

Box 144  
Thoreau, N.M. 87323  
September 12, 1970

Dear Laura Gilpin:

I was so very glad to hear from you, and of course delighted that you want to photograph Mary Chavez' string "games," as she calls them.

Mary suggests January as probably the best time for you to come. She will have to teach a little girl and a little boy, and won't be able to start, of course, until after the first frost, or maybe snow.

One problem is that she isn't sure whether or not her grandfather will be willing to record these sacred stories. I bought a small cassette the other day especially for Mary to take to Lukachukai. She has already figured out how to use it--which I haven't.

She says that if her grandfather doesn't want to there will probably be someone else who knows these stories, and would be willing to record them.

Yesterday John Martin's daughter happened to come to see me, and I asked if her father knows all the ~~stories~~ string game stories. She said he does. I'm sure he'd be very willing to record them. He has already given me, on tape, a great many of his sacred songs and chants. And of course he remembers you, and ~~the~~ your photographs he saw that day at the Museum.

I'm sure Mary would prefer to have someone in her own family tell the stories. There are probably variations in different communities. But she won't, of course, insist on it, if she can't find anyone at Lukachukai willing to put them on tape. I believe Father Berard and Dave McAllester are the only people who have ever succeeded in persuading anyone at Lukachukai to record anything ~~xxxxxx~~ considered sacred.

Anyway, this problem, I'm sure, will be solved.

I'll let you know, as soon as I know, what arrangements Mary has made about recording the stories. Getting them interpreted, and into publishable form, might also be something of a problem.

As I'm sure you know, most <sup>kind of interpretation</sup> Navajos don't feel enough at ease with the English language to do this well. And many (most) younger Navajos are not familiar with many of the words used in Navajo ~~xxxxxxxx~~ religious ceremonies.

But this, too, can be managed, even if I have to impose on Dave McAllester.

I'm so sorry you have to use crutches. I once, very temporarily, after spraining an ankle, had to use them, and I know



they are most uncomfortable.

Is it hard, or impossible, for you to drive? If it is, you might come to Gallup, or to Grants, by bus, or by train, and I could meet you. I also have a handicap that will make it difficult to be as helpful as I'd like. Several years ago a tumor made a large hole in my soft palate, and the cobalt treatment destroyed my salivary glands. And there's so little I can eat (it seems you need spit to swallow most kinds of food) I have to have all my meals at home. I'm too skinny to skip a meal, or make do with a glass of milk.

This edcentricity, ~~xxx~~ plus being, apparently, malnourished, is restrictive. I get tired toward the end of the day, and after that hardly speak to people.

But I've already arranged for you to stay with one of our teachers, who has a ~~bx~~ comfortable, new, house, with two extra bedrooms. She's the kind of person who is glad to have her house overflowing, which sometimes it is, but usually not. She's informal and easy to visit and, besides having more room than I do, has a much greater variety of food than I do. I can't ask anyone to share the odd meals that I have, and, although I used to love to cook, I'm too selfish to cook for someone else when I can't eat.

Mary Chavez, or I, or Beulah, will be able to furnish all the transportation you will need.

I'm so glad The Enduring Navajo is to have another printing. I'm glad both for you, and for all the people who will discover how beautiful Navajo people are, and enduring.

I don't think there will be a problem in finding a suitable publisher for this book--the strong game one. With the right publisher it could be a best seller. It should appeal both to children and adults.

I don't want my publisher, Houghton Mifflin, to do it. I'm mad at them. The other day a friend from Flagstaff, Jerry Levy, told me he had seen a copy of my new book, Nannabah's Friend, in a library in Flagstaff. I haven't seen it. I didn't even know it was published, although I did know it was to be published sometime this fall. He also said the people in the illustrations look like Mexicans. As I told you, I had sent a copy of your book to Boston for the illustrator to look at--and I sent it over a year ago, which was plenty of time for Leonard Weisgard to see it before he started to work. on the illustrations.

Jerry, incidentally, is an anthropologist, who has worked with Navajos for a number of years, and he offered, if it might be helpful, to recommend this book in any way he can. He has,



of course, seen your book, and is very appreciative. He himself is a skillful photographer, and his appreciation is special.

This letter is much too long, and I apologize for it.

Sincerely,

Mary Perrine

P.S. I know you are a friend of Marj McPharlin's. I've heard her mention you. Last Christmas I didn't receive, as I have for a number of years, one of her nice Christmas letters, and I haven't heard from her since. I hope there's no reason to be concerned about her.