

# Betty Billie interview

Translating For KUED and  
By Phyllis Whitehorse

**In your recollection what do you remember your great grandparents maternal and paternal grandparents told you about the long walk when you were growing up?**

**Betty:** Ok, hello to everyone. I think the reason why was because of the Dine' land and because they were accused of stealing that was the reasons why they went on the long walk.

**Betty:** Ok, hello everyone. What they are asking me I don't really know about but I will try to answer them. The people that went on the long walk were probably my grandmother and grandfathers on my maternal and paternal sides of my family. The reason why they were all gathered on the long walk was probably because they were accused of stealing. They were all gathered to walk on a terrible journey and spend some years at the place they were at and then sent home. They were going to be sent further south (white flat) but instead they were sent back to their land. The Dine' people were so happy that they were sent home. When they came home to their land they were given a chance to live how they want to again with their families. So we are here trying to tell these stories that we heard from our grandparents. We don't really know what happened on the long walk but we try to tell it about how it was told to us. I was also told that when the Dine' people came back from the long walk they were given sheep to herd and take care of. They would use the wool from the sheep to make Dine' blankets for clothing. Before the long walk Dine' people used to wear woven yucca or other plants to use as clothing to cover themselves. They used to weave yucca or different plants for shoes. They used to wrap them around their feet and tie it with strings. That was what I was told about the experiences they had.

**What were the conditions of the long walk from the people who made it?**

Yeah, the things that happen to them were they were abused when they were gathered and they had blistered feet on their journey. Some of the people, they had to leave behind because they couldn't travel because they had blistered feet. Some of the people were ill including infants and children. That's what I was told.

**How were they treated by the soldiers?**

The soldiers abused them while they were herded. I don't know if the soldiers were on foot or they rode horses while they herded the people. The people thought that they were being taken through wooded areas but it was all flat all around them. They were also abused when they got to their destination and while they lived there. All they had to eat there was everything made of corn.

When they were herded they were abused and also when they were living there. They were treated like they were in real battle (like prisoners). The people (soldiers) who captured the people probably also died and not living to this day. They abused the people when they herded them. The people were taught to farm and grow things which they did. That was how the stories were told.

**What do you think about your grandmother and the way they were treated?**

I wondered why they herded the people to that place (Fort Sumner) and how they abused them. I wondered why they didn't bury the people that died there in a place where they should be buried but instead they just threw the bodies there. When I visited the place there I was told that the people that died were over there so I just put some flowers there. I just told them, "my ancestors whoever you might be, my great great great grandmother grandfather, even though you were abused and put in this place, your spirit is still around on this mother earth. That's what I told them when I was there. It was

such a long drive even traveling in a vehicle we got there at sun set. Our ancestors have really suffered there. To this day our President and leaders do not really think about what had happened at Fort Sumner. I think of that place as my land and they should build something there so we could make money off of it and it should have been like that.

**How do you think they are remembered from your point of view?**

I really don't appreciate what happened there. I wondered if we were not sent back to our land, I wonder where we would be living at, probably not here where we are living now. My ancestors who came back from that place were overcame with emotions tears of happiness to be home and were glad to get to come back to their land and not some place else. I don't know where we would be living at if they were not sent back to their land maybe someplace else. The people who were sent there was not only from one area they were from all different areas around the land. I don't know if the (Ozii) people were part of the herd but I don't know maybe they weren't here yet at that time. Also the (Nastisa) people. When the people were sent back to there land some of the people stayed at (Beldill dacinili) they now live there and also at (Teesto). Some people who were from here live at (Teesto) to this day. Some of the people who were captured ran away from there at night. Some stories I heard was that some of them came back to Farmington around that area. Some of them came back to this area at night. These are some of the stories that I was told. Some of them didn't care if they died on the way back just as long as they came back. The people who ran away from Fort Sumner believed that if they got into the mountains the bears would take care of them. The people believed that if they communicate with the bears they listened to them and felt protected. They believed that the mountain creatures took care of them and that's why they came back to their land. I wondered why they did that to us. Sometimes I really don't like the white people because of how they treated our people. It is not the white people who are living now that did those things but their relatives who lived at that time are the ones that did those things. But sometimes I really don't like them to this day of what they did to our people when I am out there among them.

**You talked about our leaders?**

I told them about what I think about the place where our people were at, as my land and I wanted to know if they could do something about that I don't want the white people to take that. Now there are a lot of people living there and a school is built there as well. The structures that my ancestors were in are not all there, except a small ruin standing there. There were probably bigger buildings there in the past but there is little left. I tried talking with my leaders about building motels and other things to profit from it so we can receive money from it. I don't know why the chapter leaders do not do something about it.

**How do you think we should remember the people?**

I want to remember them by putting up something like motels but the president and leaders don't do something about it. When reelection come around they say that they would do this and that but they never do what I am trying to suggest. Maybe if we suggest that again they might do it. This is what I'm thinking about. I want to remember my people by something.

**Please describe your grandmother, what kind of a woman was she?**

She was from here. My distant grandfather Billy and Lilly Bitda also their daughter Helen Besalt are the ones who told me about the long walk. Billy's clan is (Nonstisha) and Helen's clan is (Tashinii). I traveled a lot with them. I wasn't told stories from my own grandparents. But these people who told me the long walk stories told me a lot maybe some of the stories are not all told to me but they did their best. Billy knows a lot of stories about the long walk and also the creation of the beginning. He told me the correct stories and sometimes I listen to others when they are telling the same stories and usually are not correctly told. That is how I know the stories.

**The ones that raised your mother, how were they raised? Did they have sheep and so on?**

I was raised in a Hogan with plants on top to make a roof that is how I was raised. I was raised poor. I used to herd sheep and when I got married I married a man whose family had a lot of livestock. I used to herd sheep and took care of their livestock. I used to herd sheep in the mountains. My mother also has live stocks. My sisters have sheep and other livestock but that was after I left. I have children and that is what kind of a lady I am.

## **Blackhorse Mitchell interview**

### **Interviewer**

Blackhorse let's talk about the Long Walk. Did you have ancestors who were on the Long Walk, and did they talk about the treatment and what happened?

### **Blackhorse**

Well my grandmother use to tell me about her first grandmother named "Lady Blue Gap" who went there to Fort Sumner and came back.

### **Interviewer**

What was that story?

### **Blackhorse**

The story was that she went through hard times. Like she said she had to be careful; they had to walk with her relatives because there were other people like Mexicans and other tribes wanted to get hold of these Navajo girls and steal them, and that's why she had to walk real carefully right in the middle of all of those women. That's what she tells me.

### **Interviewer**

And how did the soldiers on the Long Walk treat them?

### **Blackhorse**

The way they were treated is a lot of these soldiers hadn't had much experience with women, and they said women have to stay in the group even if they have to go out and do the bladder emptying. They just have to be in a group because these soldiers would just get them there and molest them, and that's what my grandmother told me in her oral history.

### **Interviewer**

You were telling me about the story of the pregnant woman getting shot. Tell me that story.

### **Blackhorse**

The story is that the pregnant woman was a slave, or has been kept somewhere in Las Vegas—New Mexico at the time—and she was a servant girl, and one of the Mexicans I guess liked her and she got pregnant for him and then ran away and then came back to her country. But it just so happened that it was 1863 when the Navajos got round up, and she was going back to cross the Rio Grande River when she was being discovered by the guy that she got pregnant for and for some reason, the Mexicans liked her as being the house servant, but this guy recognizes that it was something that the guy gave to the girl; it was a crucifix, and she had that so when soldiers take these pregnant ladies over the hill, when they get so tired, he said they would just kill them, shoot them. And when that happened; it just so happened that one of the Mexicans decided to take the girl over the hill and shoot her because one of the privates wouldn't shoot her, because it was against his will and that's how he discovers it was one of his relatives girlfriend, and so he just saves her and then he didn't shoot the girl. That's the oral history that my grandmother always talked about. It's just that I was so young and when all of the women get together—and my grandma and the ladies would just be telling stories about Hweeldi (Fort Sumner, the Long Walk)—they'd be talking about whose grandparents went and who came back. That's what they'd

be talking about. Now it seems like it's more valuable to me than when I was a young kid listening to these ladies talk about all of those experiences that their great grandmothers had—those experiences on the Long Walk.

**Interviewer**

What did they find at Fort Sumner when they got there? What kind of stories did they tell?

**Blackhorse**

What they tell me was that the place was a barren place. It didn't have much except this river and they had to dig a hole and live down in there, and what the soldiers did is they gave them straws for bedding and they just kind of like lived in the hole and then some places they had to cover them with either canvas and they said it was a terrible experience. Some people died in there. Starvation and they didn't know how to cook; they didn't know what flour was; they didn't know what coffee was, and I remember my grandmother saying that some Navajos boiled coffee beans for days and it wouldn't turn into beans. Every time they boil it, it just doesn't soften up. And some of them tried to eat it like that—and it killed them.

**Interviewer**

What do you think of your grandmother and other relatives who made the Long Walk? What kind of emotions do you have?

**Blackhorse**

I don't regret it in some ways, but I know to me I'm always thinking about today is a different life. Today is like 2007 and it's kind of my life is just moving on. And I would feel that that was what the government meant to educate a lot of us Navajos today, and it seems like my life is to just do my best and live with the kind of life I'm having. And that's the way I see it. But looking back I know it was a hard time because I would think the Spaniards failed to educate the Navajos to begin with. They were here first. And certainly we'd think that Navajos would be good speakers of Spanish if they were well provided with school. It seems like Americans kind of broke the ice by teaching us Navajos how to speak good English.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about the boarding schools. When you went to school how did that happen and how did you feel about leaving your family?

**Blackhorse**

Well I hear a lot of older people talk about boarding school life; that some of them are being taken off from the home or policemen came around and took them there or they've been taken away while they were herding sheep and they didn't know whereabouts they were going and the parents didn't even know they were missing. For me it was experience where I didn't know anything about English or the white man where I grew up. My grandmother went to school but she never spoke English in front of me until she met this trader's son, who was leading a team of mules on the mesa, and I was sitting in the juniper tree looking down at them exchanging conversation in English, and the one word that I didn't want to forget was "hello"—not knowing that it was a word of greeting. And since then I've made it enter a song called "hello," and sang that to my sheep while I was growing up because I didn't want to forget the word. But when I went to boarding school I didn't just go, or I didn't get stolen or struggled to get to boarding school. But when my grandmother discovered that my cousin's sister had enrolled me in the boarding school in Ignacio, and she talked to me not in a nice way, but she said, "If you ever miss sheep, you go to one of these white man's corals you find the sheep and hide that sheep, but never think about my sheep." So she says, "If you ever go there, don't even think about home because that's what you wanted. If they want to spank you, that's what it costs to learn that powerful tool, English." And I believed that. And that's how I went to school. I don't regret going to a boarding

school—they taught me a lot of good things, and for that reason, I felt that I made it this far. I made it this far for myself and for my little family and, therefore, I produced a book. I'm an artist; I'm an author. I'm also a recording artist. That's what it made me. I felt like without that I wouldn't have made it; I would have been a shepherd with a lot of lice in my hair today, and it just kind of changed my outlook. Now I teach Navajo language full-time and I'm glad that I can read and write Navajo language and teach it to new generations today.

**Interviewer**

So if you spoke Navajo or practiced your religion at the schools, what happened to you? Did they punish you?

**Blackhorse**

To me I've enjoyed the assignment that my first account was to go to Catholic Church—and I loved the little grape juice wine; that was one of the best... I wasn't listening to whatever they were talking about—it was the wine and the bread. And then my friends told me to go to a Presbyterian church. They serve you chicken if you go there, and so I changed to be a Presbyterian and then one of my friends said, "no, go to the Baptist church, they send you good present." And that's the best part. And to me I didn't know I was suppose to be serious about religion; it's just that I was enjoying whatever it is that they introduced to me, even English. I've been trying to speak good English since then and I'm still studying it.

**Interviewer**

What do you think the Long Walk did to the Navajo identity? How do people feel about that today?

**Blackhorse**

I think it changed a number of things, but I get to thinking that like all the things— like fry bread and fried potatoes and all of these things—I'm beginning to see that it was Spanish. I understand my great grandma; she says that Navajos didn't do all of that. It was the Mexicans who taught them how to make a lot of things that we do today, like making fry bread. And here on the reservation we always ate blue cornmeal or yellow-white cornmeal, and it was always that and it had nothing to do with deep fried stuff today.

**Interviewer**

Were you ever punished at boarding school for anything?

**Blackhorse**

I have, and like I said, my grandma said to expect it and that's what it takes if you're learning English, and that's how I took it. Everything came in English. If I got punished, that was my own mistake and I always think that where I went to the boarding school was one of the best boarding schools that I can think of. I hear about other boarding schools and how they treat kids, but the place I went, Ignacio Boarding School, was set in the southern Ute reservation, and I think they did well worth job because all of the students that I went to school with they're well to do today. Some of them became good artists and I still see them and they have made it cheap, and I felt that if that boarding school didn't do a good job, I wouldn't have seen this today.

**Interviewer**

When you think about the land here and home, what does it mean to you?

**Blackhorse**

It's precious and I know the land is getting small. People are building homes and this is about the last place that I grew up on, and that's where my hogan is sitting, my house, and I still have sheep and I still have the family ranch called "Popping Rock Ranch" and we still ranch there, we go there. There is plenty of water. We mean to keep it that way. That's where my grandmother raised me and that's

where my grandfather was, and before my grandfather, the great lady named "Lady Saltwater" found the place, "Pomer Mesa," and that's where I'm from, actually.

**Interviewer**

What kind of woman was your grandmother? Tell me a little bit about her.

**Blackhorse**

My grandmother? She was kind of mean in her own way, and I understand she took that after "Lady Blue Gap"—her name is (ah sah twa das tan). She went to Fort Sumner. I guess her story was that she had fought with the Utes before she went to Fort Sumner and she was a lady that knew how to handle men and she was raised by "Lady Blue Gap" My great grandmother was raised by her until she married my grandfather on the Pomer Mesa, and she was, I would say, a great lady. I understand she was a great diagnostician too—my grandmother was. She was a very strict woman and I think she raised me right even though she spanked me now and then, and I always felt that this comes with discipline because of my own doing.

**Interviewer**

Are there any other stories that she told you about the Long Walk?

**Blackhorse**

She told me all kinds of stories where there are mini-house. She was married to a mini-house clan that, she always said, that the first mini-house clan was Otaywa, who, I guess was killed by Don Diego, who killed all of the Pueblo men. But it was a lady and a couple others; they went to Orievie in those days—how long ago that was—but she was talking about it and so when Orievie got invaded by the Spaniards again, a lot of years after, she's the one who escaped through Navajo country who became mini-house clan. That's what she tells me.

**Interviewer**

We were just talking about English being such a powerful tool on the Long Walk... tell me that story.

**Blackhorse**

As I was saying, English is a very powerful tool and I believe it because if you have a good grammar skill, you got a good English skills and you can almost to the point say whatever it is you want to say, and I've always been told—even when I went to the University—to never use too many ah's; never to stutter. It's best to use your English grammar fully. And it's a good source and it's very powerful, and I believe that.

**Interviewer**

Tell that story one more time about the Long Walk and the pregnant girl. How did that happen?

**Blackhorse**

The pregnant girl was not the only... the girl that I described wasn't the only girl that was pregnant. There was a lot of others, and in the story, some of them were left. The ladies did bring kids into the world—they just said they left them wrapped under a tree. That's what they did, and some of them when they'd pass by these Pueblo communities, they just gave it away and some Mexicans took the babies, and they don't know what happened. More likely it's the Pueblo that raised these kids that did come back, but not for the Spanish, because I was reading about it too in the Catholic records of New Mexico. It says that the Catholics did keep good records, but some of these kids that grew up only knowing Spanish citizenship, like how to... the words that they spoke was mostly Spanish and they made it initially, even the girls and the boys said, "I can't go back because I can't speak the language. I've lost the tradition." And they didn't want to hamper any Navajos to say I can't speak Navajo anymore, so actually they stayed, and I can see that. A lot of years, when I went to the University of New Mexico, I met this Spanish guy; he was my classmate. I asked him one day how come he don't

want to talk about his past. And so one day we were sitting in a bar, and after him drinking a number of margaritas, he was more open about it. And he said that in the attic of his old grandmother, he found a diary that said that her great great grandma was a Navajo, and so he told me that he must be a Navajo, but don't know which clan he belongs to, and that's why he don't talk about his Spanish background. That's what he tells me. So I gather that there are a lot of Navajos out there that have become Mexicans, and, have become Spanish citizens.

**Interviewer**

What did your grandmother tell you about the Long Walk home when they came back from Fort Sumner?

**Blackhorse**

They said it was kind of like a ruin. But she was telling me when they were coming back, she sang me some songs that had become songs... some Navajo, some day, when they saw Mount Taylor for the first time on the wagon they made a song about it. And we still have those songs called, "The Wagon Song," and she sang those songs for me, and that's how I know about some of the songs that were made that way. They said it was a ?trail return although there was hardly anything. My grandmother said that my great grandmother had to rebuild, and then she was telling me that her great grandmother, "The Lady Saltwater," went to, I guess, Toy aut. Evidently she knew this Ute and I guess that's where she got some sheep and some horses and that's how it was a restart, but my first grandmother, my grandfather's side of my grandma, she was taken to Colorado at the age of three. She was born in 1860 and her hogan, the fort hogan that she spent four years, and it still sits on the Colorado—the only hogan you will find still sitting there in a hidden place on the Colorado.

**Interviewer**

What did she tell you when they first saw Mount Taylor?

**Blackhorse**

They said that it was overwhelming; that some of them cried. Some of them just made new songs, and they said that's how they felt. They said their heart felt really strong when they saw the mountain. That's what she tells me. They said it was really thrilling—it was overwhelming. They said a lot of people saw that, and what they did, is they kneeled down and kissed the earth that they were going home. That's what she tells me.

## **Dan Y. Begay interview**

**Dan Y. Begay**

My name is Dan Y. Begay, and I'm of the **(in Navajo), that's my clan (in Navajo) my father's (in Navajo). I am really originally from Blue Gap,** Arizona, west of Chinle, Arizona. Right now I'm residing here in Shiprock, and got married. I've got my wife and two kids, a young man and a young lady. I ended up here on this farm because I got married to my wife.

**Interviewer**

Tell me a little bit about the Long Walk. What did your grandfather tell you about the Long Walk?

**Dan Y. Begay**

One day as a little boy I was playing around and he and another man were talking, and I was playing there. I was probably around four years old and he and that man were talking about some of the people that were decedents from that Long Walk. And after that man left I turned around and talked to my great grandfather and told him that I read about that Long Walk and he asked me, he said, "What did

you read about that Long Walk?" And I told him that there was an individual by the name of Kit Carson, along with the United States Government and the United States Army, that came around and rounded up the people there in Chinle area around Canyon de Chelly area, and from there they were taken down to Fort Sumner, Heewldi. I told him that the people spent a couple of years down there, and they were brought back eventually after a treaty was made, and that they got back into that area. What I read I told him. At the time that I told him he asked me, "Is there anything else that you read about that trip and the Walk?" And I told him that was about it—that the people went down there, and in spite of the hardships, and came back also. And then he asked me, "anything else?" And I told him, "that was it." And then he told me that there is a lot of things that happened on that journey down, and what people were there, and also the journey back. Going down that there was a lot of people; some of them sick, some of them old, and some of them were children, babies, old people; that some of them were left along that trail because they couldn't keep up—they didn't have the strength. So they were left along that trail maybe with just a little bit of food and water and fire—and that was it. A lot of them never made it down there. And coming up the same thing: there was a lot of people that were left along that trail. Also, even some of the mothers that had babies—and the mothers couldn't produce milk because she was so malnourished that she couldn't keep that baby—and as small as those babies were, some of them became very heavy. So in the course of walking and trying to keep up, because the mother couldn't produce milk, some of those babies were left along that trail too. Old people, sick people were left along that trail again, and those people never made it back. That is what he told me.

**Interviewer**

When you think about them today, how do you feel about your ancestors who made that trip?

**Dan Y. Begay**

For me at this day and time, so many sacrifices were made. I heard that the struggle, and how the people were taught: we need to survive for our children to be, for our grandchildren to be, that the Navajo, the Dine people, the culture, the tradition, the spirituality, that we must go on for the sake of our children. That is what they talked about. So that way, being a grandchild to those people that made it back, I feel proud that they made that journey. That in spite of all the adversities that they made it back so I could be here to be alive; to be able to experience life, to see my children grow up and become educated and have good jobs and to experience, also my grandchildren that they can have a good life also.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about the coyote ceremony that we were talking about earlier.

**Dan Y. Begay**

While the people were there, they wanted so much to come back here to this part of the country and to the Four Corners area back up into the Black Mountain area, that one of the people there, that made that journey there, my great grandfather told me, was a great great great grandmother. Her name was **(in Navajo... as sa sana jenee)** and that she had the hand-trembling way, and along with other medicine people, they did diagnosis how can we get back up in here? So according to those diagnosis, ceremonies were done, and somewhere at the time the treaty of 1868 was going to be formulated that there was a coyote that was brought in to one of the ceremonies and the people stayed up there, that the coyote is going to tell us where we're going to be going. At the end of that ceremony if the coyote heads south, we're going to be taking east, but if it goes north, we're going to be able to go back to our country—Navajo land within the Four Sacred Mountains.

**Interviewer**

How did people feel when they made that journey home?

**Dan Y. Begay**

According to my great grandfather, some of the people cried as soon as they saw the Sacred Mountains. As far as Mount Taylor around Grants area, when they saw that mountain, the peaks, people cried because you know they were coming close to their homeland. People sang songs, what we call "Sacred Mountain songs," to honor the Sacred Mountains that they were coming home. They cried and they were elated. From then on they came back into this area, and that they were happy, and although the struggle and the pains and also the physical effort and the emotional and mental trauma of keeping up and just the strength of everybody to make it back up into this area, that it was a happy journey from then on once they saw the Sacred Mountains—the landmarks.

**Interviewer**

What do you think the Long Walk meant to the Navajo and how they were treated on the Walk?

**Dan Y. Begay**

To me the Long Walk represents at this time that we are a people that are survivors; that we have the strength physically and emotionally, mentally and also spiritually to be able to overcome whatever obstacle may loom in our path; that we are unique and can experience such trauma, and yet be able to survive—and that we have survived. My people have survived, and we will survive from here forth.

**Interviewer**

Lets talk about your boarding school experience. You mentioned what it was like when you were left at boarding school and your parent's left, and soon after you were being hit. Tell me that story.

**Dan Y. Begay**

There was a time that I was taken to a boarding school, with the insistence by the government people that I'd be taken to a boarding school. I remember hearing my dad talking about it being told that, "Your son has to go to boarding school. If you don't, you may have to serve jail time if you don't comply. We're taking your son to boarding school." So he and my mother one day took me to the boarding school in Pinon, Arizona. And they left me there. And the minute they left I started to cry, and I wanted so much to run after them but the instructional aides that were there kept me there, and as soon as my mother and my father were beyond hearing distance I was crying and the individual that was there hit me on side of the head—slapped me and told me to quit crying. I didn't understand the language, the English language at that time, and I guess he was telling me not to cry. And with the pain of being hit I began to cry louder and louder, and the slaps became harder and harder too, and eventually I realized that I had to quiet down and submit to being terrorized at that time.

**Interviewer**

You mentioned some of the boys were hit so hard their ears would bleed.

**Dan Y. Begay**

There was a time when I saw one of the kids, a young man, and he was hit on the side of the head so hard that he flew across the room and when he got up, after he got up, he had blood coming out of his ears. And I didn't realize what it was about until later on in the years that I knew that he probably had ruptured ear drums from that.

**Interviewer**

And you were telling me about your experience with cheese?

**Dan Y. Begay**

One of the things, there at the government schools, that we were served food, and on one day on the menu was cheese, and cheese was foreign to me. I didn't know anything about cheese. I'd never experienced cheese until that one day, and when I got done eating I didn't know what it was and so I saw some of the other kids eating it. But when I picked it up, the stench from it, the smell of it made me kind of gag, so I just put it aside and the individual, the instructional aide, came around. He told

me, "Eat that cheese." So I picked it up and tried to eat it, but yet again I couldn't put it into my mouth because it stunk to me. So eventually he grabbed me behind the head and he told me to "open your mouth," and he grabbed my jaw also with the other hand, forced it open and shoved that cheese into my mouth. No matter how hard I tried to chew it to where I could swallow, I couldn't do it. I was gagging on it. I was throwing up, and yet he shoved it into my mouth. I don't know how I swallowed, but I finally did.

**Interviewer**

What happened to you if you spoke Navajo or practiced your Navajo religion?

**Dan Y. Begay**

One of the things that was emphasized on a daily basis was to talk English, not to talk Navajo, because the Navajo language was what we call, "Satan"; what they told us the language. That is what we were told. So I was told not to speak that language. And then there were certain times when I went home and sometimes when I was home my great grandfather would go ahead and administer corn pollen to my mouth and my head to make my journey. But when I got back to school, if the instructional aides found that I had corn pollen on top of my head, they would tell me, "rinse it off, you've been practicing the devil's ways again." So I had to go in there and wash my hair and get rid of the corn pollen.

**Interviewer**

How about your dress? Did they encourage you to dress a certain way?

**Dan Y. Begay**

Ya, and some of the things that we were told, and I was told, was the same thing—and how to dress, how to wear my shoes, and even to the point where the haircut was also military style. I encountered that when... the same kind of haircut when I was drafted during the Vietnam War. It was pretty, well, military style, and we were checked. We would stand in line and our gig line, you know, from our buttons, our belt everything. We had to conform to what was considered regulation as far as dress.

**Interviewer**

What happened to you if you did not conform?

**Dan Y. Begay**

If I didn't conform, or any of the kids didn't conform, we were made to scrub the floor, pull extra detail, stand in the corner and be punished. Some of the things that we encountered at the hands of people; it depended also on the mood of that individual. If the individual was kind of happy and in a happy mood, the punishment wasn't as severe, yet if that individual came in and he wasn't having a good day, the punishment was severe even to the point of being spanked, whipped, whatever. Whatever was close at hand he'd grab onto and hit us with it.

**Interviewer**

Can you remember any spankings that you got?

**Dan Y. Begay**

Yes. I was spanked quite a few times, and one of the things that happened you know... I was told to strip down and I was hit severely even to the point where the individual who was upset with me, the instructional aide, picked out a bigger kid and he would put that kid into a room with me and he told that bigger kid "beat him up, I want you to beat him up." So he would close the door, and being in that room, that kid, had no alternative than to go ahead and beat me up.

**Interviewer**

What do you think that did to your identity or the identity of the many children who went through that experience?

**Dan Y. Begay**

For me I guess there was always the inspiration. My great grandfather told me in order to overcome the white people and their ways, you have to learn to speak their language—think the way they do. Do the things that they do, but never ever forget that you are Navajo because by learning to talk English and thinking the way that they do, one day you'll be able to overcome and be able to live a life in a good way. Some of the other kids didn't and I've gone back over there and I've seen some of them and some of them are grown and I know them and some of them don't have a home. Some of them are struggling with life being alcoholic. So these are things that I encountered in the way of punishment—beatings.

**Interviewer**

How did that make you feel the first time you left your parents?

**Dan Y. Begay**

I was angry at my mother and my father because they abandoned me; because they told me that, "You're going to be o.k. at school and they're going to take care of you. You're going to be taken care of in a very good way. You're going to be in a safe place." But yet, when I was over there, so many times I was terrorized and so many times I was traumatized by a lot of the things that happened. And I was angry at my mother and my father for some time, and yet I didn't show it because I was told that was not the way to respect your mother and your father because they know what's good for you traditionally. So that's what I was told. So I had to go submit to the punishments and just live with it.

**Interviewer**

Tell us about the coyote story and the direction home. Will you please tell me that story one more time?

**Dan Y. Begay**

At the time that the people were down there, according to my great grandfather, some of the things that were done at the time that the people were down there at Fort Sumner, Hweeldi that the people did ceremonies and some of the, what we call diagnosis through crystal gazing, also hand trembling, that I had a great great great grandmother that made the journey down there. She was one of the medicine people that the people relied upon. She knew the "hand trembling way"—that was what he told me, that together these medicine people would get together and do these ceremonies. How can we be able to go back to our homeland, go back to the Four Sacred Mountains? So she was one of those that was at those ceremonies. There was a time right around when the treaty of 1868 was formulated that one of these diagnosis ceremonies was done and they went ahead and brought in a coyote because that is what the diagnosis specified and they did another ceremony and at the end of the ceremony they released that coyote and during that time, at the time of that ceremony, the medicine people talked to one another and said that the direction that this coyote is going to go... if it takes off to the east, we're going to be going to the east somewhere, maybe Oklahoma... somewhere towards the east. But yet if it goes north, then the coyote is going to tell us we're going to be headed back to our homeland. And when that coyote was released, it headed north and the people were happy and they were elated and they started saying we're going to be going home. That is what my great grandfather told me.

**Interviewer**

We were talking about your boarding school experience and you were talking about how traumatic it was when you drove there, and it made you cry.

**Dan Y. Begay**

Well one day my wife and I made that trip back over there and I wanted to revisit that area where I experienced so much trauma, so much pain, so much hurt physically, mentally and emotionally, even spiritually. So we went back up there and revisited that area where I went to that boarding school and I

pointed out the different places where certain things happened where I experienced certain things, whether it be with me or another kid going through that negative experience with the instructional aide or a teacher. So at the time I didn't realize how emotionally I was still connected to the things that had happened, and as I was talking to my wife about what happened to me here or there, I realized that I began to cry and it was my wife that told me, "It's o.k. now, it's way way way behind you." And I took a deep breath and we left from there, and whatever I went through I left behind me. From that time forth I believe that with that visit to that area, a lot of the anger that I used to feel, I left it behind at that time also.

#### **Interviewer**

Tell me about the boarding school and going back and how traumatic it was for you again.

#### **Dan Y. Begay**

One of the things that happened in my lifetime... I had this at times, anger, where if anybody rubbed me the wrong way or said something or did something against me that I didn't appreciate, my tendency was to fight. At one time my wife and I were driving around and we went back out there to that place where I went to boarding school, and upon going back to that place I talked to my wife and told her about the many things that I encountered and experienced at that boarding school, telling her this happened here, that happened there, and I didn't realize that I had began to cry. Some of the things that happened to me there, either by the instructional aides, by another kid, and I began to cry. That was when my wife told me, "Those things happened a long time ago, this is now. You need to leave all of this behind you." At that time I didn't realize how I was very much still connected to what had happened to me way back then as a child. And as we left from there, with my wife's insistence that I put it behind me; we left from there and I felt a whole lot better, and I didn't realize how much I had been traumatized by all that happened at a very young age to me. But now after having done that I can sit here and laugh about some of the things that happened and laugh about it and talk about it and not feel so angry or not feel pain—that I can look back because it enabled me to be who I am, a survivor.

#### **Interviewer**

Talk about your experience in the Army and your tendency to want to fight and how that was related to the boarding school.

#### **Dan Y. Begay**

At the time that I had been drafted during the Vietnam War, and again being ordered to do this, do that by commanding officers, it was pretty well kind of a similar experience to the boarding school days, and it brought out a lot of anger and resentment about the people that were telling me what to do. But yet I had to do it because always behind it there was that thing called the United States Military Code of Justice. But anyway, there was always that threat: "If you don't do what I tell you, I'm going to deal with you; court marshal you." So again, a lot of the anger also being told to do this and do that, and I had to do it—some of the things that I did and some of the things that happened that I would have never ordinarily done to hurt people and people that I didn't know. But yet again, I survived that time that I had a tendency to fight at that time whoever rubbed me the wrong way again. Whoever said anything that I didn't like I'd pick a fight with them, and I fought many people, especially white people during those times.

## **Jennifer Denetdale interview**

### **Jennifer Denetdale**

Jennifer Denetdale, Assistant Professor of History at the University of New Mexico.

**Interviewer**

Describe the people of the era. Where did they come from and what kind of people were they?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The Dine of the mid-nineteenth century were a people who were known to be a wealthy people. They were autonomous. They had their own political, economic and social systems, and very much saw themselves as a people who were in charge of their own futures and their own destinies.

**Interviewer**

Tell me how they lived. What was the family structure?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

Families were situated or organized by extended families; by clan and then by extended families and they were matrilineal and each clan or group of people they were under a nau, aunie or a leader so they lived together in a group sometimes five, ten or fifteen extended families that lived together, and by this time they had also developed a very strong pastoral lifestyle and so they followed the seasons in terms of following their flocks, from what we call the flat areas, then up into the mountains just following the season and pasturing lands. They also grew corn. They had cornfields in addition to their livestock.

**Interviewer**

Tell me again about the Navajo people of that era. What kind of people were they and where did they come from?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The Navajo people, the Dine of the mid-nineteenth century prior to 1863, were a people in charge of their own destiny. They were seen by a lot of people in the area as very wealthy and very influential. At this time they had huge, substantial livestock and they grew... they had agriculture. They put a lot of status--and wealth came--from the blankets that the women wove that were used as wearing blankets. And the Dine came from the first world, the origins then came out into this world, which depending on who you speak to, is either the fourth or the fifth world to this present world. And from the emergence into this world we were given values and lessons to live by the holy people; and so to this day, many Dine continue to live by the guidelines that were set down through the teachings of the origin stories and that are past on through the ceremonies like the Blessingway.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about how these people lived. What was their family structure in this era?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

Families relied on their... a lot of them were very pastoral in terms of, and organized their social structures around extended families. And extended families often consisted of a woman and her husband and her daughters and their families and husbands, and groups of them were also directed or led by aunut aunie, a chief, a leader, and they followed a pastoral life and moved seasonally up and down the mountains, like in the Canyon de Chelly area or the Chuska Mountains. So that's how family life was situated. And women were very important in the social structures. Today we continue to be matrilineal in terms of our identity as Navajos start with the women with our matrilineal lines.

**Interviewer**

Talk just a little bit about the origins of the Navajo. Where did they come from?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The Navajo people are... I think I said this earlier... we came into this world in what we call "Dinetah", old Navajo country from the first world, second world, third world, and each time that we journeyed through these worlds. And so part of the Navajo philosophy of who we are is the basis of are philosophy is "sa anna...," which means the journey of old life to happiness and old age, and so, that's

who we are as a people. So the ancestors came through a reed to this world and one of the reasons they had to move was because of the transgressions they had committed in the lower worlds. And they brought those lessons as well as the lessons given to them by the holy people from... to this world. You will have, and this is, you know one of the things of the Dine is that the way in which we know ourselves and who we are as a people sometimes contrast dramatically with what archeologists and anthropologists have to say about our origins. And they say (and some Navajos would not dispute them) that Navajos migrated into what is now the Southwest around the... it depends on who you talk to, the 1400's or the 1500's and so that's also another story of the people's journey into the old Southwest. And there were places where the stories also overlap.

**Interviewer**

What was their history at Chaco Canyon? How did they relate to Chaco Canyon?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

There is work coming out which is very interesting, for example Harry Walters, Harris Francis who works with Claire Kelly, an anthropologist, and Richard Begay who used to work with the Historic Preservation Department. They have charted through ceremonial stories and songs... provided some evidence and explanations that the Dine had relationships with people at Chaco, with the people who were at Mesa Verde, and that also some of our ceremonial knowledge was shaped and influenced by their contact with these early people.

**Interviewer**

Tell me a little bit about the Long Walk. Why did the Long Walk happen?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

American native peoples have a similar kind of history, and almost all native peoples that you can speak of had their trail of tears in terms of being removed in the face of white expansion. And the same thing happened to the Dine in the 1860's when the Americans claimed this territory--this land from the Mexicans who claimed control of it in 1846--and at that time the Americans... you know, you look at some of the early narratives from this period and they looked favorably upon the Dine and noted that they seemed to practice a kind of democracy that they could admire. They admired the people's wealth and autonomy. And then soon after that they realized that the Dine didn't think that the Americans were any different than the Mexicans, and so in the face of white settlement, American expansion there also was... one of the things that was also different for the Navajo is the large amount of slavery that was going on here in the Southwest. Apache women and children were the ones who were being taken captive and so this is one of the main reasons for the cycles of war and peace with the Dine in the mid-nineteenth century.

**Interviewer**

Tell me how this raiding and slaving worked.

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The place of slave taking in the Southwest has a long history that began with the Spanish Conquest and when the Spaniards came, one of the things that they did immediately was to claim the indigenous people's resources--their land, and immediately, also their labor. So, you know there was some slaving that went on prior when the Spaniards came, but then it really escalated when the Spaniards came, and you find a few accounts of Spanish campaigns into Navajo land--and those were to look for slaves. In addition to that, slaving (going into Navajo country), that also dramatically transformed the relationships between the Dine and various Pueblo communities that were throughout this area because Navajos also had... most people will talk about Navajo and Pueblo relations as mostly hostile and that's just not true. Navajos, by clan, had trading relationships and friendships that they had developed for generations with different Pueblo groups. One of the groups they had good relationships with were the

Haymus(?) people, and so that changed a lot in terms of there was a lot of resentment and hostilities that happened when Pueblo people began to go with the Spaniards and then the Mexicans into Navajo country to look for slaves. And if you look at the number of slaves that were taken, captives that were taken in the 1860's, you will note that the slave raids into Navajo country escalated and increased in the mid-nineteenth century and so the hostilities were at an all-time high during that period, and it was directly related to the slave-taking that was going on. There are references in a lot of the primary documents that note that when there is a treaty negotiated between Americans and Navajo leaders, one of the provisions is that Navajos will return captives to the Mexicans. And then there are documents that say that even though there was this provision in the treaties, Navajos rarely, if ever, received back their own family members who had been taken captive. And this is always a sore point in the documents that's noted.

**Interviewer**

Lets talk just a little bit about Canyon de Chelly. Tell me what the significance that Canyon de Chelly is to the Navajo culture.

**Jennifer Denetdale**

I think in the mid-nineteenth century, one of the things that was really important about Canyon de Chelly is that it was the Navajo fortress. This was the one defense that the Spaniards and the Mexicans, and then the Americans found just formidable--and the Dine warriors used it to their advantage. It was their stronghold. And when Kit Carson and his men stormed Canyon de Chelly that was the beginning of the defeat of the Dine.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about Kit Carson. What happened at Canyon de Chelly and how was he viewed?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

How was Kit Carson viewed by Navajos? This is an ongoing debate that I often get involved in because the Dine don't really have a lot of good things to say about Kit Carson. They see Kit Carson as the person who was responsible for the senseless slaughter of over 2,500 Navajo men, women and children and that he was completely uncompassionate when he conducted his "burn and scorch" policy. He completely humiliated and brutalized the Navajo people when he burned their hogans, slaughtered their livestock, destroyed their cornfields. And so that brought about the final military defeat of the Navajo people, and to this day we haven't forgotten it.

**Interviewer**

Talk a little bit about General James Henry Carleton. How was he viewed?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

There is not a lot of Navajo stories about Carleton. They are mostly about... the stories the Navajo people tell are mostly about Kit Carson. Carleton was the one who had masterminded creating the Bosque Redondo reservation and he was the one who had plans to remove the Navajos to this reservation, and there are some of this reports in which he was interested in the natural resources and he thought there was gold in Navajo country. But people remember more Kit Carson.

**Interviewer**

Describe the Long Walk and its importance to the Navajo people.

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The meaning of the Long Walk to the Dine? The Dine still have a very long memory about the trauma that their ancestors experienced during the Long Walk. And the Long Walk is really actually a series of forced marches that began either at Fort Defiance or Fort Wingate, and people, depending on whatever route was chosen, went from anywhere from 250 to 450 miles to the Bosque Redondo reservation at

New Fort Sumner, New Mexico. And the people's stories tell very much about just the day-to-day experiences, the day-to-day hardship. My father tells me about his grandmother, one of his aunts who was taken captive and ended up at Zuni, and she managed to escape from the Zuni and went to Fort Wingate, and from there went to Hweeldi, which is what the Navajos call it, called Bosque Redondo. They call it Hweeldi. And the stories that the Navajo people tell about being so hungry and so starved... some of the soldiers' reports say that when the Navajos walked into the Fort, a lot of them were almost completely naked. They might just have a piece of fabric to cover their private parts, and would say that, you know, we gave them a few things--a little bit of cloth to put on and something to wear. They were not use to the food that was offered to them as rations. You had white flour; beans, green coffee beans, rancid bacon and they weren't use to that so a lot of them ate it. They didn't know how to prepare it and then they died. They got diarrhea and dysentery and died from the food as well. They also tell stories about how the food had just been destroyed and they would have to resort to having to eat coyote and crow to discover that they were just utterly inedible. And the women... they tell stories about the pregnant women and the elders who couldn't keep up were taken out of line and shot by the soldiers. Women were raped and violated. And so this was a very, very traumatic time for my people, and we still haven't forgotten. It's still very much a part of our memories.

**Interviewer**

How many people died on the Long Walk?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

How many people died on the Long Walk? There is really no way to know how many people died on the Long Walk. The estimate that is mostly used is around 2,500 people died. Over 8,000 were imprisoned at the Bosque Redondo reservation and a lot of them just died from starvation and from the cold. I mean a lot of the march happened in like March and February where it was just bitterly cold. I was just reading an account of one military commander who was so relentless in getting the people there that he was driving them twenty miles a day, and that when he got there, there was a substantial number of the people had died because of his relentless determination to get them to the reservation. The other thing is that what followed the marches, the captives walking... you also had slave raiders picking them off and stealing the women and children as well. So it was really a horrendous time for the people.

**Interviewer**

Talk about the Bosque Redondo... what happened there and what were the conditions like?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The Bosque Redondo, when they first... I think... when the first group of people came there was probably a very small group... When the people got to the Bosque Redondo, the first group of people to come was around fifty captives that were taken to Bosque Redondo and then a couple two or three months later there was another group that was taken in. These were the people of Antonio Sandoval who was known as A Nai, the enemy Navajo because they had, since the Spanish time, consorted with the enemy and he was often involved with capturing his own people for the slave trade. So Navajos didn't want to particularly be around him and even though he'd allied himself with the Americans, his band was one of the first groups to be taken prisoner and taken to the Bosque Redondo. When the people got there, there wasn't really a lot of buildings established. One of the reports say that the commanding officer who brings this first group says that he has his Navajo prisoners comfortably settled in old settler tents. And so the conditions were not very good, especially given that winter was coming on as they were taking the first trains of captives to the Bosque Redondo. It was very, very difficult. They wanted... one of Carleton's plans was to have them live in Pueblo-like villages, and Navajos just didn't live that way. We weren't use to that kind of living arrangement, and so that didn't work out very well, plus the people were living in open pits and sometimes they had brush put on the

top of them. There was never enough food and their rations were starvation rations, and eating it was very, very difficult. You also had diseases, epidemic diseases; you know that would come about. And so it was very difficult and it was very harsh for the people. There was... there had been originally a grove of cottonwood trees there, but that was soon depleted for the soldier's use. And so the people had to go further and further out to look for wood and it was very dangerous because you had Comanche raiders and New Mexicans waiting for the unsuspecting Navajo woman or child to take for the slave trade. So it was also a very dangerous time. There is an account I read of when, I think his name was Delgado, I'm not sure... There was one of the first Navajo leaders who took his people to the Bosque Redondo, and by the time he had gotten there he had lost 15 people of his band. He gets there and the officer records notes that he was met with such emotion by his kin-people who were already there, and they hugged him and embraced him. He said there was much tears as they met and greeted each other. So it was very difficult. You can look at the pictures from this period; the photographs of this period of Fort Sumner and you can see that buildings, barracks have been created. There is a commissary, there are officer's quarters, and this was in a large part built with Navajo labor. In some of the pictures you can also see firewood that's stacked up against the wall and that was for the use of the military. Navajos had to go out and scrounge around for pieces of wood and in the Navajo stories it was a particular kind of wood, I think it was greasewood that they would use for warmth. And so it was very harsh. There are stories also of people being so hungry the boys would go out and follow the horses, and when the horses had left their dung they would pick through it and look for undigested corn and roast that and eat it. So it was a very, very harsh time there for them. There was attempts to provide them some sort of schooling for the children, but that wasn't very successful, I mean, when you're starving the first thing on your mind is not paying attention to your schooling.

**Interviewer**

How did the people die at the Bosque Redondo and what were the numbers like?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

I think that 2,500 numbers of people that died includes the people who were at the Bosque Redondo. There's no record of how many people died during the forced marches and so that figure that I've read includes the people who were at the Bosque Redondo. The rations were very, very skimpy, starvation rations in terms of how much beef was given to them, how much corn was given to them....

**Interviewer**

Talk about their rations...

**Jennifer Denetdale**

A lot of people died... they starved because of the meager rations. They were starvation rations. They were given some meat and a lot of times the meat was rancid. They didn't know how to cook the bacon they were given. The flour--they had no idea how to prepare and so they would mix it with water and you know, eat it like a paste or gruel, and they would get sick from that and many died from that as well. And so a lot of them died from starvation, but there was also disease that was coming through the camps periodically and killing people as well. And then the water was very alkaline and didn't agree with them as well.

**Interviewer**

Weren't the people vulnerable to Comanche raiders and other raiders of any type that wanted to come in?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The people were very vulnerable to the raiders who were always at the perimeter of the reservation, and when they went out looking for wood, they'd have to go miles looking for wood, and they tried to set up farming and they used their Navajo labor to construct irrigation channels. They were vulnerable to

all kinds of things; the climate, the diseases, the lack of food, the lack of adequate shelter, clothing-- they just didn't have enough clothing as well.

**Interviewer**

When you think of your ancestors on the Long Walk and also at the Bosque, what are your feelings about those people?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

It's still very difficult for us to talk about these stories. It makes me cry, and it makes me sad and it makes me angry, and at the same time we also are very appreciative that our ancestors had the courage and resilience to keep on going in the face of just incredible catastrophe and incredible trauma that we think that they must have been thinking about us. And so at the same time that we are appalled at what they lived through--the utter inhumanity and injustice shown to our ancestors--we also are thankful to them. Traditionally Navajo people don't go to the Bosque Redondo because when they left the medicine people did a ceremony and they said, "we are never to return to this place of horror and many of us have broken that and gone back to remember our ancestors." And so when we remember them we also are thankful, very thankful and grateful to them for showing such fortitude and courage.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about the Mescalero experience there. How did the Navajo and Mescalero get along?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

What was the relationship of the Mescalero and the Navajos at the Bosque Redondo? The Mescalero Apaches were the first to go to the Bosque Redondo. Around 500 people under Kit Carson's command were defeated and sent to the Bosque Redondo, so the Mescalero Apache were there first, and then the Navajos came later and from what I understand, there wasn't a good relationship between the Navajos and the Mescaleros and the Indian agent for the Apaches... he was always trying to be, you know, supportive of the group of people that he was responsible for, and so there never was really a good relationship between the Mescalero Apache and the Navajos who were both at the Bosque Redondo. Early on the Apaches did eventually leave the reservation and go back to their former homes.

**Interviewer**

Tell me a little bit about Manuelito. What kind of man was he?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

Manuelito was known to the Navajo people, to the elders even today. He is still best known for as (Navajo name), which means "man from black weeds." He was also known as (Navajo name), which means "holy boy."

Manuelito is a man of great stature; he was one of our greatest leaders. He was known to the Navajo people as (Navajo name), which means "man from black weeds." He was also known as (Navajo name), which means "holy boy" and (Navajo name), which means "son in law of Narbona." He was a very imposing man I think. He was over six feet three in height and I think just had this aura about him that people knew immediately that he was a leader. When he was born his father came, he was a newborn, he was born in the Barriers Mountains in Southern Utah, and when his father learned of his son's birth he went over there and took his son outside and presented him to the sun and prophesized that his son would be a great leader and that people would listen to his words and be moved by his speech, and so he was a great orator and he was a great leader. He was one of the most fearsome leaders, warriors, I think. Historians, American historians have talked about the Navajo resistance, looking at the documents that are available where American soldiers and commanders said that we will not have defeated the Navajos until we have either killed or defeated Manuelito. And so he was known as the defiant spirit of the Navajos.

**Interviewer**

Tell me a little bit about Barboncito. What kind of a man was he?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

Barboncito was also one of our great leaders. I think he is best known for his role in negotiating the treaty of 1868. All of these leaders were incredible orators--they could speak very well. So when Barboncito was selected to negotiate the treaty of 1868 on behalf of the Navajo people, he did just a really excellent job on behalf of the Navajo people because the original plan had been that the Dine would be removed to Indian territory in what is now Oklahoma, and Barboncito argued eloquently that we should go back to our homeland and that we would not accept going to Indian territory in Oklahoma.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about the Long Walk home. What were the emotions of people as they came back to their homelands?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

At the Bosque Redondo right prior to, or during the time that Navajos were imprisoned there, there are some reports by officers who say that Navajos... the prisoners would stop them and plead with them and beg them to allow them to go home. And so when they negotiated the treaty of 1868, and they prepared, they had learned that they were going to return to their homelands. There was a caravan of Navajos ready to go--I can't remember how many days after the treaty had been signed, it was like June 4th or something--and the caravan was ten miles long they said, of people returning to their homeland. And one of the things that Manuelito also noted or said, was that, "when the elders saw... came within sight of our sacred mountain, Mount Taylor, they stopped and they cried because they were so happy to be returning to their homeland."

**Interviewer**

What do you think are the lessons learned from the Long Walk experience?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The lessons learned are... one of the major lessons that I have learned from listening to the songs and the stories and the prayers is that our ancestors got through this very traumatic time by remembering the lessons and the guidelines the holy people had given us to live by, and so when they returned home, they did their prayers. And the prayers were (Navajo name), means "the journey to happiness and old age." And so when they returned home, they once again set about establishing life as they had known it prior to 1868, and so the stories are about returning home, sustaining ourselves, and getting back to the business of life but never forgetting what happened to our people. And today it's still important to remember what happened because we still continue have to deal with discrimination and to deal with racism. And so it's a long history and we still strive to correct that in America.

**Interviewer**

What did the people find when they got back to Canyon de Chelly and their homelands?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

Upon returning to Navajo land, many people went first to Fort Wingate because, you know, they had gotten home in June and they didn't have any seeds for planting and it was well past the planning period. And so they came home and they didn't have enough food, and they needed time to set up the shelter, so many people went to Fort Wingate first while many other people went back to their former residences, and then according to the treaty of 1868, part of the annuities was livestock--sheep and goats and horses. And so at Fort they were given these annuities and then people went back to their homes. There is one song that they say was created at Fort Sumner. It's this Navajo song called "Shin ah sha, shina ah sha" (Navajo) and what that means is "I will walk in beauty...I return home and I will walk in beauty," and so it talks about the great energy and the great emotion that they had about

returning home and getting back to the business of life, you know... that I move with great energy and emotion.

**Interviewer**

Part of the 1868 treaty was an education component that the Navajo children would go to schools. Tell me a little bit about that experience and what was it like?

**Jennifer Denetdale**

One of the provisions of the treaty of 1968 is that Navajo people would accept American education for their children after 1868 and it really was difficult to first provide American education and then to have children go because of just the nature of our communities and our settlements. Some people would consider us a very disperse people and return to the pastoral life.

The treaty of 1868 included a provision that Navajo people would allow American education for their children, and when they returned to "De nah, bee kai ya?" (Navajo). It was sort of difficult to do that to provide education, American education for Navajo children because first we were, some people would consider us a dispersed settlements. It was difficult to get children to schools; there were still not roads. A lot of places were still very remote and so getting that provision off to a good start didn't take place for a very long time, and because of how isolated places were, some of the first schools that the Navajo children were sent to were boarding schools both off and on the reservation. Probably one of the first schools to be established was at Fort Defiance.

**Jennifer Denetdale**

What was the experience of going to boarding school for children? First I think one of the things that they had to do was compel parents to give up their children and many parents did not want to give up their children, and so in a lot of cases they were forced to relinquish their children--they love their children very much and they couldn't imagine having their children gone from them for years at a time. And so children grew up, in many cases, away from their parents for years at a time. They lived in a military-like institution and there was a real effort to keep Navajo children from speaking their language and practicing their cultural traditions and make them become Americans, like white Americans. So it was very difficult and it was very traumatic in many, many cases.

**Interviewer**

We were talking about your ancestors and how you feel about your ancestors who went on the Long Walk.

**Jennifer Denetdale**

The Long Walk and the Bosque Redondo, the experiences of my ancestors to this day is still very difficult for many Navajo people to talk about. When we hear the stories from our parents and out grandparents, if we're fortunate enough to hear them, we can't help but get tearful about what they went through--the horrible horrendous conditions that they lived through, the humiliation that they had to endure. They were treated as less than animals, and so when we think about it and we hear their stories, and we get very tearful and we get very mournful, and I get appalled and angry at the treatment of my grandmothers and my grandfathers, and yet at the same time we also are very thankful and we marvel at our ancestor's courage and their integrity because if they hadn't endured this experience, we would not be here today, and so we always remember that.

## **Hampton Sides interview**

### **Hampton Sides**

(upcut)...for all of the various Indian groups, and they were to just be swept aside and the other thing that went along with manifest destiny was a kind of an idealism--a sense that, you know, what our governments, our systems of democracy are really better, and it should be obvious to everyone that they're better and we're really doing you a favor to conquer you. So the United States and the populace of the United States had gotten itself whipped up into a kind of idealistic frenzy believing that this was the right thing to do and we were doing all these different people we were going to conquer a huge favor.

**Interviewer**

Tell us about Stephen Watts Kearney and the Army of the West. What was their purpose?

**Hampton Sides**

Actually let me go back and mention one more thing about a Polk, specifically. President Polk was an amazing figure in our history. He's not very well known as a President, but essentially everything he sought to get in his one-term in office, he got... very stubborn, very determined, a grim man--the sort of person who is not very charismatic, but he got what he wanted. President Polk had said at the outset of his administration that he would only seek one term of office, and so everything about his presidency had this accelerated sense of deadline--that he was going to get all of the land of the American West in those four years, and so everything was pressured and accelerated. But he did get everything he wanted.

**Interviewer**

Talk a little bit about Stephen Watts Kearney and the army. What was their purpose?

**Hampton Sides**

Stephen Watts Kearney was an old hand in the prairie lands of the West and was the logical candidate to lead the Army of the West from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas westward along the Santa Fe Trail to take New Mexico and the Northern provinces of what was then Mexico, and also march all of the way to California and take California as well. Their purpose was essentially to take all of this land in kind of a bold land grab and to hopefully do it without firing a shot and really to execute what would be one of the longest military marches in our history.

**Interviewer**

Talk a little bit about the Pueblo involved. What actually happened in Taos?

**Hampton Sides**

Not the Pueblo revolt... the Taos revolt? I hesitate because there is this thing called the Pueblo revolt, which goes way back into Spanish history. Gotcha... After Stephen Watts Kearney left New Mexico to head west towards California, he left the territory of New Mexico in the hands of a governor named Charles Bent. Charles Bent quickly found out that although conquest was easy, occupation was very difficult and an altogether different challenge. The people of New Mexico hated the Americans and didn't want to be governed by them, and that was true with some of the Pueblo Indians as well. So shortly after Kearney left in 1847, there was a revolt up at the Taos pueblo and Governor Bent was taken out of his home and scalped alive in front of his family, and there began a very bloody chapter in the occupation of New Mexico. Americans everywhere were singled out and killed and so the American Army entered the pictures and put down this insurrection.

**Interviewer**

Let's talk a little bit about Navajo history. Where did they come from? Where were they living?

**Hampton Sides**

The Navajo are somewhat late arrivals to the American Southwest. They came down from Athabaska in Canada and filtered down along the spine of the Rockies. It's tempting to believe they moved here

because they were sick of the cold weather in Canada and heard about some place warmer to the South. But in fact their migration was much more, sort of haphazard, and it took a long time for them to work their way down. They arrived anywhere between 1100 and 1300 A.D. and began to thrive in the Southwestern country. As the Navajos migrated southward, they branched off from their linguistic cousins, the Apache, and between the two of them (the Apaches and Navajos), really thrived in the Southwest and really became some of the dominant tribes in the area.

**Interviewer**

Let's talk about their relationship with Chaco canyon. Did they live there for a while? What are the lessons to be learned about Chaco from the Navajo perspective?

**Hampton Sides**

The Navajo people have always lived around Chaco Canyon, which is of course one of the most magnificent ruins in the Southwest, and have been fascinated by it and have viewed it as they are the custodians of this place in many senses. But at the same time, they viewed Chaco Canyon as a cautionary tale--to live in such density, to live in these Pueblo apartment complexes where disease could be communicated, to take that kind of toll on the environment that a dense living arrangement can take. I think they came to see that as not a good idea in a desert environment where there is not much water to go around, there's just not that much grazing country to go around. And so they decided they would not live in that way, that they would spread out over the Southwest country and live a very different sort of semi-nomadic life.

**Interviewer**

Talk about their life and other's fear of them as raiders by the settlers...

**Hampton Sides**

I think a lot of Americans have an idea that the Navajo are, and having always and historically been a very peaceful weaving culture--and of course they have been. But they were also, during that day, widely feared as raiders. They were very successful at it. They were really good at stealth and essentially coming in along the Rio Grande settlements of the Hispanics and every year taking many thousands of heads of sheep, sometimes stealing women and children, sometimes killing shepherds along the way, although sheep was really what they were after. They were a sheep people; they loved mutton, they were great weavers, they were in many senses like a pastoral people you might find in the holy land circulating widely and over a large and sparsely populated area with their sheep. They found sheep were much more successful in that terrain than horses.

**Interviewer**

Talk a little bit about their fear of death and how that relates to their culture.

**Hampton Sides**

The Navajo people have tended to have a deep-seated fear of death, anything to do with death--funerals, corpses--and they have a lot of lore and beliefs about what they called "skin-walkers," who are ghosts that do all kinds of evil things and basically invade graves and steal from... The Navajos have traditionally believed in a class of witches essentially called "skin-walkers," who they believe rob graves and steal valuables that are buried with their loved-ones in the various pockets of Navajo country. This fear of death that is so prevalent in Navajo country affected the way they dealt with all kinds of things. It's one of the reasons, although they were very successful raiders, they were not known as being tremendously successful warriors on a large-scale. They very rarely fought in concentrated numbers. Their idea was go do a raid as fast as you can and get out of there and get back to Navajo country and then undergo a series of ceremonies to wash off the taint of having anything to do with death or killing.

When the American Army was approaching New Mexico, what they didn't realize is that New Mexico

was already embroiled in kind of low-grade war that had been going on for centuries between the Navajos and some of the other raiding tribes and the Hispanic people. And in fact, shortly before the Americans arrived in the very first village they came to in New Mexico, a little village called Las Vegas, there had been, the previous night, a raid. Navajos had swept in from the mountains and had taken thousands of head of sheep and a shepherd had been reported to have been killed, so this cycle of violence of the Navajos raiding the sheep herds and then the Spanish retaliating, was a cycle that had been going on for centuries. And the Americans were just about to get a taste of this ancient war, and were about to inherit it, essentially.

**Interviewer**

Let's talk about the reciprocal slave and raiding between the different settlements. Talk about the Taos slave markets.

**Hampton Sides**

The Spanish often went into Navajo country to get slaves. There was a thing they called "the Santa Fe Bachelor Party," which was essentially before someone was about to get married, the groom and his buddies would go into Navajo country and steal a bunch of slaves for the prospective bride to have someone to help with housekeeping. It's one of the dirty little secrets of New Mexico that slavery was fairly rampant and you could buy slaves just like you could in the American South in slave markets. There was one up in Taos. It cost like a hundred dollars. Navajos were considered particularly valuable slaves because of their talent for weaving, so this was just kind of a cycle that had been perpetuated for centuries in which the Navajos... yes they came in and stole sheep, and the Spaniards reciprocated by stealing people. It was a really vicious cycle and a hard one to break.

**Interviewer**

Narbona... what kind of man was he? And maybe you can talk about the democratic nature of the Navajo society, and follow that up with what actually happened and why that was a pivotal moment in U.S./Navajo relations.

**Hampton Sides**

Narbona was a hugely wealthy and eminent leader of one of the larger sub-groups of the Navajos, but you have to understand, the Navajos didn't really have chiefs in the sense that the American government was always saying 'take me to your leader, who's your chief?' The Navajos were very democratic and very pluralistic and very decentralized politically. But if you had to pick one person who sort of represented the Navajos in the early days when the Americans first arrived, it was Narbona. He was well into his 80's, he was widely respected, and he was quite wealthy, and had in his early days, as a warrior, been very successful as a raider. But as he aged and came to see the larger consequences of raiding, he became known as a peacemaker. Narbona was very worried about the Americans. He had heard all sorts of stories about how powerful they were, that they had conquered his age-old enemy, the Mexicans, without firing a shot. And so he wanted to come to Santa Fe for himself and get a glimpse of what the Americans were up to. So he made a secret trip, kind of took the back roads, crawled up behind the fort that the Americans were building, Fort Marcy, and saw the might of these people--"these new men," as he called them--and realized then and there that it was futile to try to fight these people who had come so far beyond the buffalo plains to conquer the West, that he was going to go back to the Navajo country and recommend to all the other head men that it was important to reconcile with the Americans and to deal with them because otherwise there was going to be a long and fruitless war.

**Interviewer**

What actually happened when he met his demise at the hands of the U.S. military?

**Hampton Sides**

Throughout this saga there are these moments where you feel like the different sides are going to reconcile, they're going to settle their differences--that there are these windows of opportunity and one of those windows of opportunity came during the Washington expedition. A Colonel named Washington led a group into Navajo country in 1849, and they met with Narbona, and it was clear that Narbona was an advocate of peace and was in a rare position to be able to convince the Navajo people to deal with the Americans. But shortly after this meeting took place, and within hours of the conversation that took place with Colonel Washington, an argument, a rather stupid argument, broke out in which someone identified a horse that the Navajos had apparently stolen and one of the Hispanic militia soldiers with Washington said "that's my horse, I need it back." Washington didn't really know what to do. He sided with his soldier's point of view and demanded that the horse be returned. The next thing you know there is gunfire and a... a piece of artillery is brought out and Washington orders that it be fired on the Navajo people that are gathered. And Narbona is one of the Navajos who is killed. Within hours of encountering the American Army and Narbona is killed, not only killed but he's scalped by a souvenir hunter, and this opportunity is lost. This moment... this window of opportunity is gone and understandably the relationship between the Navajos and the United States deteriorates after that. One of the people who was watching as Narbona was killed was Narbona's son-in-law--a defiant and truculent young leader named Manuelito who would emerge as one of the great leaders of the Navajo people and a believer. After having seen his father-in-law murdered and mutilated, that there was nothing to be gained by negotiating with Americans. This was an all-out war of survival. So Narbona's son-in-law Manuelito becomes kind of the voice of defiance in subsequent years.

#### **Interviewer**

Tell me a little bit about General James Henry Carleton. What kind of man was he and tell me a little bit about his history.

#### **Hampton Sides**

James Henri Carleton was a real piece of work. He had an insufferable kind of a schoolmarm personality--someone who believed with outright righteous zeal that he had the solution to the problem and the problem being what to do with the Navajos. He took one side-long glance at all of the chaos of New Mexico and that old cycle of violence that had gone on between the Hispanics, and the Navajos and said "you know what? I've got the solution." What we need to do is take the Navajo people, round them up, move them to the plains to a location that he had personally scouted and force them at gunpoint overnight to become Christian farmers living in apartment complexes like the Pueblo Indians and to do this for their own good. It's kind of funny to say, but he was a humanitarian idealist who believed that he could reform the Navajos, and that in reforming the Navajos he would have a kind of a case study as to how to deal with all western tribes. Carleton was a New England Calvinist. He had grown up in Maine. He traveled all over the American West... had fought in some important battles in the Mexican war and had served in California with the California volunteers. He had marched all the way to New Mexico during the Civil War to help fight against the Texans who had invaded New Mexico only to find out that the New Mexicans had already been sent packing, like Kit Carson and Colonel Canby and others, and so he inherited New Mexico as the commander with nothing really to do, but very aware that his colleagues back East were winning daily appointments of glory on the battlefields of the Civil War, knew that he had to do something spectacular to gain a name for himself, and I think, invested an unusual and disproportionate amount of his personal attention and zeal to figuring out this Navajo problem, believing it was his ticket to fame.

#### **Interviewer**

Let's talk about gold as a motivator and the speculation that there was gold on the Navajo lands.

#### **Hampton Sides**

Another motivation that Carleton had for rounding up the Navajo and moving them was his belief, based on no particular evidence, that Navajo country was rich in gold. He believed that... he kind of saw himself as an amateur geologist and had spent perhaps too much time in California watching a lot of men grow incredibly rich digging for gold. So he had this idea that Navajo country would yield the next big mother load of gold. Carleton was somewhat embarrassed by New Mexico and by its poverty and how much money it was costing the American Government during the desperate times of the Civil War to keep this territory. There were a lot of people who wanted to give New Mexico back to Mexico. They were sick of the place. And he thought that if he could prove there was gold in Navajo country that it would not only help fund the Civil War back East, but it would sort of redeem New Mexico in the eyes of those back in Washington who wanted to just give it away. So he started sending speculators and gold experts into Navajo country to try and find this gold and believed that Navajos would all have to be swept aside so that the settlers could stream in and start panning for gold. Of course, there was no gold to speak of and this proved to be quixotic, and it never came to pass.

Kit Carson was a larger-than-life figure; someone who was famous in his own day because of a series of cheap pulp novels that were published called "Blood and Thunders," in which he was depicted as this great hero of manifest destiny.

Kit Carson was a larger-than-life figure--someone who was famous in his own day for these terrible pulp novels that had been published in which he was invariably the star--these novels called, "Blood and Thunders." He became a household name in America because of these books, and yet he hated these stories. They never got his consent to use his name. They never gave him any money. They certainly never bothered to find out anything about the real Kit Carson. And the final irony of these books was he couldn't read them because he was illiterate, so he had to have other people around the campfire read them to him, and he just hated them and he hated the celebrity that hounded him throughout his whole life because of them. The thing that I think is remarkable about Kit Carson is the extent to which he really came to embody all the different phases and facets of settling the American West. He came out here to New Mexico as a runaway when he was sixteen on the Santa Fe Trail. He became a trapper. Then he became a hunter, and then he became a guide for the Topographical Corp., and then he became a soldier and a Transcontinental Courier, and then he became an Indian Agent, and finally he became a General. So his career is very multi-faceted and sort of mirrors the different aspects and different stages of the expansion into the American West.

### **Interviewer**

Tell us about his philosophy about being a soldier and how he viewed that when he was asked to do something.

### **Hampton Sides**

One of Carson's greatest faults, you might say, certainly one of his strongest attributes, was a sense of duty to order. When he got an order he carried it out. You do have to understand that the army of that day was not one in which you could sort of pick and choose the orders that you wanted--oh this one I agree with, this one I don't think I'm going to do that. Of course you had to carry out the order you were given, but he carried these orders out with zeal and with a haste that was unusual and a big part of his character. You constantly see in his career, superiors giving him orders that would seem to violate his personality. Kit Carson didn't hate Indians. His first two wives were Indians. Many of his early friends, as a trapper, were Indians.

### **Interviewer**

Talk about how Kit didn't hate Indians...

### **Hampton Sides**

It really can't be said that Kit Carson hated Indians. In his early days as a trapper he probably lived

more like an Indian than a white man, and he understood the tribes of the West well, if not better than any white man alive. His first wife was Arapaho, Singing Grass; one of the great loves of his life.

It can't be said that Kit Carson hated Indians. He understood American Indians probably better than any white man alive and had lived more like an Indian than a white guy for most of his young adulthood as a trapper. He had friends who were Indians. He had married into Indian tribes. His first wife was Arapaho, a woman named Singing Grass. They had two children together, then she died in childbirth with the second daughter. His second wife was Cheyenne. He spoke five, six, maybe even seven Indian tongues, so it can't be said that Kit Carson lacked an understanding of American Indian culture or ways of doing things. Carson's second wife, a Cheyenne woman, is... that marriage didn't work out and she essentially kicked him out of her tepee with all of his belongings. Shortly after that he married Josefa Jaramillo from Taos, the love of his life. He was married to her for 25 years. They died one month apart. She was 18 years his junior--a beautiful Hispanic woman. At the time I think she was only 14 when they began to court. So I guess he was robbing the cradle in some ways. I think Josefa only vaguely understood what Kit Carson was doing when he was away all those many years in the service to a government she didn't have any particular allegiance to; a government that had never done anything particularly favorable to her people, the Hispanics. So I think there was a tension in the household. What are you doing? Why are you away so much? I think her extended family didn't get Kit Carson, or they were a little frustrated with his absences.

The "Blood and Thunder" novels frequently employed advice where there would be a white woman who would be kidnapped by some tribe or other in the Southwest and Kit Carson would be called upon to save the day to go rescue her from the tribe. It just so happened that there was, in fact, a real kidnapping of a real woman who just happened to be named, Ann White. Her family was attacked on the Santa Fe Trail by the Jicarilla Apaches, and Kit Carson... the real-life Kit Carson got the call to go find her. She had been kidnapped with her baby daughter, and Kit Carson pursued the trail for 12 days into the plains of Texas, finally located the tribe, and there was a mix-up about how to approach and what kind of overtures to make with the tribe, and in the ensuing confusion, Ann White was killed by the Jicarilla Apaches, and the tribes scattered. Carson was devastated by this and was haunted by her death the rest of his life. But one of the strange little things that happened was, when they went through the belongings of the Jicarilla Apache, they found a book that Ann White had been reading, and it was "Blood and Thunder" staring in, none other than Kit Carson, saving the day and rescuing a white woman from a kidnapping. Of course Kit Carson couldn't read this book, so he had some of the soldiers read it around the campfire. This was the very first time that Kit Carson became aware of his mythic status as essentially a comic book hero, and he hated it. He told his soldiers to burn the damn thing and hated those books for the rest of his life.

Unlike the Pueblo Indians, for example, the Navajo people never had a capitol city or a central location, a dense location where they carried out their rituals and so forth. But they did have this amazing place called Canyon de Chelly; one of the great national wonders of the American Southwest--a 70-mile network, a labyrinth of different canyons actually. It was sort of a sentimental and literal heart of Navajo country. They met there every fall for large sort of festivals and they carried out all kinds of rituals there and painted and etched all sorts of artwork on those beautiful walls, and it was a sacred place to them and still is. It still is very much the center, kind of a metaphorical heart of Navajo country. In Canyon de Chelly the Navajos were extremely proud of their peach trees. There were these orchards spread out all along the canyon floor and when the Navajos would stream in the fall for these ceremonies, they would eat the canyon peaches, and it was really part of their culture and the pride of the Navajo people.

### **Interviewer**

Tell me a little bit about what happened at Canyon de Chelly.

## **Hampton Sides**

When Kit Carson got the order to go into Navajo country from James Henry Carleton, he realized pretty fast that he couldn't fight the Navajo people in a traditional sense, and engage the enemy in a concentrated battle--that what he really had to do was to fight the Navajo country--to fight the land itself. And so he embarked on a scorched earth policy a full year before General Sherman led his famous scorched earth campaign against the American South. Scorched earth is really as old as warfare, but it was one of the very first times that it ever became a stated part of American military policy--to go into this country and starve a people out, to destroy their cornfields, to destroy every bean patch and melon patch, to ruin the water sources, to guard the salt sources and to do this over a prolonged period of time until you over months and months and months, force and entire people to their knees. That's what Carson did and it began to slowly but surely work. Kit Carson seems to me, did everything he could to avoid Canyon de Chelly. He seemed like he was spooked by the place. He had numerous opportunities to go in there and refused. It was only until James Henry Carleton said, "no you have to go into Canyon de Chelly, this is the heartland of the Navajo people, this is the place to make a stand and broadcast to the Navajo holdouts your purpose and to traverse the length of the canyon, it was believed to kind of break the spirit of the Navajo people." So that's what he finally did. He went, with some reluctance, into Navajo country and pierced Canyon de Chelly. What's remarkable about Carson's campaign into Canyon de Chelly is that he sent subordinates to actually do the work down in the canyon. Even then he was... it seemed like he was spooked by the place. He went up on the rim. He went in the mouth of the canyon right there at Chinle Wash, but he didn't go all the way in, and he didn't want any of the glory that might come with saying you were one of the first commanders to penetrate the full length of this mighty canyon. He wanted nothing to do with the place and let his subordinates win that glory.

## **Interviewer**

Could it have been worse if it was somebody else...?

## **Hampton Sides**

All people hate their conqueror and that's certainly true of the Navajos with respect to Kit Carson. They hate him. They think he's a genocidal maniac. They've compared him to Hitler. But I've always said that really the Navajos could have had a much different and a far worse conqueror than Kit Carson in terms of how he actually led the campaign and his understanding of American Indian culture. He was no Sheridan. He was no Custer. He was no Andrew Jackson, if you want to go farther back into American history. He didn't hate American Indians, and he resisted orders that he got from Carleton to shoot every Navajo on site, for example. And the fact was he was a reluctant warrior, he didn't want to be there. He had on several occasions, put in for a leave of absence. He actually resigned at one point and Carleton said "no you're indispensable to me. You have to do this." Now you can ask the question, is it worse to conquer a people and do it because you believe it's right, or to do it anyway even though you have reluctance about it? That's a good question and it certainly doesn't let Kit Carson off of the hook morally. But it is true that he did what he said he was going to do in most instances. He tried to keep the casualties as low as possible, and when he accepted the surrender of the Navajos he treated them fairly and with decency, and he insisted, when he found out that there really wasn't enough food to go around, that the government provide for these people or else this whole thing was going to be a total failure.

## **Interviewer**

Talk about the Long Walk for a little bit...

## **Hampton Sides**

The Long Walk was the largest forced relocation of American Indians after the famous Trail of Tears of the Cherokees. Depending on where you started from, it was anywhere from 200 miles to almost 500

miles. It was not designed to be a failure like most relocations of... Like most forced relocations of refugees, things went wrong. There wasn't enough food. The weather interfered. Navajos froze to death because there weren't enough blankets. They weren't acquainted with the kind of food that they were issued by the American Army. The old and the sickly and the children who were already weakened by this scorched earth policy of Carson got sick, and their constitutions were already depleted so the march took longer and it was harder--took a harder toll on them. But it evolved into something of a disaster and many hundreds of Navajos died along the way.

**Interviewer**

Was it as brutal as it was depicted in terms of the American soldiers...?

**Hampton Sides**

The American soldiers were under strict orders to treat the Navajos kindly and fairly. After all, this was an experiment to prove to the Navajos that you can become Christians and farmers and, you know, if you can't even get them to the site without killing them, then this experiment is going to be a failure. What was so tragic about the Long Walk was that these long columns of refugees were exposed to other enemies, not just the American soldiers, but Pueblo tribes who had long hated them; Hispanic slavers who preyed upon the flanks of this long column of refugees. So they were constantly being picked off and shot at, and it seemed like they had enemies on every front.

The Navajos had been living for years in a period they come to call "the fearing time," in which they had enemies on every side and they had had droughts and they American government had pursued them, but so had the Ute's, and so had so many other tribes, and Kit Carson finally led his campaign into Navajo country it was sort of a final straw that broke the back of the nation. They thought that anything would be better than this sort of paranoid existence that they had to live for the previous four or five years, and they were willing to give it a try. They didn't know what it all really meant. They had never seen this country the Bosque Redondo, but they were willing to give it a try. They certainly had some experience with agriculture. They were proud growers of corn and melons and beans and it wasn't an entirely alien experiment for them at all. It was only when they got there to the site of Bosque Redondo that they began to have profound doubts. The location was out on the plains--an area that is just light-years away from Navajo country. There wasn't enough firewood to keep them warm. There wasn't enough pastureland for their animals. The water in the Pecos River was alkaline and caused them to get sick, so this experiment very quickly began to unravel and the corn crop that they planted that very first year was infested with an insect called a cut-worm, almost like a biblical plague. Just before they were about to harvest, they realized that the entire crop was ruined. So it seems like the whole experiment was cursed, and with each succeeding year the Navajos began to give up.

**Interviewer**

How many died on the Long Walk?

**Hampton Sides**

It's really hard to get an accurate sense of how many people died on the Long Walk. The army didn't take very good records, and the Navajo stories that live to this day contradict some of the army stories. The Navajos have said that the numbers were much higher. The army records that I was able to look at said the number of those who died on The Long Walk itself were actually fairly small, maybe two or three hundred, not the many thousands that you will hear in other accounts. Where the real numbers began to add up of casualties was at the Bosque Redondo. Very quickly diseases of all sorts began to break out. Many Navajos froze to death. Dysentery broke out. Many diseases began to break out including dysentery and cholera--typical of many prison camp situations. And venereal disease became a terrible problem when the soldiers found out that they could sleep with some of the Navajo women because they were starving and needed money essentially. It was a desperate situation and it just got worse and worse and worse, and within a few years as many as 3,000 Navajos had died. That's

essentially 1/3 of the 9,000 that had been brought there during the Long Walk.

**Interviewer**

Did General Carleton participate in anything at the Bosque Redondo?

**Hampton Sides**

General Carleton was a funny man in a lot of ways. He was a control freak. He followed every aspect of this campaign and yet weirdly, he never went with Kit Carson into Canyon de Chelly or into Navajo country to fight. He ran this campaign from afar. When they were moved to Bosque Redondo, Carleton went occasionally, but by and large he stayed in Santa Fe and wrote tons and tons of letters and dictated all sorts of minutiae. This was his baby--he personally believed in this with all his might. He personally scouted this location. He had gambled his entire army career on its success, and so when things started to go bad he was very reluctant to believe it. He was one of these sort of "stay the course" guys who believed that we're going to make this thing work and not accept failure even when it's staring you in the face.

There are all sorts of villains in this disastrous experiment in social policy. If you're really looking for a villain in this I tend to focus... If you're really looking for a villain in the Bosque Redondo experiment, it's James Henry Carleton. This was his baby. He believed in it with all of his might. But you don't necessarily have to stop there because this was policy that was approved in Washington and was approved by President Lincoln, so it goes all the way up the chain of command. The basic outlines of Carleton's policy of removing the Navajos to Bosque Redondo fit perfectly with policy emanating from Washington and his plan was signed and approved by President Lincoln. So it went all the way up the chain of command.

**Interviewer**

Let's talk about the Mescaleros... how did they get there? How did they get along with the Navajos...?

**Hampton Sides**

As a sort of warm-up to the Navajo campaign, Carleton assigned Kit Carson another mission to go into Mescalero country, Mescalero Apaches, and round them up--a much smaller tribe, mostly mountain-dwelling tribe in Southern New Mexico--and to take them to Bosque Redondo. It proved to be a huge mistake to bring the Mescalero Apache Indians into the Bosque Redondo and have them share this place with the Navajos. Carleton thought they would get along just fine because they spoke more or less the same language because they were Athabaskan Indians as well. But they were bitter enemies and had been for centuries, so from the start they fought and stole each other's livestock and raided each other on the Bosque Redondo and it proved to be one of the first real problems that the commanders there had to deal with--essentially policing these two tribes that are supposed to get along, but essentially hate each other. The Mescalero Apache began to realize that the Navajos were running the show here at the Bosque Redondo. This was their reservation. The Apaches were outnumbered something like 9,000 to more like 500, so they saw the writing on the wall, and they finally realized that this was a huge mistake, it wasn't working, people were starving, and so one night they just simply vanished into the night. They escaped stealing a bunch of Navajo horses as kind of a final insult as they left. And Carleton made a feeble attempt to chase them, but he realized it was futile--they couldn't hold this tribe there and it was a mistake to try and make these two tribes get along in this close environment.

There is one other point though about why this was just a bad thing for the Navajos that I think I should say. One of the other reasons why the Bosque Redondo experiment was such a failure is that the Navajos really lost a sense of themselves by leaving their country. Their identity, their tribal identity was so closely tied to the four magic mountains of Navajo country and to the place names that are sprinkled all throughout Navajo country. Every place is sacred. Every place has a name and figures

into their folklore. To be removed from all of that--it just broke their spirit. The medicine men didn't believe they had any power left. They lost their touch. There were old prescriptions that had said you're never to leave Navajo country and the four sacred mountains unless for very very particular purposes. So it really was a great source of fear that by removing them from their homeland, the Americans had essentially taken the magic out of the people and their sense of themselves. That by violating those prescriptions maybe they were on a road to complete ruin.

General Sherman was certainly no sentimentalist on any subject. He had seen pretty much everything there was to see in the department of human misery as a General in the Civil War. But when he came to New Mexico after the Civil War and surveyed the situation at Bosque Redondo, he came very quickly to see that it was a huge failure and it was a very sad place. The Navajos were despondent.

They weren't planting. They had pretty much given up. And furthermore, everything that the experiment had set out to do had failed. They were not Christians. They were not Pueblo dwellers and they were not farmers on a large scale. They were not self-sufficient, and it was costing the U.S. Government millions of dollars to essentially prop this thing up. These once-proud people had become wards of the State. When Sherman came to Bosque Redondo his primary idea was that the Navajo should be moved to Oklahoma, even farther away from their homeland--Oklahoma being the preferred dumping ground for American Indians for generations ever since the Cherokee. But he was willing to listen to the Navajo leaders and hear their side of the story and hear what they wanted. Barboncito had emerged as one of the great leaders of the Navajo people and was certainly one of the more eloquent speakers. The Navajo had finally come to see that, you know what? the American people (these bilagana), they really want us to have a leader--someone who speaks for the tribe, someone who represents the will of the people and is accountable for the actions of the people.

Sherman was somewhat appalled by what he saw at Bosque Redondo, just how bleak the place was and hopeless, the numbers of Navajos who had died there, and yet how expensive it was to maintain. It was a complete failure. He said that Carleton was half crazy on the place and recognized that this had been kind of a personal experiment of Carleton's and that the Government had to do something to change this. His idea was to send the Navajos to Oklahoma, even farther away from their homeland. But he was willing to sit down and listen to the Navajo people and hear what they had to say. Over the course of the years at the Bosque Redondo the Navajos finally came to understand that the American military really wanted and needed to have a leader, a spokesman for the Navajo people and that it was in the tribe's interest to have one. This seemed to be what the biligana needed to, you know, "take me to your leader" syndrome again. The person who emerged as the Navajo leader in many respects was Barboncito--a very respected headman and medicine man from Canyon de Chelly originally, who was very eloquent. He stood up and gave a very impassioned speech to General Sherman, which was captured by the army stenographers and translated, in which he essentially said, this place at Bosque Redondo does not like us. Everything we do here turns to death. He said that my desire comes in at my feet and leaves from my mouth that you will not send us to Oklahoma and you will send us back to our homeland before I die. General Sherman was moved by Barboncito's speech--a man who is not accustomed to being moved by anybody, and decided to grant him his wish to go back to Navajo country. No gold had ever been found in Navajo country. Perhaps it's a little bit like the briar patch in the sense that the U.S. Government, by that point, did not find Navajo land very valuable.

Barboncito was a medicine man from Canyon de Chelly and a great speaker. He was very gentle and small--small hands, very calm, very steady, very quiet, a reassuring presence with whiskers. He was not typical of the Navajos that have beards. But he became to be respected by the American commanders and by Sherman for his eloquence. He seemed to have kind of a prophecy that the Navajos were going to go west, not east... go back to their homeland and not to Oklahoma, which was the last place he wanted to go. Barboncito rose and gave a great and impassioned speech to Sherman in

which he said everything that we touch here turns to death. "This land does not like us" he said. He made it very clear that he did not want to go to Oklahoma. He said, "My desire comes in at my feet and comes out at my mouth that you will let us return to our homeland before I die." This speech was captured by the army stenographers and later translated. It was a very beautiful speech and Sherman was quite moved by it--Sherman being someone who was very rarely moved by anyone. He considered what Barboncito had said and decided that the Navajos had suffered enough and that he would return them back to their homeland. And so they began to negotiate a treaty to return them to their homeland.

Manuelito was defiant and was one of the very last Navajo headmen to surrender. He had been hiding out for years resisting pleas of the various American commanders to give up, and to come to the Bosque Redondo. He was kind of like the most wanted man among the Americans. If they could make him surrender, then everyone would surrender. But he held out for years and years. It was said that he hid out in the Grand Canyon and in the country around monument valley. He was constantly on the move, but he finally did surrender. He came to Bosque Redondo and looked around for a little while, then left again, escaped in the night because he thought it was such a dismal place. But then finally he surrendered again for the final time and came to Bosque Redondo and was there in the final desperate months of this experiment when nothing was working. Manuelito in many ways was kind of the antithesis of Barboncito--he was a large man, a very truculent warrior, a very... just a tough guy. Everything about him was just large, you know a large voice, and had been this defiant warrior for all of this life. But even he began to see that he had no choice but to surrender, and he gave himself up for the final time, came to Bosque Redondo and lived there during the most desperate months, the last months of this experiment.

The American government was still, even after the failures of Bosque Redondo, trying to do everything in its power to turn the Navajos into Christians, farmers and apartment dwellers. It seems to be something they could not get away from. And in sending the Navajos to boarding schools and not just teaching them in English, but requiring that they not speak Navajo and that their beliefs and their culture was inferior, did a lot to contribute to a kind of inferiority complex, and it has taken the Navajos a long time to get away from it and get over. It was terribly destructive and really counterproductive to the larger goals of Indian policy.

It's really hard to say that anything good came out of this experiment--all this needless suffering, all of the starvation and bloodshed. But the Navajo people did learn some very important lessons about the realities of dealing with the biligana. For the first time the Navajos really became a unified tribe because up until that point they had really been a very decentralized (not one tribe, but many tribes) with many different leaders, and they became unified in their voice, and in their political will, in a way, that was necessary for their continued survival. They also came to really appreciate the fact that this cycle of violence that had been going on, that they were indeed a part of with the Hispanic culture, had to end--that this metronome back and forth of slave raiding and sheep raiding was not a cycle that was going to work anymore, that the United States Government was serious about ending this culture of violence. So these were some of the lessons that were learned. The United States Government learned some things as well. It became more and more evident after the failure of the Bosque Redondo experiment, that although reservations were necessary to prolong the culture of American Indian tribes and to ensure their survival, these tribes needed to be located in their own homeland. This whole idea of forced relocations began to lose purchase because prior to that, really, the American had the idea that essentially just move people around like pawns on a board it really didn't matter--thousands of miles, hundreds of miles, it didn't matter. Finally the government was beginning to realize that homeland was sacred and was necessary to the morale and spirit and the tribal identity of these tribal groups, and to move them long distances was going to ensure the failure of any kind of reservation.

# Harry Walters interview

## Interviewer

Start out by telling me your name and your title here, and use the professor title if you would.

## Harry Walters

My name is Harry Walters. I'm Director of the Hahathli Museum here at the College and I also teach Navajo History, Navajo Oral History, and Culture.

## Interviewer

Let's start out by talking about the Navajo people. Where did they come from? What are their origins?

## Harry Walters

According to Navajo tradition, they say that we can from the earth from beneath the earth. There were three worlds before this present fourth world and that the three worlds was kind of a disorder. People did not really amend to the natural order, but when they came to the fourth world then order was established, and so that's what tradition said we come from that.

## Interviewer

Tell me a little bit about Chaco Canyon and the Navajo's role at Chaco Canyon.

## Harry Walters

Chaco Canyon was probably one of the earliest settlement of Navajo in the Southwest. And there are some rock art that have been attributed to the Navajos and also some of the Navajo oral stories talks about Chaco Canyon, you know, when that area was settled by the Anasazi. So Chaco Canyon actually existed from, you know, 800 A.D. to 1130 A.D., so if there is any bearing on when the Navajos entered the Southwest, it might have been somewhere around there.

## Interviewer

Tell me about Canyon de Chelly. Why is Canyon de Chelly a special place for the Navajo people?

## Harry Walters

Canyon de Chelly is a place where there is safety and there is also food and shelter. Navajo tradition says that it is like our mother; they call it our mother because it has all of the qualities of a mother--a place where you seek comfort, shelter and protection. And so the Navajos have used that ever since they came into the Southwest.

## Interviewer

Tell me what happened at Canyon de Chelly when the U.S. Military rode in.

## Harry Walters

During the Navajo campaign, which lasted from 1873 to 1866, the Navajos used the canyon as a place of refuge. And then in January of 1864 Colonel Kit Carson led the military into the canyon--and it was January the coldest part of the year, and then there was about two feet of snow--and he went in from the mouth, from the West side. And then Lieutenant A.J. (?)

## Interviewer

Tell me what happened at Canyon de Chelly when the military rode in.

## Harry Walters

Colonel Kit Carson entered the canyon from the West, and from de Chelly, from the mouth. And then Lieutenant A.J. Phifer entered the canyon from the East and Carson didn't know that there was a branch in the canyon. They thought that there was only one canyon so...

## Interviewer

We were talking about Kit Carson. What happened at Canyon De Chelly?

**Harry Walters**

Kit Carson entered the canyon from the mouth, from the West side, and Lieutenant A.J. Phifer entered the canyon from the East, and he entered Canyon del Muerto and Carson didn't know that the canyon branch. There's del Muerto to the South, excuse me, Canyon del Merto to the North and Canyon de Chelly to the East, and so when they were to meet half-way and Carson came and he entered the South side, Canyon de Chelly, and while Phifer was coming down from Canyon del Merto they missed each other, and then Carson, when he didn't contact Phifer, he turned around and they came back and they met where it was called Chutchin(?) ruin where both canyon's branch.

**Interviewer**

What did they do at Canyon de Chelly?

**Harry Walters**

Well there was no direct contact with the Navajos. The Navajos who were living in the canyon there had already fled and they left frankly all of their belongings-- you know, hogans and blankets and food and things like that--but there were Navajos on top of the canyon who were yelling, you know, and shooting arrows at the troops. And then, so Carson ordered all the hogans burned, and then whatever food that the army could not carry they piled them and they burned them, and then he ordered the volunteers, about 75 members volunteered, and they went back into the canyon and they cut fruit trees. There were peaches, apricots and apples and they estimated that in three days they cut about 7,000 trees. And so this was the straw that broke the camels back you might say, and the Navajos began to surrender in large numbers the following month in February.

**Interviewer**

What kind of a man was Kit Carson?

**Harry Walters**

Kit Carson was a man that was very dedicated to, you know, his profession and he was not of the same mold as General ...

**Interviewer**

From the Navajo perspective, what kind of a man was Kit Carson?

**Harry Walters**

From the Navajo perspective he was an evil man. From the Navajo perspective, Kit Carson was an evil man. From the Navajo perspective, Kit Carson was an evil man, but I have done some research on him and he seems to be a very reasonable man. He's not of the same mold as others like Colonel Shivington or... I can't think... or General Custer.

Kit Carson, from the Navajo perspective, Kit Carson was an evil man, but I have done a lot of research on him and I find him to be a very reasonable man, you know, dedicated to his profession--and that he is not of the same mold as General Carleton or General Custer, or General Shivington. He does everything within reason and he knew the Indians, and there are some stories, some horror stories along The Long Walk--I don't think that this was the military policy, I think those were done probably by, you know, the individual than the army, but most of the conflict, most of the damage that was done was by the Utes, you know. Carson was an agent to the Utes before, so he knew them well and he knew also that the Utes also know the Navajo country, well and they know the Navajos, so he enlisted them as scouts, and then General Carleton also encouraged the Utes to raid into the Navajo country. So I think that without the assistance of the Utes, the Navajo campaign would have lasted a long, long time.

**Interviewer**

Do you think it would have been... Carson is somewhat sympathetic to native people... do you think it

would have been worse if someone else had been in his shoes?

**Harry Walters**

Carson has been married to Indian women to occasion, and he had children by them, and so he knew the Indians and he was very sympathetic to them. I think that if it was any other person than him, you know, there would have been a lot more horror stories.

**Interviewer**

Why did The Long Walk happen?

**Harry Walters**

The Long Walk happened because the Americans, the European Americans had this goal, which is the manifest destiny, and that we were not citizens of the United States at that time. We were considered as enemy, so to do whatever they want to with us. And that in many cases we live on good farm land, choice land, land that has gold, and then, so the policy was to remove the Indians out of the way of the advancing civilization, and Oklahoma was the place where the Indian country was, so during that period, a total of 43 different tribes from all over the United States were removed to Oklahoma. So that was what the government had in mind for the Navajos. But as it turned out, there were too many of us, and there was about 8,000 Navajos at Bosque Redondo Reservation, and it's estimated that another 2,000 did not make The Long Walk. They stayed behind.

**Interviewer**

How brutal was The Long Walk? How were the people treated and what happened to them on The Long Walk?

**Harry Walters**

The brutality and the suffering of The Long Walk, I think, was due to the fact that there were a large number of Navajos that were moved, and also the time of the years--January and February--and so it is said that in many cases the March was ten-miles long and that the government did not have any idea how large the number the Navajos were and that there was no money to feed and cloth the captives on the way and Carson had to feed them out of military supplies. And then there were also Utes, Pueblos and New Mexicans that also prey on the people along the way.

**Interviewer**

We were talking about the brutality of The Long Walk. What happened there and how brutal were the soldiers?

**Harry Walters**

The brutality and the suffering that the people experienced during The Long Walk, I think, was probably due to a large fact that the Navajos were in great numbers, and then the military had overestimated the population of the Navajos, and so in many cases...

**Interviewer**

Tell me how brutal this was... the Long Walk?

**Harry Walters**

I think that the weather, the time of the year had something to do with it in January and February of 1864, and that in many cases the march was ten miles long and the army did not have adequate food or clothing for the captives, and then there were also New Mexicans, Utes and Pueblos also came down and attacked them along the way. There were not enough soldiers, escorts for protection, and then so many of the people died along the way. And then of course there were some of them who froze to death and then others starved to death.

**Interviewer**

What did they find when they got to Bosque Redondo?

**Harry Walters**

When they got there, there were plenty of trees and they began building hogans, and then there was... you put in fields. And then of course as the years went by the trees began to dwindle and then they were reduced to using their hogans for firewood, and in the end they were reduced to living in a hole that they just dug in the ground and covered it with canvas. It was a very terrible situation.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about Manuelito. What kind of a man was he?

**Harry Walters**

During the Long Walk period, Manuelito was a young man. In 1859 when the Americans first entered the Navajo country, the Navajos were puzzled by who these people were, and then some of the elders, like Zarcillas Largo, advocated that they should make peace with them, but the younger men, which was led by Manuelito, said "no," and then they wanted to fight. They said there is only a few of them and we can easily defeat them. So at the ceremony called (Nauchit) it is said that Zarcillas Largos was over-ruled, and he became very angry and he left before the ceremony was over.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about Barboncito. What kind of a man was he?

**Harry Walters**

There was not very much mentioned about Barbocito before the Long Walk. But he was from Canyon de Chelly, and he was of the mighty "**schechnie**" of the Hamous(?) clan, and he was an elder during this period so in his youth he was a great warrior, you know he distinguished himself as a great warrior, but in his later years he was a Peace Chief. Navajos have two leaders; one as a warrior or what we call (Nashtesha nautauinie-Navajo) which means "a war leader", and also a Peace Chief, (wachzarjenaught aunie-Navaho). And so during the Long Walk period, Barbencito was a Peace Chief, and then for this reason he was selected by the people to represent them with the Peace Commissioner.

**Interviewer**

What are the lessons learned from the Long Walk? What can we learn from that experience?

**Harry Walters**

I think that the suffering that the people went through, you know, was very devastating for us. But you know like everything else, it has two folds; the suffering and the other one is what we gain since then--the treaty that was signed and the things that were promised in the treaty. It is still valid today and then this college is one of those because education, you know, was promised in the treaty. The Government is responsible for the education of the Navajo children.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel about your ancestors who make the Long Walk?

**Harry Walters**

I feel terrible, of course. But my grandfather made the Long Walk. Today some of the elders that are still living today can count their grandparents making the Long Walk, but most of us people of my generation--there are two or three generations since then. But with me, my grandmother married my grandfather. My grandmother was 15 and my grandfather was 53 when they married in the early 20th century. And so I happen to have a grandfather who made the Long Walk, and he made the Long Walk when he was six years old and he came back when he was ten. He lost his father at Bosque Redondo, but he came back with his mother.

**Interviewer**

Any other stories you can tell of ancestors from that period?

**Harry Walters**

I think every Navajo family has a relative that made the Long Walk and each family had their own stories. And here at the College in my history class, I require a research paper, and many students write about their great-grandfather or grandmother who made the Long Walk. So it is still fresh in our memories today.

**Interviewer**

We talked earlier about Kit Carson. What kind of man was Kit Carson?

**Harry Walters**

Kit Carson was a very unusual man. And he is not of the same mold as General Custer or Colonel Shivington, or even General Carleton; and all indication is that he is a very reasonable man and he does not fly off the handle, you might say. He does everything that he is assigned by order. He tried to resign his commission during the Navajo campaign. He actually enlists in the Army to fight in the Civil War, but when General Carleton found out that Carson was in the Army, he commissioned him a Colonel and ordered him to organize a New Mexico regiment, which he did. And then his next order was to round up the Mescalero Apache, which he did in three months. And then his next order was to round up the Navajos. And all indication was that he did not want to do that, and he tried to get out of it several times. But when you're in the Army, the military owns you, and so this is how he carried out the Navajo campaign.

**Interviewer**

Tell me again about Canyon de Chelly and why that is so important to the Navajo people.

**Harry Walters**

Canyon de Chelly and the Navajo is said to be like our mother; it is often called the mother because it is the place you seek comfort, shelter and protection. And so throughout the ages the Navajos had used Canyon de Chelly. There are good farms lands down there. There's water, and also there are fruit trees. And then it is warm down there, and so it was a place that people would take refuge in time of danger.

**Interviewer**

What was the aftermath of the military campaign at Canyon de Chelly? What happened after the military came in there?

**Harry Walters**

When the military entered the canyon under Kit Carson in January of 1864, there were two feet of snow. When Carson came in he found the canyon abandoned, but there were homes; hogans, shelter. And there were also a lot of places, granary where food was stored; corn, beans squash, whatever. Carson did not find any Navajos in there, but what he did was that he went about and destroyed all of the hogans and then he broke open some of the granary and then he fed some of them to his animals, and what he could not carry that the army could use, he burned them and then he also asked for volunteers to go back and stay behind and to chop the fruit trees. There were peaches, apricots, apples that were growing in there. And in his report he said that during the three days, these volunteers chopped down 7,000 trees and so this broke the Navajo backbone, and that within the month a large number of Navajos began to surrender.

**Interviewer**

Can you tell me about the story of Fortress Rock? How did that transpire?

**Harry Walters**

Fortress Rock incident did not happen during the Long Walk. I think there is a lot of misunderstanding among the Navajos about Fortress Rock. The Fortress Rock incident: where some soldiers or some

expedition came and camped underneath and the Navajos took refuge at the top of this mesa; and there are ladders that still can be seen, and when they were there they ran out of water. So undercover in darkness it is said that some young man climbed down with ropes and got water without waking the Spaniards. So the Fortress Rock incident happened during the Mexican period, not the Long Walk. If it had happened I'm sure Carson would have... you would read about it in his report. There is no report about that incident.

**Interviewer**

You told me earlier about the origins of the Navajo. Where did they come from and what kind of people are they?

**Harry Walters**

The Navajos are Athabaskan-speaking people and the Athabaskans live throughout Canada and into Alaska. They are related to three other people; the Clinkets, the Hida and the Ee-at. The Southern Athabaskans, which the Navajos and the Apaches are, probably came down from the North somewhere, I put it around the later part of the Anasazi period.

**Interviewer**

Tell me again about Chaco Canyon and the relationship the Navajos have with Chaco Canyon?

**Harry Walters**

Chaco Canyon is probably one of the earliest settlements of Navajos in the Southwest, and that there are some rock arts that are still visible today that are attributable to the Navajos. And the Navajo tradition says that there were people living at Chaco Canyon when the Navajos came there, and there is a story about a great gambler that was said to have taken place in Chaco Canyon--that the Pueblo of Chaco Canyon. And from the archeological standpoint Chaco Canyon was occupied from 800 A.D. to 1130 A.D., so if there is any indication of when the Navajos entered the Southwest, it might have been around that period.

**Interviewer**

Tell me the story of Narbona and how that episode--being accused of the stolen horse--may have set up the Navajo-U.S. Military relationship for the future.

**Harry Walters**

Narbona is a Navajo leader who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century, and he was killed in 1849 under the military that was commanded by General John M. Washington. At that time in 1849 it is said that he was a very old man; probably in his 90's or 80's, and that he is one of the Navajos that was well-versed in the Spanish, Mexican and military--I mean, American affairs. The traditional Navajo homeland (Dinetah), in Northwestern New Mexico, he was probably born during the time when the Navajos first began to move into Arizona in the Canyon de Chelly, and that he tried to keep the peace between the Americans and the Navajos, but an incident at the place which bears his name now, Narbona Pass, the military expedition under General... Colonel John M. Washington met the Navajos there and then it is said that one of the New Mexicans spotted a horse that was stolen from him sometime before and there was an argument. Washington demanded that their horse be turned over to him and then there was a scuffle that broke out. And then the military open-fired against the Navajos, and one of the first that was killed was Narbona.

**Interviewer**

When the Navajos look back at the Long Walk period, what are their feelings...?

**Harry Walters**

I think that it was a terrible, terrible time and that I know that with me, you know, my grandfather and my great-grandfather who was buried there and my feeling of injustice, you know, a great wrong that

was done. But since then there has been a lot of things that we have gained from that, you know the treaty for example. And then there were also some legislation that have been passed since then that have been very beneficial to us. I think that the Americans, in looking back at this incident--the guilt on the part of the Americans, you know, have played a role in these legislations.

## Jim Dandy interview

### Interviewer

Jim start out by telling me about the boarding school experience. How were you treated there?

### Jimmy Dandy

A boarding school is kind of like a very... it's more or less like you go to military, but the different thing about it is a boarding school is when they take you away from your family, and that was one of the worst part of me because I was raised by my grandparents. Boarding school... when I first started there in Tuba City it was really... I struggled there because at that time I didn't know any English. Everybody has to speak English and I couldn't communicate with anybody unless, if I'm outside or somewhere, we could kind of get away with communicating with one another in our own language. But every time we get caught out there speaking Navajo, we get really, what we call a punishment. And it was a "no no" and you get punished for that. And when you get back and somebody turns you in, you have to sacrifice. You have to be really careful about speaking the Navajo language. At that time I can't... that because I could only speak Navajo, there's no English. I really had a hard time to get used to that because every time I get in trouble I'd be sucking on the brown soap. That brown soap at the time got to be where it taste awful at first but you get used to it, so I kind of get away with it, and I get where I was treated worse than a lot of other students because I couldn't speak the English. It was hard for me to adjust to that and that's why I always get caught with that. And another thing that I didn't like about it was the boy's supervision. Our supervisor most of the time was not there. A lot of the young students, they're a little older than we are; usually it would be the leaders of each dorm. And we'd get the worse punishment from them because they treat us like dirt. And I got in trouble with that a lot of times get hit in the head with a pocket knife a few times, and I get kicked for no reason. So I got to where I was very mad one time and I couldn't take it anymore. So I got myself in trouble. I went ahead and tried to defend myself in the wrong way, I guess, and I was punished for the whole two months for that; get up early in the morning and I have to scrub floors then get in line for about three hours for my punishment, staying in line straight, never even moved. It's just like the way I'm sitting right now when I'm talking to you. You know that was the worst time of my life was standing. I can't stand standing there for two to three hours sometimes sucking on brown soap. And sometimes it does feel a little bit sick in your stomach sometimes, but when I got used to it I just said I'm used to it. And then another time that I... everybody has to wear the same type of clothes you know we suited up with like coveralls all of the time which was kind of... it's good in some ways and a lot of times I get in trouble and I'll be doing somebody's work for being a... I guess trying to discipline me that way, but I got use to that too. I was doing somebody's work and at night I used to go out and scrub floors until about, oh ten o'clock and then I'd go and I didn't have any time to go out and have a free time to do something. I always been in trouble all of the time. And one time when I couldn't stand it anymore so I ran away trying to escape, and I got caught, and I was punished for the whole month scrubbing floors and doing things that wasn't very good. And there was another time that I was so angry and I tried to contact my parents. They wouldn't let me go see my parents and my parents would come and they'd drop of something for me and they don't even let me go see them. I guess at one time my father really got angry and he came in and really got down with the supervisor, and he was very mad. My father

was very mad, and I was so glad at that time, and I was sitting there and had these bumps on my head, and I also had this black eye from one of the older students who gave me a black eye—just no reason hit me in the face. And things like that that we went through so hard. And then the classroom... in the classroom was bad too because we had something that really bothered me was that I sit by these little two girls on each side, and it's hard for me to study, and they'll be sitting there and times that I'm scared, and I think I'm not the only one. A lot of the kids are kind of scared too because they're scared to get in trouble. So I end up getting in trouble again. At one time I got so angry, and I just didn't do what was right, and I got me some thumbtacks and put it on my teacher's chair because she was so mean. She got crutches and when you get caught with something she'll let you have it with that crutch. At one time she hit me the side of the face with her crutches, and I had to kind of, I guess, start swelling on the side of my face that nobody did anything about it and I got the blame for it, and I had to stand in line, and I got so angry at one time that I put thumbtacks. And she knew who it coming from. As soon as I got in the classroom, and she stood and taught there and she pointed her finger at me, and she said, "Jimmy Dandy come here!" And I got over there, and she just gave it to me with her crutches. She turned me around in front of all the students. I just couldn't take it anymore. And with getting in trouble like that they sent me off to Sherlock, Oklahoma away from all my friends, my parents. And I was going to school there with about 150 different tribes and talk about discrimination there—we never got along with other tribes, and we always been, I guess it's just like during the Long Walk you know. There were a lot of these people expecting that there's going to be something that's going to happen to them, and so they hidden in this canyon for a long time. And that's the way I felt when I went to boarding school, is I always expecting that I might get killed or... it was scary. But whenever I got in there, and one time I just barely couldn't stand it anymore so I ran away from Sherlock, Oklahoma; went back all the way to Tuba City miles, and we walked part of the way and hitch-hiked. When I got back over there, there was a government vehicle parked in front of my grandmother's place. I wasn't really that smart to hide away from that. But when I got there, they just put me back. I didn't get to see my grandparents. They just put me back in the vehicle and took me all the way back to Sherlock, Oklahoma. Another time I ran away because I got caught in Oklahoma City, and they took me there, and I was punished for the whole month. They finally took me into the office and said, "hey Jimmy Dandy you don't belong here. You'll never learn. " The only hope I got at that time was mentioned to me by the counselor. They said the only thing that we might help with you is put you on a five-year vocational program. So I started there and that was another struggle I couldn't... And they have to really watch you all of the time just like they know that you can get in trouble. So I was always there, and know that somebody's watching me so I had to be very careful. But I escaped one time. I was working with some of the older people who were working there, and there were two of the very outstanding students that I know that really helped me a lot was one, Dean Jackson, and the other one is, Jet Jackson, and they're still around and the other ones... their both very successful but Dean passed away a few years ago. And they are the ones who were idols for me because they helped me a lot, and they kind of kept me in line. But I started just dropping out of school and working on railroads the rest of my time, and I finally got back into school again and that was another experience that was very difficult. But it turned out to be one of the best programs. It was an L.D.S. Church placement program that I started out in Plymouth, Utah. And I didn't think that I can have the education that I got. And I graduated from Brigham Young University, and I found a good job here. But the only thing that I can tell you about the place, boarding school, there's some good to it because it teaches you independence, and it teaches you how to... as far as being disciplined it was one of the experiences that I had. I'm glad sometimes that I had the opportunity to a boarding school was being disciplined. I didn't get away with anything. The only part that I didn't like was that I was told that I'll never learn and that was false because one of the church caseworkers told me, he said, "you're really a good person," he said, "you need to go to school," and so I believe that that is not the end of it. You can do a lot for yourself. Just go at it and keep your chin up and go, and I believe that and I always... that was my philosophy in

counseling is that never give up, which I'm glad that I did.

**Interviewer**

Jim you were talking about the parents being just about as afraid as the kids. Tell me about that.

**Jimmy Dandy**

I think another thing about that is that my parents were very nervous because at that time a lot of the parents trying to hid their children—they don't want them to go to school. But they being punished for that because a lot of the parents being in jail for that because they, you know hidden their children and get their education. But my grandparents have always been nervous about that, and they said, "You have to go to school grandson because we're going to go to jail, and it's what we don't want to do." And I think there are a lot of the parents been hid like that on the reservation being accused that it's their fault, that their child didn't get an education. Some of them went to jail for that, and which I think at that time they could have done better because it's just like during the Fort Sumner—a lot of them were always nervous because that's the reason why our parents taught us. You got to be early. You got to get up early in the morning. You got to be able to face the hardship, and it was one of the reasons they taught their kids that way. They're a little bit tougher on their kids because sometimes you have to stay up all night waiting for somebody to attack you. And that was one of the stories I got from my great grandparents is because they will never go to sleep. They were sitting all night sometime because they're expecting somebody's going to attack them and take them to jail. And that's another reason that I always taught that I should go to school because they don't want to get in trouble with the law. And we were always expecting that way, and when my brothers and sisters and one of them went to school, and she didn't go to school until about when she was 20 because my great-grandmother on my father's side, she was going to go to jail too and she, instead of going there, she passed away and so my sister finally... my dad decided only hope for her is to get an education so he signed her up in school. She went to one year of boarding school at Shiprock, but she didn't do well until she got in there in the mountain Indian school and then on to the placement program. That's when she started her education. Now she has her master's degree, and she's retired, and she's doing really good. And I'm glad that she hang in there in the school.

## **Luci Tapahonso interview**

**Interviewer**

Lucy why don't you start out by just describing the Long Walk

**Luci**

The Long Walk was probably one of the most important periods of in their history. It has, of course, a profound impact on the people that suffered through it and lived through it, and it continues to have an impact today on our lives.

**Interviewer**

What do you think it meant to the identity of the Navajo people?

**Luci**

I think that though it wasn't meant to, it probably reinforced and strengthened and ensured the identity of the Dine.

**Interviewer**

When you think of ancestors and relatives and people who made the Long Walk what are your emotions about that time?

**Luci**

It's hard, you know, to say you feel one way or another and it's so much a part of our experience that it's difficult to think of it separately by itself. It's very meaningful to me, and it's so much a part of our experience as a people and as individuals and as a group so...

It's very much a part of the way that we identify ourselves, and not necessarily the experience, but because many of my ancestors of whom I'm a direct descendant, which means it's my experience in a sense. So I don't think of them as separate from who I am. I think of what happened as forming my own sense of self, and my experience that it's going to play a role, or it plays a role in who I am as well as my future and my children and grandchildren's lives and their future as well.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel the Navajos were treated by the U.S. Military?

**Luci**

I think it's a long cycle of misunderstanding and abuse and very much different kinds of mistreatment. That was the feeling, or the way that was the general feeling in America and at that time. Over time as Navajo people became more educated, and as there was more interaction, I think that maybe those feelings, and that kind of treatment, continued, but perhaps not to the degree that it did in the 1880s.

**Interviewer**

Why do you think the Long Walk happened?

**Luci**

I don't know... I suppose that the general purpose, as history shows, was to isolate and to civilize and to Americanize Navajo people. So that was the general purpose for it.

**Interviewer**

Part of the 1868 treaty was an education component with boarding schools and things like that. What do you think that did to the Navajo identity?

**Luci**

It's very complex. I don't think there is a single answer, and there's not a single outcome. For one thing, the people that signed the treaty--and were there at Bosque Redondo--helped many ceremonies, and it was not an action that occurred from a single decision or made by a single person. It was a process that took a long time and that involved a lot of talking and praying and all kinds of... the process for the Dine was very much a complex and sustaining process, so they put a lot of thought into what the implications of the treaty was and were aware of what the education component meant. So when people began... when they were forced to educate their children, there was always the component that when Navajos became educated then they could be advocates or they could be, I guess advocates for the people.

**Interviewer**

What was your boarding school experience like?

**Luci**

I went to a private Methodist boarding school. At the time I was in school, which was the 1960s you know, no one was encouraged to speak Navajo or practice their own, you know, practice ceremonies or anything. That was not... that was a time when we were all encouraged to speak English and to... we couldn't speak Navajo, we couldn't... that was the time. It wasn't until much later, probably in the '70s and '80s that Navajo began to be taught and people began to talk about culture and Navajo history and those sorts of things.

**Interviewer**

What happened if you did speak Navajo? Were you punished for that?

**Luci**

Ya, we were not encouraged and we were punished.

**Interviewer**

What motivated you to write 1864? How did that come about?

**Luci**

As with all of my work, the rhymes and stories... you know a person writes what they care about, and a person writes about what they want to remember or have remembered, and so that was part of the, as with all of my other work, that was part of why I wrote it.

**Interviewer**

How about The American Flag... how did that come about?

**Luci**

The same... that's kind of the companion piece. I wanted to write something about the rugs that were woven during that period because they were very stunning and very beautiful, and they are also a sad experience in some ways to see the rugs and know what was occurring at the time.

## Lucy Willie interview

**Translating For KUED and PBS**

**By Phyllis Whitehorse**

**Lucy Willie**

My clan is Biibitonii (Bitterwater clan) I am from Sweetwater and Clacheehii are my father, Toahoni are my paternal grandfather, shish dineeh (bear people) are my maternal grandfather. My name is Lucy and my story is short not very long.

**Please tell your long walk stories about your ancestors?**

I just know stories that were told to me about the long walk. My grandmother and my great great grandmother were captured when they were digging for wild onions and other foods. They were part of the people who were herded on the long walk. There were five people who were captured too. Some of the people ran into (Tsashintaa) black rocks and hid themselves so they didn't go. Those people who hid in the rocks continued living there until the captured came home after they were released.

**With women, men and children?**

Yes. My grandmother, grandfather and great great grandmother were they were the ones involved in the long walk but the others stayed in Tsashintaa. That was what I was told. When the other came back they noticed they were still living there. At that time ...

My mother's father stayed he wasn't involved in the long walk. At that time he was a young boy and he wasn't part of the herd. He was part of the people who hid at tsabisheeskhi, tsashintaa he was there and that is why he wasn't involved. People at that time used to survive on root food that was how they survived. They also use to eat rabbit, Naasiisi, liiatsho. And the time people used to live in hard times they lived in rocks and homes made out of burnt woods. They used to wear woven plants and they also used to use that for shoes. When a baby is born they used to wrap the baby up with rabbit skin. So as this was happening some of them were captured while they were digging for food to eat. The ones who were captured spent a lot of years away and when they were let go at tsahotso (yellow rock) when they

got there they were given each one sheep. Four of them got four and they started herding over the mountain where you said you used to herd sheep. That place is called "where men used to play" hastyee ni dani. At the time when people were herded they lost some children there. The story goes, there was a lady who was about to have her baby, she told everyone that she can't make it on the trip and told everyone to go ahead she and her three children stayed and told her husband to go ahead. When the people were released they came back to where they left the lady and three children and surprisingly they saw children playing by the river and noticed that they were grown up. When the children saw the people coming they ran underneath a big slab of rock. Suddenly the mother poked her head out to see and recognized who they were and the mother said it is your father. After that they started herding the sheep back to their home. This is just the stories that I was told.

### **What does she think about her ancestors that made the long walk?**

They had a hard time going there they were punished and finally released to go back to their land. Hastin ha jelli was the one who negotiated and pleaded their release. He was the reason why they were sent home. It is really good that they were sent home. He brought back black goats and sheep. They born different colored babies and from that my grandfather was called Black sheep. The long walk was hard for them but they brought home sheep and goats. There is another story about three brothers who were captured and one of the boys was released. He was given a jacket to keep him warm. He ran and walked fast. He got hungry as he was walking and saw some pinion nuts. He picked a lot and put it in a gunny sack. He scooped up pinions with dirt so he shook the dirt out. He was walking again walked on top of a hill he noticed smoke coming out from home. He went over to the village and noticed there were Nakai (Mexican) people. They wanted some pinions and begged for it so he gave them each a handful. There was two couple who came to him with a girl and said to take her for all the pinions he had so he traded. He was scared for his safety. He stayed with them for a few days and sneaked away. He noticed a familiar rock standing out which was Shiprock. He got back to his people who are the biibitonii (Deer clan people) in Mexican Water. The ones that came home are just stories that I was told from my grandparents. The sheep and goats that are outside are the ones who are in the corral are the descendant from the long walk.

### **At that time how were they treated?**

At that time they were kept by the soldiers. But some of them died of hunger.

### **What about the conditions of the long walk, the people how were they treated?**

They were treated harsh. They were herded extremely hard. That was what I was told.

## **Robert Begay interview**

### **Interviewer**

Tell me your name and where you're from, then tell me the significance of the Chuska Mountains to Navajo culture.

### **Robert Begay**

My name is Robert Begay. I'm the Navajo Nation Archeology Department's Director. I am from Crystal. My clans are "Born from Water"... I am "Born from Water; Born for the Edge of Water People." The Towering House people are my paternal grandparents, and my paternal grandparents are the "Red Streak Running into Water" people.

The Chuska Mountains are very, very important culturally. Basically they're one of the mountains that are part of Navajo culture and Navajo history.

The Chuska Mountains are very important in Navajo history, Navajo life ways. It is one of those mountains that are mentioned quite often. It is ordained with what we call Yoda, meaning all the riches in the world. It is considered a male and a counterpart to Black Mesa. There is a lot of history to it ceremonially, and also in more recent times, stuff with Navajo history that has happened in the last several hundred years.

**Interviewer**

Tell me again the significance of the Chuska Mountains.

**Robert Begay**

The Chuska Mountains are very important to Navajo people. It is one of the mountains that have our significance not only ceremonially, but also in traditional life. It is considered a male mountain, but also considered and ordained with various riches of the universe called (Navajo). It is one of those mountains that is ordained with that, with all of the jewels and various things, and it's also very important because a lot of events in the last four or five hundred years is significant in that area. It is a mountain range that... the counterpart to the Chuska Mountain is the Black Mesa. The Black Mesa is considered the female part, or the counterpart of Chuska Mountain.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about Narbona Pass. How does that fit into Navajo culture, and why is it important to you?

**Robert Begay**

Narbono Pass is actually really, really important to Navajo people. Again, it's part of Chuska Mountains. Back in when the holy deedies(?) were occupying Navajo land, there was some type of dispute between the holy people and they fought right there at Narbona Pass. That's why they call it (Navajo), meaning "that's where they fought with metal and arrows," and so forth. It also identifies right there the travels of Changing Woman--the mother of all Navajos. She had lunch there. So again today, it's very important. In addition to that, it is an area where we called... it used to be known as Washington Pass. Now it's renamed, oh about ten years ago, to Narbona Pass because of events leading up to the Long Walk. Narbona is the name of a famous headman of the Navajo people back in-- somewhere in the mid 1800's.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about Canyon de Chelly. Why is that important to Navajo culture?

**Robert Begay**

Like everything else, Canyon de Chelly is one of those areas that is also important not only to the history of the Navajo people, but it has a history to various things; there's some ceremonial history that extends from there, (The Night Wayxxx)? There is some clan origins. There's some clans from Navajo today that come from there. It's also a place where... it plays a big part in the Navajo Long Walk and the U.S. campaign against the Navajo in the mid-1800's, around the 1860's and so forth.

**Interviewer**

What happened there and why did it happen?

**Robert Begay**

That's a long history what happened in Canyon de Chelly. To put it really generally, in the mid-1800's the United States led a campaign against the Navajos. Before that, the U.S. really did create some treaties, signed some treaties with the Navajos. But the problem there was Navajos in general not only lived, but they lived in different bands, so whatever Calvary came in or the United States Army, they would sign a treaty with one band, but that treaty wasn't binding to the other bands of the Navajo people. Well because of that, that led up to a lot of disputes not only with the U.S. people, or what I mean the U.S. people was the Mexican people, the people that are coming into the Southwest to settle

the Southwest, and here they basically ran into some Navajo people that occupied the area. And that created a lot of tensions, and basically there was some raiding and killing and so forth. Canyon de Chelly at that time was also occupied by Navajo people, but at the height of the war, actually between the Navajos and the United States Cavalry, that was an area where a lot of Navajos hid out. It was a place where they hid out to hide out from being captured and being round up to the Long Walk or to their way to Fort Sumner.

**Interviewer**

What happened to the peach trees and orchards at Canyon de Chelly when Kit Carson came in?

**Robert Begay**

Kit Carson... there's a lot of history surrounding what Kit Carson did and the United States Cavalry. The peach trees, the corn fields, because the Navajos were basically in that area and hid out so well using the terrain and the canyon, to get them to come out. What Kit Carson did, and his Cavalry, was to burn those, basically, and try to starve the Navajos out of there, which was pretty successful from my understanding.

**Interviewer**

Why did the Long Walk happen?

**Robert Begay**

The Long Walk is basically... there's a misconception about the Long Walk. It's not a one-time event. The Long Walk is something that happened over several years. If you look at the military records, the campaign I think accounts for like 50 times. There were 50 trips between the Navajo people to Fort Sumner, meaning there were 50 different trips to Fort Sumner. In all of that, that happened anywhere from 1864 to 1868, generally in that time period.

**Interviewer**

What happened on the Long Walk?

**Robert Begay**

The Long Walk, depending on who you talk to... o.k. There is different accounts. The things that you read and hear about today: it was a forced march; there was a lot of death associated to it; there was a lot of suffering associated, in addition to their stay at Fort Sumner. Now depending on who you talk to there is, just because of the 50 times or the 50 times they went to Fort Sumner--the 50 campaigns. You hear different things from different people. Yes there is always suffering involved. There was always hardship, but there's also... you know that was also, probably I would say about 95% of the experiences. But there's other experiences that were associated with that time period, and that was... we have identified people who have talked about it and said back then people actually just volunteered to go to Fort Sumner because they were missing their families so much. So they made a trek just to get to Fort Sumner just to be with their families, just because of the loneliness that was caused by the Long Walk. There's others that... there's another experience where they never went to Fort Sumner. This is really common in the Navajo Mountain area--Black Mesa. There are Navajo people who said we never went to the Long Walk. We conquered the U.S. in dealing with this, and it's very fresh in their minds today. And then there is people that... one interview that we did, which took me by surprise, was that he basically said the Navajo that went along the Long Walk were well taken care of, meaning that he said we didn't have our traditional enemies like the Zuni's, the Hopi's, the Utes raiding on us while we were going along the trail. The U.S. Cavalry protected us there, so there are different experiences depending on who you talk to.

**Interviewer**

What did they find at Fort Sumner?

**Robert Begay**

Bosque Redondo, or Fort Sumner the Navajos call (Navajo)... it was basically a barren land. It was a land that they, soon after arriving knew was hard to live on. You could not plant. It was... the soil was not suited for farming or for grazing.

**Interviewer**

Any specific stories you can relate from the Long Walk that were ancestors of yours?

**Robert Begay**

There is a lot of stories that even just through my work we have come across. There's stories from oral history that's recounted by people from. Talk about various issues... one of the big problems that we ran into when the Park Service did approach us on this was that there was one trail from Canyon de Chelly to Fort Defiance to Fort Wingate to Fort Sumner. We told them that that wasn't true. There are trails that lead into Fort Defiance to Canyon de Chelly and then some not going to Fort Defiance. Some went straight to Fort Sumner that the U.S. Cavalry used. Now the only way to ascertain that information is to go back out and talk to the Navajo people, which, the little work that we did work on, we did identify some additional trails to it. As far as personal experiences, my grandmother, or my great grandmother was born in Fort Sumner. My father or my father's father--my paternal grandfather--he never went to Fort Sumner. He basically hid out in the Chuska Mountains. And then there's a whole history to that. There's trails everywhere coming into Canyon de Chelly going into Fort Defiance and so forth. Again, there is a lot of history out there that has not been recorded.

**Interviewer**

What do you think the Long Walk did to the Navajo identity?

**Robert Begay**

The Long Walk is basically really, really reaffirmed, from my personal perspective; really affirmed the sovereignty of the Navajo people. Now sovereignty from my perspective really is based on language, culture, and the origins of the Navajo people--their history. This is the basis for their sovereignty. Because of that time after the Long Walk, after the signing of the 1868 treaty, it just reaffirmed that the Navajo people are a sovereign people. Yes it did impact their culture to some extent, and today Navajos have really, really adapted on how to coexist within the modern world because of that. It has changed a lot of Navajo people today. And unfortunately people my age, and people that are older than my generation, and even younger, don't know much about the Long Walk and how it impacted the Navajo culture and Navajo people in general.

**Interviewer**

One of the components of the 1868 treaty was an educational component. How did boarding schools affect your culture?

**Robert Begay**

The boarding schools is really the inception. I think if I remember right, title VI of the 1868 treaty. It started out really slow. The U.S. Cavalry and the U.S. Government could not get a Navajo to attend school. The first school was, I think was Fort Defiance. But the boarding school really did push forward how education is important. It wasn't really the boarding school, even though you hear a lot of horrible experiences of the boarding school; Navajo children being beaten because of their language use, because of their dress, and because of their culture, and that is still, you know, I was part of that on the tail end of it. But this is... the tail end of boarding schools. It was a terrible experience. What really impacted the change in Navajo lifestyle or life ways or culture was actually WWII. WWII, on the other hand, really changed how Navajo viewed education. If you look at some of the records right shortly after WWII, you see a lot of Navajos just pouring into western education as opposed to, you know, WWII.

**Interviewer**

How about boarding schools around the turn of the century? What was that experience like for Navajo children shortly after the Long Walk?

**Robert Begay**

The boarding school, at least from some of the people that I talked to--and also I did some of the reading on that--it was really like you mention; a military-type of school where you're really stripped of your identity and how you're stripped of identity? Basically changing your appearance; cutting your hair, making you dress differently, making you speak a language you didn't know. So it was really, really harsh and it was an alien, basically alien way of life. If you've ever been in boot camp, that is exactly what they did; took your identity and try to assimilate you, and it was very harsh.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about the Navajo relationship to Chaco Canyon.

**Robert Begay**

Chaco Canyon, again like everything else, Chaco Canyon's a big part of Navajo history and Navajo origins, Navajo ceremonial origins, Navajo clan histories. There is a conception out there that you see in books where Navajos arrived in the 1400's long after Chaco Canyon was abandoned. That is not true. Depending on how you look at scientific research and who you talk to in Navajo, people, the Navajos, have always been in the southwest, and Chaco is one of those areas that is very important ceremonially and clan histories. In the archeological record, Chaco Canyon has been occupied 1800 A.D. to 1250 A.D. Now Navajos have been in the area when Chaco was at the height of its occupation, which is anywhere from 1000 to 1200 A.D. They learned some of their ceremonial history there. They're also part of that history, and since then Navajos have been in the area of Chaco.

**Interviewer**

What can we learned from the exodus of Chaco, for example the issue of resources?

**Robert Begay**

What we can learn from Chaco? There's a lot of traditional history of what we know about Chaco. A lot of that history is sacred. It's explained to you in an area, you know, where this is not what you're supposed to do because of this, because you go against natural law, because you go against social law and so forth, this is what's going to happen to you and like the same thing at Chaco--that you abandoned your area.

Chaco is very important to Navajo people today, and it has always been important to Navajo people. There is a lot of traditional history to it--ceremonial history. There is a history where the, what we called "the Gambler," had enslaved the occupants of Chaco, and he was the one who basically built Chaco Canyon. Well it turns out that he could not rule those people. It was actually the Navajo people who defeated the Gambler, and as a result, the people that he enslaved abandoned Chaco Canyon after the Navajo people did beat the Gambler at his own game. Now, based on that, Chaco is really an area, if you look at it there is a lot of rooms there. There is... totally different than how Navajos live. You look at the Pueblo people today; they all live in closed communities. From our perspective and we can't do that. I mean, Navajos just do not live that way. We have always lived off the land. We have always lived apart, and for Kit Carson to think to implement some kind of system like that at Fort Sumner was trying to change a whole nation's history, a whole people's culture, and that, I guess from anybody you ask, is impossible today. Even after Fort Sumner, you come back and Navajos just went across the Navajo land again. They went back to their origin areas where they lived, and they even went beyond that. So Chaco really, in a sense, does not work for Navajo people.

**Interviewer**

When you think of your ancestors that made the Long Walk, what are your feelings and emotions about

that time?

### **Robert Begay**

The way I think about the Long Walk, and that time period, you know, it does create some kind of animosity towards the United States, but also at the same time, it's history that we rely on to teach our children, to teach not only ourselves but our future generations. This is what part of our history is and I think that Navajos really, really traditionally understand that history is a big part. History teaches you how to live. This is why we rely heavily on ceremonial history, oral history, because that's what builds our future. We go back and inspect and re-evaluate our history and say, "just because of this era, we're not going to make this decision for the future." And I think, yes it was a painful time for Navajo people, but it's also... we have to learn from that.

## **Ron Garnenez interview**

### **Ron Garnenez**

My name is Ron Garnenez and I'm from Oak Springs, Arizona, north of Red Valley. (says name/where from in Navajo) My story about the Long Walk was told to me by my elders; my grandfathers, my grandmothers. They told me that my maternal great grandmother, at a young age, snuck away into canyons north of San Juan River. Behind, we called it the White Mountain, and they hid there for four years, but they did a lot of things while they were waiting for the return of the tribe. And then my paternal grandfather--his story is they were driven to Fort Sumner from Canyon de Chelly, and they were rounded up and actually they were starved out of these canyons; all of the their crops, their peach orchards, their livestock's were slaughtered, and one winter they had nowhere else to turn--their children were starving. So they turned themselves into Fort Defiance and then from there, those that turned themselves in were given food, the ration food, and then they were sent back out to the rest of the their people into the canyons and the mountains and told them that there was no starvation there--there's food there, and that's what they were told. And how they were all rounded up was like all of the other tribes that surround the Navajos--the Pueblos, the Utes, the Apaches--they were, even the Navajos themselves, were scouts for the soldiers, and so they were the ones who brought all of the Navajos out and gathered them at Fort Defiance. And by enticing them there with food and promising them a place far to the east and that they would be moved there one spring in wagon trains, so a lot of them gave up themselves to that. And then they said little did they know that there were going to be no wagon trains, no horses. A lot of their horses... I guess the Navajos by that time were pretty wealthy. They had a lot of horses, they had lots of sheep and they just, you know, became too wealthy and then they were moved to Fort Wingate. And Fort Wingate they said they were put on a forced march into Albuquerque, and some died along the way because they were going at a fast past, and if you couldn't keep up, they said the soldiers would shoot you. And so that's how some of them died. And then they weren't protected from the other tribes also like with the Apaches and the Utes. I guess they kept following them, taking them as slaves and killing some of them. And they made it to the Rio Grande River, and the Rio Grande River, I guess during the spring run-off, was swollen with water, and they said a lot of them drowned.

### **Interviewer**

Why don't you back up a little bit... you were talking about the treatment of the soldiers that if they couldn't keep up they were shot...

### **Ron Garnenez**

The people--the old people, the very young--some of them couldn't keep up; the sick ones couldn't keep

up, so apparently they were just shot and killed on the spot there. Women that gave birth along the way had to abandon their babies because they weren't given time to nurse, or they themselves were hungry and starving by that time. And then also, you know they mentioned rape that went on too as they were being marched. And at the Rio Grande, the river was so high that a lot of people drowned trying to cross there. And then from there they went further east into Fort Sumner, and they were told that they would be called to wait there and grow their own food, and the first year they tried and the soil wasn't good so a lot of the seeds that they planted did not grow. And then some of the sheep that they took with them were stolen by the Comanche's because there was no protection. They were told to give up their guns and their arrows when they were rounded up, so they themselves had nothing to protect themselves with. And that's how they made it to Fort Sumner. And that Fort Sumner, the same thing; they had nothing to protect themselves with. As far as food went, they said there was barely any food.

**Interviewer**

We're talking about Fort Sumner and the conditions they faced there especially in terms of food.

**Ron Garnenez**

Well in Fort Sumner, when their crop failed, they went into further starvation, and with not being familiar with the place, they said that young women and young men would go out to gather wood and sometimes they would never return. And it was understood that sometimes they were stolen by the Comanches, and then as far as gathering food in the surrounding area, there was really nothing. The soil there apparently was too alkaline that corn wouldn't grow. And there, also, the soldiers would tease them with food, and one day they were given a ration and they had no idea how to use bacon powder, how to boil coffee. They tried to boil coffee like beans, and then they ate bacon powder. A lot of it killed them; they thought it was flour. Things like that happened, and also they said that the soldiers made fun of them. They would take their young women to their quarters and use them as sex slaves, so that's what they endured at Fort Sumner. But yet they had their prayer; they hung on to their prayer. They said their prayers three times a day, and then those that were here that were left behind, that were hiding in the canyons, also did the same thing. My grandmother's uncle I guess went, and they were holding ceremonies, and then they needed one thing and they went back to Canyon de Chelly and could not find any footprints, so he actually snuck into Fort Sumner to get footprints of the captives there and brought them back--snuck out of Fort Sumner again and brought the sand back to what we called it our land between The Four Sacred Mountains. They did the ceremony. And they did this for four years, and at the end they were released and they were so happy to return.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel about your ancestors who were on the Long Walk? How do you feel about the way they were treated?

**Ron Garnenez**

When you think nowadays you hear about how people are treated and you think this is how my ancestors were treated also. They survived--that was the main thing. We are here as... you know, the survivors, and I teach my children the same thing; your ancestors endured this with their language and so you better learn your language.

They said that Canyon de Chelly, the whole canyon floor was like a forest of peach trees, and they were all chopped down and burned, and a lot of the food they had; they grew corn, beans and squash down in there, and they were stored away for the winter, and they found all of that, and destroyed them also. And a lot of the sheep that they had, which is today now known as the Navajo Churros, were driven off into the canyons, and that's how a lot of them were slaughtered.

This story was told by my great grandmother to my grandmother. As a young girl she heard that the soldiers were marching up Canyon de Chelly, so their father took them to the rim of the canyon, the

three sisters, and were told to run and don't ever return.

My great grandmother's story is she and her sisters were told to run from Canyon de Chelly and go into hiding, so they met up with other people that went running, and they went all of the way across the San Juan River into Canyon lands and hid there for four years, and my great grandmother, I guess had... they were shucking corn during the time that this happened so she took off with an ear of corn that was her doll. And she kept that through the first year, and even though they were starving, she wouldn't give it up. They lived on a lot of cedar berries. The corn was her doll so she didn't want to give that up as food, but I guess she would go down by the stream and play down there and some of the seeds would drop, and then by springtime they noticed... or by the summertime they noticed that was corn growing down in there, and that's how they started cultivating corn in Canyonlands within the next three years that they were there. They said they had an abundance of corn when their relatives returned.

## Rose Begay interview

Translating For KUED and PBS  
By Phyllis Whitehorse

### **Please tell your long walk story:**

Hweeldi herd was a time when people were gathered and some of the people hid themselves between the crevasses of rocks that is why they were not part of the herd. Some of them were gathered from their homes. It was not a good sight because some of them got whipped with no shoes and of thirst. Along the herd some of them died of hunger and thirst. They were a lot of people who died and the ones who are stronger survived.

### **Were they offered food from when they were on the long walk?**

They were not offered food when they were herded. They just suffered on the herd.

### **You said some of them died and what else?**

They died of thirst.

### **Some of them are very old and they were traveling in the back trying to catch up so what happened?**

They didn't catch up so they died. When they got to the place they were given white flour just enough and they people didn't know how to fix it. So they just mixed it like that and ate it some of them died from it.

Some of them were medicine men; they used to get up early in the morning and prayed with corn pollen so they can be released soon. I don't know how many years they were there.

They were given pans, that were poorly made to cook on and they were instructed how to make bread.

### **When they were herded there what did they live in?**

They used to live in rounded circular made homes made out of some kind of root they used to dig for. They used those as firewood too. The sound that the fire made was like screech sound.

### **Did they dig in the ground for their shelter?**

Yes, they used to live in the dug out ground.

They were released through prayers and they were given only one sheep. Some people had relatives there and they put all of the sheep together to make a herd with 3 and 4 sheep. That is how they came home.

**How do you feel about your relatives of that era?**

I think that if we never had that experienced or we they didn't do that to us maybe our prayers and ceremonies would be different. We used to have a lot of rain, it used to rain a lot but not now because of it. That is what I was told.

**What are the lessons learned from the long walk?**

Well, over there from Washington they wanted us to be their relatives and told us "from here on we well take care of you" because the Washington people used to fight a lot with Mexican people and other race. I suppose they wanted us to be their partners and because of that they wanted to take care of us.

**Where were some of the people hiding?**

There was a man name (Huskananee) and he was never caught. I heard of another person that way who was (Beayosgin)Ute.

**What do you think was learned from the long walk?**

Probably how to cook that was it.

When they were herded they were captured from their homes and when they were herded the elders had a hard time some didn't survived, some didn't have shoes or it wore out.

**How did the soldiers treat them on the long walk?**

Yes they had guns. Some of the people who got mad just got shot there.

The capturer had guns and when one of them got mad they were just shot there. They were not treated nice.

## Roy Smith interview

**Interviewer**

Tell me your name and where you're from, and then tell me your boarding school experiences, for example, how you felt when you were first asked to go to school and how you were treated there.

**Roy Smith**

My names is Roy Smith and I'm originally from Big Mountain, Arizona, which is the four-corners of the state in Arizona. I was nine years old mid-September when I was hauled off to a boarding school--a school called Low Mountain. And didn't know one word of English, and the only thing I ever did was herd sheep. And there was three other relative guys of mine that we were all round up and put in a bus, sort of like a cage. I guess people didn't ask us to be hauled off to a boarding school, but they never... our parents were sort of... didn't want us to go to school somehow, but we were hauled off. Three other guys were dropped off at a near school... by a school called Pinion. I was the one hauled off to a school called Low Mountain.

My name is Roy Smith and I'm originally from Big Mountain, Arizona. In 1959 in mid-September I was one of the four students that was hauled off to a boarding school. In mid-September we were hauled off. Three of my other relatives were sent to a school called Pinion, and I was hauled off to a place called Low Mountain, Low Mountain boarding school. I guess my first experience with going to a boarding school was the loneliness and the homesick because all of the things you ever did was herd sheep. The saddest or the lonely part was the first month of your school year, you know. You miss your sheep dog and you miss your animal that you've been around them--not so much your parents, but the things you did at home, you know, that were the loneliest part. But as far as experience at boarding school, I don't know, for some reason this school--I liked it. They treated me fine and I began to cope

with whatever was brought to me at a boarding school life, and it's funny that the building that we used to stay in was like an egg-shaped. We girls on the other side and the boys on the other side, and the center was the living room, and we all meet together in the living room and we had good conference. Being a boy back then, what I was exposed to was cowboy and Indian movie. Indians were always the bad ones and the cowboys were always the good guys, and I was exposed to that. And then there was a war movie with the Indian and the soldiers, and we used to cheer for the soldier, you know when they were coming out in the movie, and all in all during my boarding school life, you know--that was my first boarding school life that I experienced, you know. I only went to school there for three months. See, I lived out in a remote area. Out in the Big Mountain area there's no transportation or nothing, so come to Christmas vacation, nobody came for me and I was sent back home with a special vehicle that takes people that don't have their parent's show up. So I went from September to December and on my way home, and I never went back to school again, and I went on to herding sheep again. So that was my short, brief three months of boarding school at Low Mountain.

**Interviewer**

How did they treat you in terms of your culture? Were you encouraged to keep that culture and your language and dress and things like that?

**Roy Smith**

Well that never came about until I was put into another school. It was a school called Tuba City. I mean Tuba City was drastically a bigger school with more students, and that was... talk about experience. There were bullies and there was what you call dormitory aides, and we were treated like militaries. You had to stand in a straight line; you had to stand on your knees. Anytime you say one word of Navajo or something, they will shave a bar of soap, and they will put it in your mouth and they'll tell you to wash it out. And we had marched to the dining room, and when we sit there and eat we had to keep one side of our hand underneath the table and eat with one, and there would be a guy walking around--an instructor. If they find you talking or saying something, you know, you get your name written up. And I thought all boarding schools was just like the first one, but this was just unbearable--and they tell me to forget my culture. They tell me I have to educate myself, and that I have to do this and that. So it was very unbearable. And I went there for six years. And as time went along I think the school sort of changed, and I sort of changed myself as I went with the school. Those were the worst part of my years at a boarding school.

**Interviewer**

Did they allow you to have long hair and things like that?

**Roy Smith**

Well in any school the first thing they do is they'll shave your head off, even if you have a hair bun or, you know, something. They'll strip all of that out of you, and certain type of boarding school clothes, and they'll herd you into the shower and you really have to scrub down. And after the shower they have a jar of Vaseline, and you have to wax down your whole body with that Vaseline, and so everything is taken from you then. You know you don't keep anything cultural like jewelry or anything, you know. They strip everything out of you.

**Interviewer**

How did you feel about that?

**Roy Smith**

Well at that time to me I thought that was all part of the school and that was all part of being at that institution or boarding school... that comes with it and I never thought of it anyway. But in a sense, being that I come from a cultural and very traditional, I missed my grandparents. Some of the teachings and some of the offerings that we do in the morning, and some of the corn pollen pray that

we had, and I missed it. But here I was told to forget that, you know. This is not the way you need to go. So, it's how I grew up in that school.

**Interviewer**

Did they ever encourage you to practice your own religion and things like that?

**Roy Smith**

You know it's funny that you ask me that. When I went to Low Mountain there was three different churches; there was the L.D.S. and there was a Catholic and then there was a Presbyterian. Somehow I went with L.D.S., and the guy that used to do recruiting took guys out on hikes, and somehow I was recruited and then I was baptized, you know, just being with the group. And when I went to Pinion. There wasn't enough boys to be baptized, and I was one of them there in the group, and I told them I was baptized... so you come to Holbrook with us. It was the only place where you were baptized. So they haul me off there with then again, and I got baptized again. And when I went to an Indian school, I got baptized again--three times. You know, they don't ask you were you baptized before? I says, ya... and he just goes on and on and they forced it on you. My own religion was not brought up, was never taught...

My own religion--it was never brought up to me, never brought into me saying that you should relearn it. It was never brought up to me... nothing.

**Interviewer**

What happened if you were to practice that religion?

**Roy Smith**

Well any kind of item that you have--either like corn pollen or a mountain tobacco or something, those are forbidden. You don't use things like that at that school. Those were stricken. It's been brought down from the years when they built the boarding school. It's just been that way.

**Interviewer**

What kind of punishment would you receive if you did something wrong culturally?

**Roy Smith**

I remember one time when I talked about my grandfather, how he does certain prayers and certain ceremonies when you have a nightmare. I was only talking about that and in that sense, and I was punished for that. I ended up scrubbing the bathroom; the urinal, the toilet bowl and the floor you know. You have to scrub it down, and the dormitory aid will come in and inspect and see how well you did. And those were the punishments that were given to you. There were other severe punishments that was also brought on you.

**Interviewer**

And how about your native hair--what happened to your hair?

**Roy Smith**

When I was put in boarding school back in Low Mountain, I remember I got my head shaved off. It's really interesting how, just like the egg-shape that I was telling you about--the middle of the living room we had the boys and girls all circle around me--and they came with a clipper and they were shaving my head off, and I was so embarrassed of bald hair that I have. I never wanted to have the long hair because of that embarrassment, and so I never grew my hair long again ever since then.

**Interviewer**

We were talking a little bit about the lessons learned. What do you think are the lessons learned from the boarding school experience and the lack of cultural identity, and some of those things that have happened to you?

**Roy Smith**

I think the lessons learned on both sides is that, you know the colonization of the American Indians is that, you cannot take away their culture. You cannot take away their tradition, and any urban cities or wherever you know. Look at what happened to our people. Look at the main outposts of Gallop. To this day there is alcoholism; you know that has destroyed some people's culture and traditional being. And then the lessons learned from the Anglo society that's trying to impose certain Christianity or a certain belief has never succeeded. When you impose the freedom of religion, you as yourself, you know are the pilgrims who were homeless at one time. You try to decentralize some kind of a civilization and it doesn't work. So those are the two lessons that were learned on both sides. That's the way I view it now.

**Interviewer**

When you think back to your ancestors and the people that went on the Long Walk, how do you feel about those people today and how they suffered at that time?

**Roy Smith**

You know the stories that I heard from my paternal grandparents years ago was that certain people had certain land or wealth or animals or certain areas that they practiced certain beliefs. That was destroyed. And then a certain avenue of life, like a land that a certain family had lived... they're gone. Those were taken away and a lot of people suffered. A lot of people lost the whole family and some people would say that, you know, we had this relative and we had this family at that time, but they were gone--either they were on their way to Fort Sumner or during the encampment.

**Interviewer**

What do you think about the brutality of those times?

**Roy Smith**

I think it's, in any instance where there is captivity, if the people don't do their... I guess investigate as to how you can survive these people just like this. They wanted to be taught how to be farmers, but that was failure. But beforehand somebody should have known what was going on--how the land would adapt to these kinds of encounters.

## **Ruth Roessel interview**

**Interviewer**

Ruth, why don't we start out by talking about this rockslide out here? Tell me what the significance of this rockslide is.

**Ruth Roessel**

In 1966 when we came back here, to this place, here, and that's when I learned about that. Before that I didn't know because I wasn't from this community. I'm from Ron Rock Community. So during that time that there were a lot of Navajo around here, and we communicate with a lot of Navajos here at school. The school was call Demonstration School, so we have more Navajos around the school. So at that time when they're talking about the rockslide, and I asked the questions, you know, "when did it happen?" and they said that during that time, about 60 years ago and that happened, they said. And then they said that the reason landslide or rockslide like that, it meant something to the Navajos and their belief is something that, you know, harm them and their future, so they have to offer right away so those things won't happen. So during that time that they were telling me that there were more Mexican men here, and they put up maybe about six, what we call, sweat house, and they were having a

ceremony going on for about four days, maybe in the sweat house, and at the same time they were doing the chanting, and so it kind of like erased them or this is what the rock is telling me or the slide is telling them... it will never happen again and it will never hurt them... the community. They were saying that if it's all the Navajos, not even living around here. That was their interpretation about the rockslide.

**Interviewer**

Why don't you start off by telling me your name and where you're from and then tell me the story about your grandmother being on the Long Walk?

**Ruth Roessel**

My name is Ruth Roessel and I live at Ron Rock and I have five children. My oldest daughter is living in Washington D.C., she's a lawyer. My second daughter is an M.D. psychiatrist, and she's living in Santa Fe. And my son is living in Phoenix, and he's an engineer. My third son is working here with, me and he's my boss. The fifth son is working with the B.I.E., and he's a hydrologist. So I have five kids and living here--I came back here in 1966 and I went to school at Arizona State University... I get all of my degree from there. So I came back and I was teaching, and then I started a Navajo Community College here with my late husband, and then ever since then I've been around here helping my people and teaching them about what I believe, which is Navajo culture. So that's what I'm doing, and I'm still doing it here at the school.

I'm Ruth Roessel from Ron Rock, Arizona and my grandmother's name was "Raggedy lady" which means (Navajo), and my dad told me about her, that she went to Fort Sumner--she was captured four times. She ran away all the four times but the last time. They took her, the army took her and then... all the way to... she didn't go all the way to Fort Sumner, but she went as far as I think the other side of Albuquerque. And they were camping out there, and I guess there are several camps around so she was kind of like a leader as the woman. A general was her friend and so she was kind of telling all the women what to do and what to cook and kind of like being in charge of everything. And then one year she went by, and she was doing o.k., and the second year she kind of didn't like to be away from her home, which is where she grew up. And then, so she began to talk to her other friends and just saying, "I don't want to be here... I don't want to die here... I want to go back to my home and where I live," which is Waterless Mountain right by Black Mesa and south from here. And then she began to make a plan with her other friend, a lady, a young lady, and they were saying that "We are going to run away and go back home, and I want you to make some food and some lunch so we'll take off at one in the morning." So the day that came and she was ready to go, and her friend was a General and he was just laying down and asleep and he went to sleep so she walk out through the door and they said that every time that somebody moved the tent either the horse made the noise or the dog made the noise and so when she went out and she saw a dog by the doorway and she talked to the dog to say that "I don't want you to make any noise. I want to go home to my home and I don't want to die here, and I'd rather die in my own place that I belong to." So the dog, he just didn't move and sleep, and then she went passing by the horse, she talked to the horse and said "I want to go home, and don't tell on me and I'm leaving." She was waiting for her friend to come, but she never came so she just went and took off. So she ran. She ran for a long time and there was a river right by and she went right across the river. They said the river water was real deep, but she made it across and then went on the other side and she ran all the way. And the morning came and past lunch and then she saw all of the soldier army coming and follow her, and then so she was running and then she found there was a horse with a little coat on... this must have been spring time. And so she got on the horse, took her sash belt off and put it around the neck and she took off with the horse and ran a long way. Then they came, and then she hide herself under a bush. And then she was laying down there and they just ride over her, and they didn't find her and all this, and then she stay in there all night. And then she came out of there at night and everybody

went back so she walked that night for a long, long time. She went to the mountain and then it was really dark, and then she said the owl was right by her making the noise, and then she felt that the owl was telling me something--either to follow me or something--so she went and followed the owl all night long in the mountain or in the woods. The next morning she walked again for a long, long time and she came to another place that was at night, and then she saw a bear again this night, second night. She saw the bear on the other side of the river, there was another river she was going past, and then she was afraid how deep the water was. And then the bear walked in the water walking towards her and the water wasn't nothing. She thought I can make it, it's not that deep. So the bear sat right by her and the bear kind of motioned her to like with his head to go on, and she thought that maybe the bear ask me to follow me, so then she got up and she start following the bear all the way across the river, and then went on.

### **Interviewer**

Tell me about the Long Walk. Why did the Long Walk happen?

### **Ruth Roessel**

Well the way I understand is they were a group of Navajos that were kind of running around through other reservations, and the other Navajos were trying to tell them to behave themselves and not causing any trouble for the other tribes, but this other group of Navajos they just continued doing that--like they go and attacked the Apache or Zuni or other tribes that surround us on the reservation. So that's where they say a report took place. And they got trying together, and they were told that the government is going to come to take them. Finally it happened, and so again the Navajo was working for help them get all of these Navajos that are bad, and they take them all into over to Canyon de Chelly. I guess that's where they really took them, a lot of Navajos, and they couldn't believe that this was going to happen--but it happened to them. So pretty soon the whole (failure) was involved. And then they didn't believe that the army was coming to get them, but a lot hidden in the Canyon de Chelly where there was a hiding place. And then some of the people they were hiding where there were cliffs, and where they can't be reached, and there's a place called The Secret Place or Fortune Rock--a lot of people moved out on top of that rock and then they stay out there. They were saying that maybe over 100 people, that they had climbed up there, and they had survived, some of them didn't, some of them just died and starved, starvation or anything sickness like that happened. And so all of the things happened to them, and then one time... they have kind of a cliff--a big, big place and there were Navajo group. Navajo went over there and then they trying to hide it there with the family and the children, everything. And then they saw the army coming from the canyon and the wash and they all lined up coming, and then this man, they said he kind of doesn't listen and trying to told to be quiet and people might attack us and find us where we are. And then this man got up and starts screaming, and start yelling to these army, and this is where the army saw them. They throw things to blow up the family, and all of the things happened there. Today you can just see all of the bones and everything there where the Navajo were all being killed, and I think it must be about a couple hundred Navajos that were there. I didn't go up there because it was kind of climbing rocks and so only the other people who were with me, they went up there and they took pictures, and so I'm sure they saw the pictures there. That is one of the reasons the guest start up from there. Then from there on they went to I guess... from there they took them from Fort Defiance again. The Fort Defiance is where it was a lot of things took place again. They said that the people there, the old folks, they could hardly walk and they couldn't make it, and so they just shoot them on the way. And they just went on, even some pregnant woman. They just couldn't carry their baby. And some of them had babies there on the way, but some of them they just couldn't. And they just shot them there. So they went to Fort Defiance--that's where they spent I don't know how many years there again. And they spent a long time there at Fort Defiance and from there they were taken to Fort Sumner again. And the Navajo were thinking this is really bad at what happened to them. They were being treated that way and just like a bunch of animals or dogs and

being shot when nothing. And so today we look back and think about those things.

**Interviewer**

Tell me the story about the soldiers shooting the pregnant woman. How did that happen?

**Ruth Roessel**

Understand that the lady was going to have a baby, and then they told her to get onto a... I don't know if it's a wagon or a horse or something, and then the army said, just don't waste any time and just leave her here and just shoot her, and that's it. Something like that happen. The actually... when I interview these Navajos they actually tell me about all of these things.

**Interviewer**

What kind of brutality was there on the Long Walk do you think?

**Ruth Roessel**

I don't really know. All they can say is, it was really, you know... it was really sad what happened and how it was being handled.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel about your ancestors who were on the Long Walk?

**Ruth Roessel**

I really felt bad about now days. And the history tells you a lot of things, and then history tells you that really makes you think that sometimes you think that sometimes I wish I was living there or be a part of it, but you know yet again I think all that history is trying to make you wake up and teaching you something and the way behave of the people, and so even though the Navajo wasn't as bad as like today, in those days the Navajo were just being treated like that. They didn't do anything so they were handled by, just like I say, like nothing. I think about it, what kind of people were there, those people, they handled people that way, and these sort of things, it makes you think, it makes you sad because my grandmother was there. My grandmother came back, and she taught a lot of things.

**Interviewer**

Tell me again about your grandmother... what were you going to say?

**Ruth Roessel**

My grandmother like, when my daddy told me about all these things my grandmother. And so she taught us a lot of things, what her experiences was, and also she bring lots of holy things. And the Navajo people, they call the holy people, and then sometimes you don't know what it mean, but in the Navajo way you say the holy people (in Navajo). So my grandmother was a lot of experience with that thing on the way home to... so that's what she was telling about all the bad thing that happened to her on the way home and to my dad. So it's, you know, it's pretty sad but at the same time, you know there's nothing we can do about it today, but all we can do is our history, that's all.

**Interviewer**

Tell me about Kit Carson. What do you think about Kit Carson?

**Ruth Roessel**

Kit Carson, they call him (in Navajo). He's a man with a big beard and so that's why... I think he was really a bad person to me; the way that he's handled the Navajos. Why is he doing that? Why is he gathering all these Navajos through other reservations and what was he accomplishing to, you know by doing that when that's... you know sometimes I think about those things like that. But I don't think he done anything for the Navajos. But today I look back to the government--what did they pay us? You know, what they did to us, you know, and so sometimes you see things, it makes you think, you know--they killed a thousand, a thousand Navajos for no reason and then why is this happen? Sometimes I

think about those things.

**Interviewer**

How did the walk happen? Did they actually walk the whole way or did they ride...?

**Ruth Roessel**

Most of the people walk. And most of the people are walk, some if they're lucky, I guess, they were in the wagon or in some kind of stick sitting on it with the horse pulling them. Most of the time they're all walking. If they walk they can't make it, and they just stay right there behind and that's it.

**Interviewer**

What were the conditions like at Bosque Redondo...?

**Ruth Roessel**

I really don't know. I'm sure he was, you know... trying to think of something... helping the Navajo or to herd them. I don't know what he was thinking.

**Interviewer**

How about the Long Walk home when they actually left Fort Sumner and came back to their lands?

**Ruth Roessel**

The Navajo, when they're treated at the Fort Sumner in 1868, I think they were so happy and then...

...1868 and the Navajo when they were released and signed the treaty I think they were all happy that they were all going to come back here to be free. And one thing that the Navajos they were promised was not every child and the thirty students in the classroom were to be taught in English and given a lot of helps, and today it's not really happen. One of the times that we have some money... we had lots of money for the students, they're all going to school today and it doesn't really happen, and so they keep their promise, you know that will happen.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel about the Long Walk today? How do you feel about what happened to your people?

**Ruth Roessel**

Well I feel like today, like I said that I'm a teacher, and I teach even my coming to people, and to think about what happened in the past and doesn't make you think. It doesn't make you proud to be a Navajo, but during that time, like I say, that I wish it didn't happen, the way they were treated because like they were shooting them with the babies and little kids and all this and it makes you kind of angry today and why these things happen? Don't those people have a heart and those army, and you know why they did it to these people? That's what I think sometimes. It kind of makes me wonder, and it makes me mad.

**Interviewer**

What do you think are the lessons learned by the Long Walk?

**Ruth Roessel**

Well I think maybe we learn something about, I think, that the history what teach us is something you know for the young people today. They're in a position that is like the young people today, a lot of them are they wanted to get even with the army, but they couldn't do it but they kind of act like big and they can do, you know they can do better. But today does teach them a lesson that this was happened to us and we shouldn't do that again, you know. So we're trying to have the kids, young people behave themselves and teach them about mostly history and the culture and the land which, if they learn and to be proud of who they are, I think they can be a better people today with our youth and with our people.

**Interviewer**

Was there a lot of raiding going on? Did the Navajo raid other tribes?

**Ruth Roessel**

Yes they did. That's how the Long Walk began. They go around to Zuni, and they go around to Apache. They go around to Utes and all of these other people. They went out... the young people went out and raiding, and also the Mexicans do the same thing too, so that's where it start.

**Interviewer**

How about slaving and taking the children...?

**Ruth Roessel**

They had a lot of things happen in slave... the young kids and they traded them down in Mexico and then traded with the Navajo kids, and they coming over there and the selling the kids and trading them with like the Denado(?). A lady we were talking about, she was, her brother was being traded and taken down to Mexico and she was talking about those things.

## **Sarah Natani interview**

**Translating For KUED and PBS**

**By Phyllis Whitehorse**

**Tell me the stories of the long walk. Please tell me the things that happened to your ancestors?**

These people who were herded to Hweeldi were herded; they did not just traveled with patience but herded with force. They all suffered when they were herded some of them died of hunger, thirst, disease and some died from those terrible situations. My late grandfather was not part of the herd. Both of my grandparents did not go there. My mother told us stories that my grandparents told her. My grandfather told stories about some of the event he could remember. My grandfather told stories about a time when he and his grandmother hid on the rims of Canyon de Chelly and all they had to eat was (liashoo). One time he came upon a group of people that gathered there who were not Navajo but had similar language. He saw a Hogan like home made out of (shahio) when he went to that home there were meat hanging and he wanted to take a piece of meat so he weighted them to see which is lighter so it will be easier to carry. So he took the piece of the meat which was attached to the ribs he picked that because it weighted lighter than the others. As he was sneaking the meat close to the red canyon the people who lived there saw him and shouted that something came in and took something out and running that way. He started running towards the rocks; I'm sure at that time people used to run real fast. He ran and hid under the rock so he laid there with the ribs he stole. He was listening to the people who were chasing him as he lay underneath the rock. One of the people who were chasing him spoke up and said, "Let's stop chasing him. I think he is the evil spirit (chidi)". So after they all left he crawled out and by that time of the day it was almost dark so he hurried back to his grandmother. As he was approaching to where his grandmother was at, he could hear her talking, "Where is my baby (Shieawee) where has he gone! He always comes back by this time of the evening and I'm worried he might be caught". So he came back inside and he looked around to see who she was talking to but could not see anyone. He told his grandmother the reason why he came back late was because he took meat from the village. His grandmother just cried with happiness that he came back. His grandmother cut small pieces of meat and made it into gravy so it could last long. One day they left where they were staying at and came to a place called (tsahotso) Fort Defiance and noticed some people standing in line to receive food. I guess that was where some of the people who were herded lived. When they got there someone said, "Hey! This is our boy" it was his father that took a hold of his shoulder. This father asked where his grandmother and he told them where she was so that is where some relatives reunited.

**How did you feel about your ancestors who made the long walk, the way they were treated, how**

**did that make you feel?**

I think both sides suffered when they went on the long walk. The one that went there had suffered from hunger. They had a hard time and my husband's father used to tell about it.

Well, these people who were herded to Hweeldi really suffered and when they were herded there they died of hunger and illness, some of them died on the way. On the way, they were so hungry that they ate the grains that the horses ate. It went as far as some of the people ate the horse droppings because food was so scarce. Some children used to dig for corn that was fed to horses so the people could grind it up to make food to eat. It was an awful sight even the ones who were not herded there all of them had suffered badly from hunger and illness. Some of the people started eating (hizaalieh) and (gloshin) they gathered those to survive. Foods like chilchin (berries) and wenishidii (locust). But our voices were heard that is why we are here today. The people who were captured prayed some of them are our beloved grandparents and their prayers were answered and that is why to this day we are here. We are very appreciative that they made it back to our land and now our children don't live like that.

Well, the people who gathered them maybe they are the white people or maybe Mexican people. They suffered from everything, some of the girls who were captured were pretty and maybe those are the reasons why so they could rape them. These are just the stories that were told to us. My grandmother was also captured so she could be a slave to the capturers she was taken to Colorado.

## Shirley Clark interview

**Interviewer**

Shirley why don't you start out by giving me your name and where you're from and then tell me your father's Long Walk story.

**Shirley Clark**

My name is Shirley Clark. My maiden name is Shirley Woody. I am from Rehoboth, New Mexico. My father's stories of the Long Walk are very few because the old folks didn't speak of the Long Walk like we do with other stories. Perhaps because it was more sensitive and they had memories of their loved ones suffering. And they didn't want to dwell on it or bring it back to mind because it's too close to their hearts. My father tells me of my grandmother, my great, great grandmother, who was captured and followed the soldiers, and they were forced actually to join the trail of people going to Fort Sumner. She was out tending her chores when she was captured and forced to join the group that was walking to Fort Sumner. She didn't say goodbye, or her family didn't know where she went... she just disappeared. And so for two years she was gone and she looked for her family at the camp in Fort Sumner. When she could... she was a slave--she was a slave to weave rugs--and what little she could, she helped others because she was a strong young woman. While she was a slave she met an Apache, Mescalero--Apache young woman about her age--and they worked together and taught each other each of their languages to communicate. Most of the times they had to just whisper, and so as they whispered one evening, the Apache Mescalero young woman asked my great, great grandmother if she would join them because there was a plan to escape, and my grandmother felt very sad because she didn't want to leave some of her people that she was nursing or little children she was taking care of. Her heart was torn to leave or to stay. But she left with the Mescalero group that left in the evening one night, and they traveled and traveled. It seemed like they ran and ran for several days. And quite sometime later they met with a camp, another Mescalero Apache camp, and from there their group was a lot larger and got larger and larger, and they traveled all of the time, they said. And they didn't go back to the Navajo reservation because she was traveling with her friend, her new friend, and for two

years they traveled. But she thought of her family often, and she knew exactly, and in which direction the Navajo reservation was. She speaks of passing through groups of Spanish communities. And once she was going to be given up for a slave but her friend and some other elderly people, they helped her escape that. And so later, two years after she escaped from Fort Sumner, she still had a heart to go home, and by this time she was expecting. She was pregnant and even though she knew it was going to be hard, the Mescalero Apache group were moving further West, and so she had about four or five months of walking time back to her homeland. And she left even though there would be hard times. She lived off of the land and moved mostly in the nights, and several months passed and she reached Standing Rock--that's where her family lived. The family--whatever was left of them--were so surprised to see her. And there was a baby boy born, and he was called Mescalero Apache, the son of a Mescalero Apache. He's one of my ancestors. That's one of the stories I recall having my dad speak of.

### **Interviewer**

Why don't you go ahead Shirley and tell me your mother's story.

### **Shirley Clark**

My mother told me a few stories about the Long Walk. They lived... my mother's family lived near Fort Wingate, New Mexico. And in the early days, of one of my great, great grandmother, she was just eight years old and her little brother was six, and I think the people knew that there was going to be trouble and that there was killing. And so even before the Long Walk there was raidings, and there was killings going on inflicting the families, and so I think that the Spanish or, they just called them the enemies. They could have just been the plains people who came among the Navajo, among my family, and they would kill them or take them off as slaves. And there was a place called "The Trail of the Slaves," and that trail my grandmother said, when she was young, she could see the wagon wheels the trail left in the sandstone near my home, and there were trails left there from the slaves that were captured there. At one point some of them escaped and they went there a ways, and a lot of them were plains people held captive there by the Spaniards. And the stories go way back before the Long Walk. But my grandmother tells me when she was a little girl her great grandmother told her that her six year old brother and her were wandering in the woods south of Fort Wingate in the tall pine trees. They were left out there by their family because they wanted the two little children at least to survive when the soldiers came by to collect all of the Navajos for the Fort Sumner trip. And the boy and the little girl wandered for days. And they were gathering berries when this Mexican guy came upon them and pleaded with them to turn themselves into Fort Wingate site where the other Navajos were being gathered. The little girl and her little brother were sad that they were seen by someone because they were suppose to be hiding. The Mexican guy was very nice and he took them to Fort Wingate. There the family was found. And several days went by and the little girl and the little boy were shown how to escape by their families, and they escaped from there again to go back to their home. The summer before, their families had prepared this big log. They had planted a big log into the ground, and the hole was dug in it and dirt was covered over the log. And so that's where they were supposed to spend the winters, and they stored their food there. There are several places where in the caves their food was stored, and this reminds me of Anasazi stories, you know, where you find corn--these stashes of different places; dried cactus, corn, all kinds of... even dried meat. And so they survived two years. The little girl was eight, and the little boy who was six years old. They wandered in the night and they were to only build a fire when it was, you know, a dire time, when it was cold, but they ate birds and they ate a lot of rabbits. And when two years came the family had returned and there was a garden planted of corn, and it was by the little girl and the little boy. They're my ancestors. And as we were growing up, my parents, my mother especially, she always told us "Don't eat everything off of your plate at one meal, save some for tomorrow." Or, "Leave your shoes by your bed in case you have to escape." These are some of the teachings that they taught us and they told us to be active and be strong

so that we can survive whatever you are escaping from. And I have other stories of my great grandmother. She learned how to eat, prepare skin... sheep hide and take the wool off of it and clean it and wash it and scrape it like you would tan a hide, and I think would cut it in strips and cook it over charcoal. And she said it tasted like pig skin--pig hide--how it's cooked. And she spoke of that and she also spoke of many berries that she was not familiar with that she learned how to eat, as they were little. Today I would be scared to eat any berries because sometimes they tell us they're dangerous. But I don't know how those little two children survived, and I'm proud of them and proud that they have stories that they can share with us to keep us strong. You know when my parents talk to us about the Long Walk, they were not in a hateful... they didn't teach hate. They taught of the experience and what the positive outcome of it. They didn't dwell on it either. And it was a teaching experience whenever they shared their stories with us.

**Interviewer**

How did they tell you they were treated on the Long Walk? How did the soldiers treat them?

**Shirley Clark**

Oh my grandma who was captured, she did not have any blankets or any extra clothes--it was just what she was wearing. She wore that all the way and just mended it over and over again. By the time they got to Fort Sumner they didn't have any shoes, and they were not, it was not just moving along. People were dying. People were crying, and just people tried to escape but there was no escape. In the night sometimes, you know, there were people who did escape, but then found later and returned again. There were other Pueblo Indians along the way who would mistreat the Navajos who did escape, and turn them in or brought them back to the Long Walk. And there was no water along the way, and it was just... if you had water it was not good. It was rainwater, or you had to drink the ditches or whatever they did, and they let the people do that. It was not... no one brought water. It was just... that was the main thing I think that was the hardest, that my father remembers her grandmother telling... the grandmother that water was the most precious thing that they missed. Everyone was... if there was no water everyone was starving. You couldn't, I mean you could go without food, but water was the main thing that they remembered that was hardest to go without.

**Interviewer**

What kind of conditions did they find when they got to Fort Sumner and Bosque Redondo?

**Shirley Clark**

At Fort Sumner there were no buildings to move into or no hardly anything there, and there were a few tents but after a while those were worn and people just lived out in the open. Most of the time there were little safe places in the ground and whatever rocks they can find they would put over them and hold two or maybe three people at a time.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel now about your ancestors who were on The Long Walk?

**Shirley Clark**

I really... I don't know if I would have survived if it were me, but I really am thankful that they were strong to survive. And I think their prayers and their belief that they wanted to live, and that they wanted their families to be together--I think that held them and really helped them just to stay alive. And my grandmother who was all alone, she said they tell that she often wanted to just not live. But her friend, the Mescalero Apache friend, I think that was a good thing that happened, and they were close because they were not allowed to just wander and play at her age. She was nearly 15, and they would just work all of the time, whatever it was. They had to dig holes or they had to just do with what they could with their hands, and a lot of the time there was no equipment to help them. And her weaving... a lot of the time she said she had to undo other rugs brought in from different places, and they weren't

woven like the Navajo wove their rugs, which was kind of thick and warm. So they had to redo those and if they weren't done by a certain time, they were not allowed to eat. So food was very precious. You had to save half of what you had, what you were served so you could have, because the next day you might not have any. I assumed that no one was overly fed. Everybody was just very slim, and very thin and frail.

**Interviewer**

What did you think the Long Walk did to the Navajos sense of identity?

**Shirley Clark**

The Navajos were always, through the stories of their legends, they always had this identity of being brave, of being good--trying to find the good in things and being peaceful and accomplishing working hard. That's kind of the background that the Navajos were accustomed to through their origin stories and through their traditional teachings. I would say that they were a prayerful people. And so when this Long Walk occurred, they relied on their prayers. They relied on brighter days, some day, and they did make what good of it, you know, they could along the way helping each other and not giving up. They knew that they had not done, as a group, done wrong, and I think that if you know you hadn't done wrong, you have this identity that is strong and you know that you're going to overcome--and I think that's what was in each individual who were there. Although, sometimes my dad spoke of tribal leaders who were not to be trusted; in those days my great, great grandfather knew of people, and Navajo leaders, who would try to con and provoke raids and have the Navajo men join them, and if you refused to join them they would whip you. And so my dad always taught us that--you don't put your full trust in leaders who might lead you astray.

**Interviewer**

Shirley tell me about your boarding school experience... where it was at and what happened?

**Shirley Clark**

My parents drove to Fort Wingate boarding school. As we drove into the schoolyard my mother told me (Navajo), which meant that in school you'd be known as Shirley. (Navajo) My grandfather had given me that name. It means "tumbleweed" or (Navajo) "plant or flower." And at school I just couldn't get the hang of just answering to Shirley, but I was given a number. My bed was B24, and so when B24 was called out I was supposed to say "here!" Every time we always lined up for everything, and B24 was my identity. My clothes--the smell of permanent marker was on everything. My clothes were marked with B24. And eventually I think I learned how to write my name Shirley. And at home we're called by our Navajo names. At school everyone seemed like they were Betty, Irene or Marie. It was kind of humorous, but I remember one time everyone had to stand by their beds, just before bedtime, and we were suppose to recite "Now I lay me down to sleep, if I should die before I wake..." I could not finish the story, whatever it was, because it seemed like I was being doomed or something bad might happen in the night, and I would feel fear or loneliness for my family. And that smell of permanent marker, to this day it always reminds me of boarding school. A lot of the time it was happy times because my sister was there with me. We shared one bunk bed and she slept towards my feet and I slept the other way. And sometimes I could hear her crying, and then I would start to cry or visa versa because we were missing my mom and dad. We didn't live very far--maybe 25 to 30 miles away. There was no bus. That's why my parents took us there. I'm sure they wanted us to go to school and learn English. My mother always told me, "Don't be like us... we don't know how to read. We don't know how to talk to people when we go to trading posts." Or when they were buying a vehicle they couldn't converse in English, and so that was their way of encouraging us to be in school. At school one year my father said to me, "We will put you in Fort Wingate Boarding School." For the third time, I think it was... this is what he said, "This is my daughter's fourth year of school." But it was my third year. I tried to tell my dad, but he just kept telling the registrar that this was my fourth year of school--

kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and it was suppose to be third grade, but my dad kept saying the fourth grade, the fourth year. So the next morning I was wearing my nametag and some children came up to me and said, "You're in fourth grade?" And I think it was because I was short. In those days I think they placed the students by their height, not by what they knew. I was in fourth grade and I was so afraid because I might get retained because I knew fourth grade was harder than third grade. And for that whole year I would hide. I would hide from my kindergarten teacher because she knew that I was in her kindergarten class three years previous. So when there was a knock on the classroom door I would just crawl under the table or hide down in my chair for fear that they would retain me to third grade now that I was in fourth grade. I knew that I had to learn my times table. I didn't know it was the times table. I thought it was just numbers with X's in between, but I caught up. I remember being in the lowest reading group one time, and I thought what am I doing here? Being the lowest reading group. So I tried hard and hard, very hard and I caught up with my grade level at the end of that year, and I am glad that my father always supported me in the things I did at school. I always thought I went to school to please my parents. I would not run away. The dorm leaders would caution us if we ran away that we would freeze or get lost or maybe be killed by bears, and that would really scare me, but the only reason why I stayed in school was to please my parents. And sometimes the boarding school days weren't as fun. Like the swings were always just a few swings, and there were hundreds and hundreds of children, and so some of us, most of us would just play in the dirt, so the one time a couple of my friends they came over and said oh eat this shiny black thing and it will turn into gum. And so we chewed and chewed and chewed. Later I found out it was lead off of the building--the tar that seals the ceilings so water won't drip. I didn't know it was that, but we chewed and chewed. And then there were times when there were the bigger girls or boys and they would pick on the younger children, and I think that's what made my boarding school most miserable--is because our own boarding school peers would pick on us, and they would, you know, herd us or they would just take things from us like our toothpaste or our dresses or whatever we had that they wanted. And so a lot of time we were not happy in those days, during those days. Other times it was just something that we had to do. I was glad that I went to boarding school. My parents saw the need for education and that's the only way I could get it because there were no buses that came our way. Still no buses go to where I live now; just maybe ten miles from where I live. That's where it stops.

**Interviewer**

What do you feel boarding schools did to you identity? Were you encouraged to be Navajo--dress Navajo and speak Navajo and practice your own religion?

**Shirley Clark**

The religion at the boarding school--we were to be assigned whatever religion our parents said that we belonged to. If our parents didn't state a religion, then the boarding school chose which religion we were supposed to go to. Everyone was supposed to go to some kind of Christian church. First I went to Catholic, and then I became a member of a different church called Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And it was not because I didn't want to go; I did go because my parents signed me up to go to that religion. My father had, when he was just a little boy, his father took him to school and the nuns stole him back--took him through the window of a school where his father enrolled him, and so he really didn't want me going as a Catholic member. I'm not sure, he probably had his reasons and so sometime later I realized that I was a prayerful person even though I didn't know English. My father helped me to pray in Navajo and so when I learned about the Christian churches; it was just a different language to pray in, so it was not very different. I deemed certain things to be sacred and certain things to be observed in reverence, and so that's how I was brought up so when I learned about Christianity, it was not a big change for me.

**Interviewer**

Were you encouraged to speak your own Navajo language at school?

**Shirley Clark**

I was encouraged to speak English all of the time in the classroom and in the dorms. Whatever we said we whispered and that was going to be in Navajo, and so I was a quiet child. I did not speak very good English, so in the classroom I was a quiet student and on the playground, you know, we spoke Navajo or didn't speak because we couldn't speak English. But we... when I went there to the boarding school, we weren't like punished or abused in any other way because we were speaking Navajo, but we were taught to speak English, not Navajo.

## **Frederick Peso interview**

### **Navajo Name is bizhiiguulin**

**Frederick Peso**

My name is Frederick Peso. I'm a member of the Mescalero Apache Tribe from Mescalero, New Mexico. Your question on how did the Mescalero meet with the U.S. Military? Our first encounter was probably when the United States made the Guadalupe-Hidalgo treaty. And previous to that we were working with the Spaniards and the Mexicans, and then we had our first encounter with the United States when they made the treaty. The Mescalero owned all of the land, they were in control of all the land, but when the United States came in then they wanted all of the land, so this where the hostilities began because they didn't want to share our lands—they wanted them all. So this is our first encounter with the United States military.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel the Mescaleros have been treated by the U.S. military?

**Frederick Peso**

We did make a treaty with the United States, but they have not continuously lived up to their part of the treaty. We still have a lot of problems with health care. We still have a lot of educational problems, and the Federal Government is constantly cutting their programs—the entitlement programs that they have for the tribe and things that would be covered under the treaty.

**Interviewer**

Historically, how were they treated?

**Frederick Peso**

At the very beginning the United States was hostile towards the Mescalero Apache people. Our people were friendly, they greeting them, but the United States did not treat the Apache as they were people—they wanted all of their land. They began fighting with them. And the Apache were raiders. They were — anyone that came into their territory, anyone that invaded their lands, they fought with them. So looking at this the United States felt that they were hostile and they didn't want to have them in the area, so they wanted them eliminated. This goes back to the treaty that the Mescalero Apache had with the United States in 1852. The United States had agreed to several different things in the treaty and they said they would seed the land and the United States would eventually build a reservation, set up a reservation for the tribe. However, the government did not set up a reservation until after forty years. Prior to that time, the confederates came in from the South and tried to take over the lands. However, and the Mescaleros did fight with them. In the treaty, and with the agreements that the tribe stay within the reservation, they would provide them rations, they would provide them with clothing, they would

provide them with all of the necessities: farm implements, teach them how to farm, teach them how to do a lot of the things for survival, and mostly in the farming and working with the animals. However, when the confederates began fighting with the union, then the United States abandoned Fort Stanton and when they did that they forgot that they did not provide for the tribes. They had no means of support. They had no means of gathering food or hunting because they had taken all of their weapons. They had taken everything—their horses—everything from them. So they had no means to protect themselves. So they did go out and make their weapons and began leaving the reserve area and fighting with the confederates and fighting with anyone else that fought with them. They began their raiding again, to some extent, to survive. After the war with the confederacy was over, then the United States came back and the Apaches were blamed for starting these wars, for not following their part of the treaty. But the United States had not looked to see what they had done to cause these problems. So at that point, President Abraham Lincoln was in the presidency, and under his administration they had General Carleton to come and round up the Apache and subdue the Mescalero. This was one of the experiments they had been using to put Indians on the reservation. Using Kit Carson as their lead man, they came into Mescalero, occupied all of the tribal lands—their strongholds, their water—and subdued the Apache into nearly starvation, then made them surrender, and then they transferred them to the Bosque Redondo, and the Bosque Redondo was only suppose to be two-years that they had promised, and then they would be able to return to their lands. However, that was not the case. When they were removed from their lands in this area, then General Carleton enticed the people from all over the country to move into the territory because the Apache threat had been removed. So this is why we have people in the surrounding communities—Rio Del Sol, El Mirador, Lincoln, Capitan—all of the surrounding communities around Mescalero were occupied when the Mescaleros were imprisoned at Bosque Redondo.

**Interviewer**

Tell me a little bit about the conditions at Bosque Redondo. What were they like?

**Frederick Peso**

When they first moved to the Bosque Redondo there was hardly anything there. It was a new fort. They had to rebuild. They had to make adobes. They had to clear the land so they could do the farming, and when they did that our people were not used to that. They were warriors; they were hunters; they were fighters. They were brave and they had to come and grovel in the dirt, which was something different for them, something new because they were not farmers like the Pueblos. So they had to learn a whole new way of life. There were no sanitary facilities because our people never stayed in one place long enough and there were no sanitary facilities. The food was bad. They were given rations that were not edible. They were given rations that our people knew nothing about. They didn't have utensils. Sickneses came about and there was not medical care for the people, so the conditions at Bosque Redondo were terrible, and no human being should ever have to go through that.

**Interviewer**

How about the brutality? Was there brutality perpetuated against the Mescalero people?

**Frederick Peso**

There was always brutality by the soldiers when they wanted the Apache to do something that just was not allowed. Well then, they would punish them, lock them up into the stockades, and they would punish the people so that anyone else could see what they were doing; that they would do what they were told and they were beaten, yes. This is what the old people say. You read the military books; the military books say that well they enjoyed it there, but that's not the case when you talk to our own people that have given these stories to me.

**Interviewer**

Do you have a specific story that you could tell?

**Frederick Peso**

They would just tell about how bad it was there—how they had mistreated the people. When they got ill, we had people dying and it was just bad. It was a totally different world to them. You know they were a nomadic people, a free people, and all of a sudden they were put in sedentary conditions that they knew nothing about. So that, in itself, was brutal. That was brutal to the people. They had no clothing. They had no materials. Their shelters were bad. They built shelters out of whatever materials they could find there and it was cold. The water went through. The farming they had done was...the corn weevils and all of the droughts and anything else that could happen happened to their crops. And on top of that they moved the Navajo in, and then they gave them all of the cultivated lands that they had done, and left them without crops because they gave them to the Navajo because they brought them in late. They had no way to start new farming or anything so they gave them the crops of the Mescalero. They gave them the lands that they had cultivated and cleared up and this was brutal. It's all brutality.

**Interviewer**

How did the Mescalero get along with the Navajo?

**Frederick Peso**

Traditionally the Mescalero and the Navajo were fierce enemies. Maybe in some parts they were friends, but the majority of the people were enemies with the Navajo.

**Interviewer**

How did they inter-relate at Bosque Redondo?

**Frederick Peso**

It wasn't good. I was told that what they did was bad—that the Navajos were there and there were constant battles. They were constantly fighting with the Navajos. The Navajos were constantly stealing their crops, stealing their food and there were constant battles.

**Interviewer**

Describe how the Mescaleros sort of vanished into the night at Bosque Redondo.

**Frederick Peso**

Because of all the problems that they had been having, that they had been experiencing, and the promise that General Carleton had made to these people in the early days before they were sent to Bosque Redondo—that they would only be there for two years—the conditions were bad, and the government did not live up to the promised they had made. So they said that Chief Cadete had told General Carleton that they were going to leave because he didn't live up to his promises. They said on several occasions they were going to leave so as things never changed; he got all these people together at a certain time and in the middle of the night they disappeared. They were not to be seen again until the early 1870's.

**Interviewer**

We were talking about the Mescalero vanishing into the night. Tell me what happened there and why?

**Frederick Peso**

When General Carleton met with Chief Cadete, and told him that he was going to place them on the reserve in Bosque Redondo, he promised that they would only be there for two years and all of the things that they were supposed to do for the tribe. However, none of these things were kept, none of these promises were kept, and the problems that were going on continued, so Chief Cadete informed General Carleton's people that they would be leaving because he did not keep his promises, and he told them on several occasions. However, they didn't believe that anything that he had said, so one night, I guess with all of this being planned for some time, they completely left the reserve—everyone except

for nine people. Nine people were left there to keep the fires burning and walk back and forth and make the appearance that everything was o.k. But the next morning they found that they had all left, and the military records and the books show that they were left alone. They weren't pursued. However, our old people say that the soldiers pursued them, went after them and hit them with the butts of their guns, shot them down. Men, women and children were shot on the way out. As many as could get away got away, but those that they could catch, they punished them by killing them. The books don't say that. So this is what the old people say happened to ours. Our people vanished... they didn't vanish. They vanished according to the white man. But they vanished into the plains—they went into the plains. They went down to the Guadalupe's; they went into the Fort Davis Mountains; they went into the Sacramento Mountains; and some of them went into Mexico. They scattered all over, and eventually, those that were from the Sacramento Mountains, returned to the Sacramento's, but under cover and they were not seen again until the early 1870's when they began negotiations with the United States again for a reservation.

**Interviewer**

What is the opinion of the Mescalero of General James Henry Carleton?

**Frederick Peso**

The attitude towards General James Carleton was very poor, very bad because he wouldn't listen to anything. He was very brutal in his demands when he wanted someone... I'll give you an example: When he told his people that any time they encountered the Mescalero that they were to be shot; there was to be no quarters, they were to be sent to prison immediately without any negotiations. It was final. They were to go to prison, and several of the smaller groups were shot into and killed, and some of the larger groups they did come in, but they had to go and meet with General Carleton. So the people had very bad feelings towards them.

**Interviewer**

How about Kit Carson?

**Frederick Peso**

Kit Carson was more understanding and sympathetic to the Apache and to the Indian people, so he would listen. And people went to him to ask him for things or try to surrender to him rather than to Carleton because Carleton was brutal. And Kit Carson would not kill people just to kill them; he was more sympathetic and understanding. He did disobey some orders, and I imagine was punished for it.

**Interviewer**

Talk a little bit more about the Navajo and Mescalero interaction at the Bosque Redondo. Did the Mescalero feel the Navajo received favorable treatment? I understand there were quite a few more Navajos there.

**Frederick Peso**

The Mescalero that were sent to Bosque Redondo numbered... the Mescalero numbered about 480 people at Bosque Redondo when they were first imprisoned and the Navajo, the first wave came in about three months after them... the Mescaleros were put there, but there were about 7,000 Navajos that were placed above the Mescaleros. The conditions were bad. A lot of the cultivated areas were given to the Navajos. The food was stolen by the Navajos, was taken by the Navajos. And being at war with the Navajos most of the time, and enemies of that tribe they just did not get along, and they should never have been put together on that one. It was promised to the Mescalero and then they brought the Navajo in.

**Interviewer**

What are the lessons learned from Bosque Redondo?

**Frederick Peso**

I think this is a lesson that should be learned by the United States. This can never, never happen again. We are a people. Just because we were a nomadic people, just because we were an indigenous people and not having the technologies, nothing like that should happen to any people anymore. We suffered for it. We fought for our land. The only thing we were doing was fighting for what was ours. The only thing we were doing was fighting for what belonged to us and it was taken away and the lessons learned from that should be that this should not happen to anyone or it should not be allowed to happen to any one else regardless of who they are.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel about your ancestors in that era?

**Frederick Peso**

They were a brave people. They were a strong people. They were a religious people, understanding people, and I just wish that we were able to have learned everything we could have from them, or everything they could pass down to us without the interference of the government.

**Interviewer**

How do you feel about the way that your ancestors were treated?

**Frederick Peso**

The Federal Government has not always been there for us. They've got a treaty that they've got to uphold, but they haven't always held that. We continue to have problems with that. They continue to, from the early days up to now; it's the same old thing—not enough money. Treaties don't seem to mean anything.

**Interviewer**

What do treaties mean between the U.S. Military and the U.S. Government and the Mescalero?

**Frederick Peso**

A treaty is a treaty. Treaty of the United States is the law of the land, and the treaty that they made with us is the law of the land. However, it was not always recognized or looked at in such a way. It's no different than the treaty with Russia, the treaty with England, the treaty with any other country—France. It's the same; it's a treaty. It should be recognized as such.