

Jane Thing-Dumas  
Teachings  
2005-2007

Part Two

Jane Thing-Dumas  
Edited by Julia Doughty

Jane thanks Sycuan chairperson Danny Tucker and staff for providing refreshments and the classroom for the Ethnobotany class.

## **Introduction**

Jane Thing-Dumas and Jane's long-time apprentice, Richard Bugbee, offered an Ethnobotany class at Kumeyaay Community College, Sycuan Reservation from Spring of 2005 to Fall of 2008. The class was held as a sharing circle; participants would bring in plant cuttings and share what they knew of the uses of the plant. And Richard and Jane offered their wealth of wisdoms regarding plants as well as local Indian practices.

The last week of August 2007, Jane suffered a stroke. She says, "I am now forced to use a walker. I can't teach any more, but I haven't given up." We are blessed to continue to have their wisdoms!

### **Jane Thing-Dumas Teachings 2005-2007 Part Two**

I was born under a live oak. I was named Juana Juanita Thing, and later I changed my first name to Jane.

My father's ancestors, we were told, were from Europe. They changed their name from Hogg to Thing. They had stores in El Centro and Tecate. A customs officer asked what his name was and he said, "Call me any damn thing." So his name was Damon Thing.

Kumeyaay language wasn't written until the 1970s. Every family speaks a different dialect.

My first school was in Potrero. When I was in school, I was a Mission Indian. Then I was told I was Diegueno. Then Kumeyaay during World War II. We're the only race in the world that has to have pedigree—have to show our bloodline.

You never read Indian before you hear it.

Kumeyaay means downhill, a slope. Or: People on the cliff facing the water.

Sweetwater means ja-mule. That river is the first sweet water when you're coming up from Mexico.

In the photo at the front of the Delfina Cuero book, the woman on the left is my mother, Isabel Thing, and next to her are my mother's cousin and my aunts.

My mother cleaned up the dead bodies and my father made the coffins. Because we didn't have mortuaries. When I was little, I thought the hammer and saw was just for dead bodies. Later, when I heard them and there weren't any dead bodies around, I figured out what else they were for. My mother would pray all night for the deceased one.

They'd prepare for a few weeks, with dedication, before they'd play Peon. When I was thinking about learning it, my father said, don't even think of it. Because I was waitressing, and he said you can't do the devotion, the preparation. You have to be really focused, even before you are playing the game.

My father loved to play.

My great uncle worked in Potrero. They lived in a run-down house. He called my great-aunt "sister." Relations were very close, so we never asked questions about who was who.

A blind woman across the way from us, she'd hook up her buggy. I never could figure how she did it because she was blind. They lived there, worked there for Potrero raising bees, etcetera.

The county people who lived next door offered my uncle some of the land to homestead in Potrero. We didn't know better; he turned down the land offer. If my uncle had taken it, he'd have five acres.

Grandmother worked at Otay Ranch, and then she'd go to her home at Jamul two to three weeks, and then come back to work at the ranch, the olive trees, for two to three weeks.

I think about those things then, we didn't know any better. We couldn't have had that land. We've lost a lot.

We had beans to eat, and we grew corn, cabbage, and squash. My father would go deer hunting so that we could have meat.

When my father worked at the Chula Vista salt mines, he would get paid 25 cents a cart. And he was lucky if he could get two carts a day. We've lost a lot. History is so different.

If someone was ill and came to see my mother, we would go in their car, sometimes, to Rosarito beach and get clams and mussels. We'd have extra meat then. But we didn't always have the transportation, so it was hard.

We may not have had any money for anything. We'd use the abalone, mussels for survival, so maybe that's why we use abalone for burning the sage. We've come a long way. That's the way we were created. We would gather, simply, to help each other. My mother told me we're one family on earth; we respect what we do. Even the snake is your relation.

They would walk, get there however, to help each other. When you get older, it has meaning. When I was in my 20s and 30s, it didn't have any meaning.

We could have had better living conditions had we known. It wasn't out of ignorance. But the way we lived, what we knew, how we survived.

It wasn't until 1975 that we had electricity.

A van would come out and bring meat—there was no refrigeration. It would come out every three or four days.

We had outhouses in Jamul until the 70s. No one worried about stepping on a snake or scorpion when they'd go to the outhouse at night.

June, 1924 we became U.S. citizens. I was born June 24, 1924, but my father didn't want to say 24/24 so he changed my birthday to June 25.

Now we have classes. I never thought there would be an interest in our ways. This is a dream come true. I pray for each and every one of you. I'm looking forward to having a DNA test. Every goal I've tried to reach, I've reached. And it's not just me, it's because of every one of you. You are the ones who inspire me. My great-great-kids probably can't claim they're Indian. You're my energy; my vitamin pill.

In the old days they'd say: that's a white baby, black baby, yellow baby. We didn't know. I'm very happy they're doing DNA now. We're educating one another. A professor said when you talk about Native people, you don't know. We're all one.

Anna Sandoval and her brother are my relations. They invited me to teach here. I don't have any business welcoming people here. It would be like a neighbor coming into your house and inviting a bunch of people over. But I do it here because Anna invited me, welcomed us.

People from the farthest away area are entitled to our leftovers; they get first choice.

Elders are afraid of the camera. If you take their picture, they say you're taking their spirit away.

My tribe is not on the best terms with everyone.

When I see the coyotes, the fox, I think they're after me. The coyotes are all over. If we can help each other, pray for each other, the plants are coming back. Keep on praying. It's important in our every day life that we live in a positive way. The rain is bringing more flowers.

Sixty-three years ago, I lived in Santa Barbara. At that time my brother was stationed at Pt. Mugu, Vandenberg Air Base, before he was sent over to Germany. My husband was stationed at the army base, Camp Cooke. We couldn't get a house there, so we lived in Santa Barbara. I waitressed in a restaurant in Santa Barbara. My daughter was seven or eight months old. I'd drive to San Diego to see my parents. We were there until my husband got sent overseas, and then I moved back to San Diego. Anything that happens, we have to take it in stride. When you have a detour, there's a reason for it. Topsy turvy, all for a reason that we didn't see.

Oo-oo means owl in Kumeyaay. Pt. Mugu sounds like oo-oo.

The owl is the messenger of night or death. When my elders hear an owl, they bust out crying. You can tell if it's sad news or warning. You can tell if it's good news or bad news. I grew up listening, learning to listen. You can tell the difference. Same way with coyotes when they run in front of you, they caution you, something's bad. The animal doesn't represent something. You just go by the sound, learn to.

All the animals have a different way of conversing with the Indians. They don't tell you someone died, but there's a sadness for a particular family. There's a sign, so you know how to hold your body. Even in my old age, I'm still learning. It's very, very hard.

Many years ago, when we had funerals in Jamul, we had open crying. When everyone was quiet in church, our lady the coyote would be crying in the same way up in the mountains.

Look, listen, observe.

Had I asked then, I might have learned why we did what we did. But we were taught not to ask questions.

*[See appendix for this story of Jamul Reservation's evictions of long-time residents.]*

I used to be proud about Jamul. It used to be the nicest thing.

A lot of people got hurt with the beatings and pepper spray.

I can't let it get the best of me. All I ask is that we say prayers for the cemetery and sacred land. Keep the prayers in your heart for those souls. There's brothers and sisters hating each

other now. The only weapon we have is our prayers. Pray for what is right.

It was my niece [*Karen Toggery*] and cousin [*Walter Rosales*] that got kicked out of there.

Think of the poor souls that are restless. Maybe that's why the animals are coming to us. Your prayers are keeping me going.

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When I was little, the government used to give commodities—we used to get raisins, apricots, peaches, dried apples. And margarine—it was plain and we would add a little button of coloring that came with it to make it yellow. Now you can buy a package of dried fruit and it costs a fortune.

Years ago, we'd go to the store, and I'd talk to my parents and tell them not to buy this or that any more. But now because of the language classes, I can't do that any more because the store clerks know what I'm saying. Today I feel seven feet tall because they're learning the language.

When I look at these flowers, it's a reminder that everything is important. Now I look at each flower. I didn't notice it before. Mother earth—we thank the creator. You just don't know how much I appreciate it.

I hope the creator will walk with each and every one of you and show you your way, to keep it going.

I would get scratched from scrub oak, a hairline scratch. I'd put a little sugar on it, leave it for awhile, then wash it off. When I got stuck with cactus stickers, I'd put the film from the inside of an egg shell on it, let it dry, then pull it off.

Learn to live with what we have here. Appreciate it. Plants appreciate it. Learn to talk to your plants in any language, and they listen. You get that peaceful feeling.

Richard and I are working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife because they say there's a relationship between plants and animals.

People would come who were really sick, and my mother wouldn't give them anything but woodrat stew. And they'd get well. Woodrat only eats plants, and their home is very organized. They have different rooms in their nest—they have a bathroom, a bedroom, and a living room.

My mother said her grandson when he was born, he was very skinny, so she fed him woodrat soup for a few months.

My mother was able to assist in breach birth. Both mother and daughter were hard to control, but she was able to assist the birthing so that the baby came out alright.

I was a home health aid. I'd transport elders because they didn't trust doctors. They didn't understand that they made these people to be doctors. I was almost trilingual. Before I retired, I was a traditional health representative. I'd explain to the elder what was going on and what they needed to do. A man in his 80s walked out of the clinic saying he was o.k., he had eczema. But he hadn't understood that what they'd told him was that he had emphysema.

I started in the 70s working at the Indian Health Clinic. First it was on Florida St., then 1st

Ave., and then Ray St.

Diabetes is like a stray dog. If you say “it’s my diabetes,” it will stay with you. When the creator gives you a disease, it’s not yours. It’s passing through you. It’s given to you to help you learn. Don’t say, “I’m taking my diabetes medicine.” Say, “I’m taking my survival medicine.” Just like saying your intent to the plant.

And the fly I was always swatting, come to find out, is the one who in its infancy will eat our skin infections. When I heard that even maggots help infection, I understood even more that everything here is for a purpose.

I understand now, now it’s a time when women don’t think anything of wearing pants. Men wear pants, they sweat, they have to for protecting their legs for their jobs. I had to wear pants when I worked for Control Data and then Honeywell. I did assembly work. At Honeywell, I was the lead lady for assembling computers.

But men don’t have their moons, they don’t get that self cleansing every month, they wear pants, they do sweat lodges.

“On her moon” means menstruating.

Postmenopausal women go into women’s sweats.

I used to dry cactus fruit.

Dodder pulls from the plant, so if you use dodder from sumac, you might get an allergic reaction—because of the sumac. The dodder must be from buckwheat and not from other plants.

I used to pick orange blossoms from my backyard for my children, but I wouldn’t do that now because of the pollution.

A woman would be the one to give the plants to the person with the problem. A man would deal with the mind.

Kumeyaay women wore skirts made from plants. It would have been easier to wear animal skins. So there must have been a reason, a relationship with plants. And it’s more work to get the soft part of the bark of willow or cottonwood.

Rabbit skin was wrapped around twine—not tanned skin.

Henry Rodriguez from La Jolla reservation said he used to eat the white sage leaves with the bubbles. When he said that, it surprised me because we used to do that, too, when we were children. We learned when we were older that the bubble is from a parasite.

It’s nice to sleep on a deer skin. And bugs, we didn’t worry about them, they weren’t bad like they are now.

Most plants are gathered on full moon days, above ground plants. And when the moon is dark, gather below ground plants.

My father passed away July, 1980.

That spring, some kids put datura in a blender, drank it, and died. I told my father. He said they didn't use the proper amount.

I often told people I'd use the leaves for a poultice for arthritis if I had it. But elders told me not to use it.

A lot of people would come to my mother when they were very sick, and they would stay with us two or three days. I realize now it was so she could monitor them. I don't know how we did it. They would stay with us, and she would feed them, even if we didn't have enough groceries, for a whole week. We had fresh vegetables and chickens. Her food was very bland. We didn't have salt, she didn't add salt to her cooking like they do nowadays. I did not know back then about allergies.

All her cooking was bland. She boiled and fried and baked. She made homemade beef jerky. She would dry it, and then she would make creamed beef after it was dried.

They're taking peanuts out of the padre games 'cause kids have been getting sick.

And I've been doing fry bread, and I'm cooking it in canola oil. We have to be careful.

If you add too much salt to food, you can't take it out. You can put in a little, but if you put in too much, you can't take it out. But unbeknownst to me, when I think about what she did, what she knew, we didn't know about allergies then, that word. But she cooked very bland food. Now I know why she did it. So you're never too old to learn.

When you make fry bread, the batter is sticky sometimes. If that happens, you're not thinking right. You have to sit down for a little bit.

A woman at a pow wow was making fry bread, and it wasn't coming out good, it was sticky. I told her to sit down and start thinking right. So she did, and when she got up again, her fry bread came out good.

We made fry bread because that's what we could make from the government commodities—we had flour, lard, and beans.

Today I cheat—I used to use flour and baking powder. Now I use self-rising flour and buttermilk or milk with vinegar. I don't refrigerate the milk—it's all room temperature—or now I use buttermilk powder.

If you're in a hurry, and you're not thinking right, that's what makes your family ill. I have to rearrange my life. Most of my life I worked two jobs. I had to make up my mind to take care of my family, to not be angry. How we feed our family is how we feel. I'm eighty-three now [May, 2007], and I learned the hard way.

A lot of people are dying from carbon monoxide. Smoking might kill you in twenty years. If you can grow your own tobacco, that's fine. Keep it sacred.

My mother would be unhappy about passing around the abalone shell with sage. She would have had someone stand at the door and put smoke on people as they came through the door. Passing the shell around, you can pick up negative energy from others.

The two oldest things that my mother would gather were pine pitch and creosote. She wouldn't gather plants ahead of time to have on hand for illnesses because that would mean you were bringing on illness by expecting it. She kept the creosote because it was way out in the desert.



My mother made plain food. She very seldom put pepper on the food she cooked. She put very little salt in it. It always seemed so different when we ate somewhere else. A lady not too long ago died because she was allergic to the peanut oil from a restaurant.

Fifty years ago, I would have said oh, you were lying. I didn't really know about allergies then. I used to eat from the garden. My mother used very little seasoning. So this is what we have to be careful about. Her food was very bland. Even my babies—I had to switch my milk. How we cook is ok, but what we add is important.

In 1999 I lost all that weight, and the doctor sent me to a shrink for depression. And I figured out it wasn't that—I was sick. Cancer.

I'm sure mother earth will be very happy that we're sharing. This is very good that we can share. It helps us know how we can survive.

## Appendix

*This "Casino Controversy" article is from Wikipedia. It give a summary account of what happened at the Jamul Reservation regarding the eviction of Jane's relatives.*

### Casino Controversy

In 1999, the Tipai Band of Kumeyaay Indians, with 64 members living on 6 acres (24,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of [sovereign land](#) in the Jamul area designated the "Jamul Indian Village," announced their intent to develop a new [hotel and casino](#). The original plan, which required the US government to [annex](#) 81 acres (330,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of surrounding land to complete the project, met with strong opposition from local residents. After the annexation effort was denied, the casino plan was revised to fit the 6-acre (24,000 m<sup>2</sup>) reservation grounds. Despite continuing opposition from townspeople, a ceremonial groundbreaking took place on 10 December 2005.

The \$200 million project is financed by [Lakes Entertainment](#) of Minnesota. The casino's original concept was to be developed according to the State of California's [gambling compact](#). Proponents emphasize increased revenue for the state and the tribe, as well as 2000 new jobs for all members of the community, while opponents fear strain on its police and fire services, a major impact on the local water supply, and argue that a 15-story building will permanently change the town's character. The chief concern is the increased traffic on the main road through the town, Highway 94. The proposed casino location is such that all the traffic to and from would likely pass through the middle of the town.

On Feb 7, 2003, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs [held a meeting](#) to discuss the environmental impact report produced by the Jamul Indian Tribe in support of the casino project. Hundreds of Jamul residents showed up to express almost unanimous opposition to the casino.

On Sept 13, 2006, casino organizers [held a meeting](#) with the townspeople on site to address their concerns. The casino plan was further clarified, with an artist's conception of the proposed six story casino and 12-story hotel complex on display. A court reporter was on hand to receive comments for or against the proposal, and of the 40 who did so, three were in favor. Most of the negative comments were in regard to increased traffic on Highway 94, which narrows to a two-lane road at the proposed site of casino.

On Mar. 10, 2007, [the tribe evicted three residents](#) (not tribal members) who had been living on the Indian Village land but who opposed the casino- Karen Toggery and her son and Walter Rosales. Local Jamulians gathered to protest the evictions. The Tribe hired a local security company and "deputized" them as "Jamul Tribal Police." These guards then utilized pepper spray and metal batons on some of the protestors who trespassed onto Tribal property and refused to leave. Tribal chairman Leon Acebedo [signed an agreement](#) witnessed by local Board of Supervisors member Dianne Jacob that stipulated that the homes of the evicted would not be destroyed for at least seven days. The homes were demolished two days later, leading to considerable controversy in the community. An unrelated statement was released that same day stating that the tribal leaders no longer wished to negotiate with the state regarding the casino

and were planning a casino with Class II games only- which do not include slot machines- as casinos with only Class II games are not governed by compacts with the State of California.

On October 1, 2008 [the tribe sued CalTrans](#) after months of unsuccessful negotiations. The tribe claimed their sovereignty gives them the right to use the land that they see fit. CalTrans maintained that they represent the public's safety and that they will not approve the permits to put a stoplight in the middle of 94 unless more environmental impact studies (EIR) are performed. The tribe continued to maintain that CalTrans' preferred, safe alternative of building a driveway off a side road, Melody Lane, was "improper meddling by the state". In the article cited above, a member of the tribe's Executive Council, Carlene Chamberlain, stated "The Minnesota company backing the casino, Lakes Entertainment, can't get funding for design and construction until it's clear that gamblers will be able to get to the slot machines.". As the tribe appears unable or unwilling to meet CalTrans' requirements, this lawsuit must be won by the tribe before the casino can be built.

During Lakes Entertainment's review of their 2008 results on March 12, 2009, they indicated that the Jamul Indian Tribe and CalTrans' had reached an understanding and that the Jamul Indian Tribe had agreed to create an EIR for the revised project. Lakes indicated also that the project would be re-evaluated in light of the financial environment and would be monitored closely. Although Lakes did say they wouldn't abandon the project completely, they reduced the "fair market value" of the project by 80%. In addition, Lakes revised their estimate of when the project could be completed to 2014.

2. [^ "American FactFinder". United States Census Bureau. <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Retrieved 2008-01-31.](#)

*"Casino Controversy."* *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.  
16 Nov. 2010. Web. 27 Nov. 2010.