to Future

A descendent of three Indian chiefs should know all about Indian history. And Mrs. Susan Shagonaby, 59, with an ancestry of Ottawa chieftainship, does not let anybody down. Susie, as she is locally known, built her reputation as a verbal historian while taking care of the Chief Blackbird museum from 1957 to 1963. Visitors to the museum had available a storehouse of Indian lore. Susie, can boast of a regular "clientele" who returned to the museum to hear her stories. She gathered most of her Ottawa history from talking to people. "If I hear about something," she said, "I like to find out what happened, who did it, and just all about it." She says that she is a "good listener," but she can also switch sides and be a magnetic story teller.

She can relate the details of her "royal" ancestors, Chief Pog-si-gon, who lived near the end of the 16th century; Chief Middle Plains, who led the Ottawas of Cross Village; and Chief Black Skin Indian, the father of her husband, who headed the Ottawas of the Grand River.

As time progresses her repertoire of family history and Indian tales enlarges. Because she can speak the tongues of the Chippewas, Potawatomes, and the Ottawas, and understand Algonquin, she can "go up to almost any Indian and talk with him.

"Sometime I would like to go to Canada," Susie said, "and dig up some more history and write a book about Indians in general." She explains that she has not yet done this because of "two natures" oppose each other inside of her. One nature tells me to get up and go write that book. The other tells me 'what they don't know won't hurt them.'"

It is evident, however, in Susie's life that her "get up and go" nature has won out most of the time. For instance, it was this nature that led her to organizing the Indian Pageant in Cross Village from 1950 to 1960.

When she found that her four children were skipping dance practice for the Michigan Indian Foundation's Indian Pageant in the late 1940's, she took it upon herself to assure their attendance at practices, "the first thing you know, I was into it," Susie said.

She had never done any Indian dancing before, but she knew about it from talking and observing all her life. Once "into it" Susie was busy sewing costumes and rallying the Ottawa spirit for her own

shows in Cross Village. Expressing her own spirit, she said, *when I hear the drums, I feel like going right out and dancing.*" Indian drums recently set Susie a dancin' at the Indian pageant in Wisconsin July 2 to 4. She attended with her daughter, Kathleen, and some of her grandchildren.

Susie explains her entrance into the pageants through her belief in tokens. That is, she said, "you live according to the characteristics of an animal. Her father's token was the bear, with the chief characteristic of never leaving any loose ends, sticking to the job." The deer was the token of her mother, who, Susie recalls, told her that its characteristics were being "alert, quick, ready to go."

This former organizer still has the blood. She entertains hopes that the Harbor Springs Chamber of Commerce would be interested in Indian pageants in the future.

Presenting pageants was part of Susie's desire to promote the Indian. "I have always been interested in the Indian, she said. "I have always stuck up for him."

Susie also promotes Indian crafts. She once taught crafts to Boy and Girl Scouts. As one of the leaders of a Holy Childhood School Cub Scout Group, she let them in Indian skits and crafts. She has also been invited to camps to teach Indian crafts. She is now in the process of gathering and preparing materials for the craft work she plans to do this winter.

Several years ago, Susie explained Indian medicine to some doctors from southern Michigan. She inquired how they were led to her. The doctors said that her name is recorded in the Federal building in Detroit as one who is quite an authority on Indians.

Susie's wanderlust temporarily satisfied, she returned in 1932 and married. Her first four children died in a fire. Another four children lived. She resides at 798 N. Washington with her 19 year old son, and a daughter and her family.

Since her school days, Susie has seen the Indian advance in education. She recalls only two Indians attended Harbor Springs High School with her. "there is quite a number of well educated girls and boys now." She said. "They are progressing for a better life."

Susie notices a change in the Indian, once he becomes educated. "He feels less like an Indian," she said. "He wants to leave

the place and go where there is more opportunity and better work."

She herself admitted, "I get itchy feet now and then." A Washington, D.C. museum has offered our Ottawa historian a job. Her decision may take her traveling this fall.

If she does not travel in person, she continues to travel in spirit, via her reading interests, "I read a lot," Susie said, "mostly magazines and the news. I like to know what's going on." A conclusion she has drawn from her readings is that "there is an awful lot of identity of life in general, regardless of nationality." She also recognizes a close similarity between the life, in the Bible, of the people today, and the Indian.

Tomorrow has a certain fascination for Susie. "There is so much I'd like to do," she said with enthusiasm. She anticipates doing quill work, basket weaving, teaching crafts, and sewing more for her children and grandchildren.

Susie's dreams have a robust chance of materializing and expanding. She can count some of her ancestors' lives ten times on her hands. If heredity prevails and her determination and pep continues strong, she will provide a future historian with material for hours of captivating Indian lore.

Extracted from The Harbor-Lite newspaper
Week of July 28 to August 3, 1965, page 8



Mrs. Susan Shagonaby