

After a short rest and a second breakfast, we continued our journey following the San Juan River to the area of the Four Corners—that unique spot where four states meet. Below us were many Navaho farms for this is the most cultivated part of the reservation. Green fields of alfalfa, fields of corn and oats, filled the pale yellow landscape with rich color. When the new dam is completed and its stored water becomes available for irrigation, the Navaho will expand this region to include many thousands of acres of new arable land, ~~x~~ acres now bordering the narrow productive strip of the river's valley.

To the south of us, Shiprock, the largest of the Southwest's volcanic cores, rose eighteen hundred feet out of the desert sea. We circled it, the rock's two great dykes reminding us of the Navaho legend of the eagle with outspread wings. In a few more minutes the Red Rock area which I knew so well appeared before us, and I was able to trace just where the dun colored landscape we were leaving turned to opalescent red as we neared the Lukaichukai and Chuska Mountains. This 9500 foot range, densely covered with pine and fir, spruce and aspen, runs north and south bisecting the reservation and yielding a large timber reserve for the Navaho People. On the western side, ~~xx~~ the mountains slope off into the Fort Defiance Plateau and the timber changes to pinon and cedar as the elevation drops. Red sandstone promontories jutt out into the sage covered foot hills.

To the south I could see gashes in the Plateau, great splits in the land which form the Canyons of de Chelly and Del Muerto. The Navaho had penetrated this region by the beginning of the eighteenth century. They found the Hopi living in the canyons and probably drove them out. It was from the rim of Canyon del Muerto that a small company of Spanish soldiers bombarded a cave in the opposite wall, killing most of the inhabitants, thus giving the Canyon its name. This was in 1803—the year of the Louisiana Purchase when New Mexico was still under Spanish rule and Thomas Jefferson was wondering about this western land.

As the timbered plateau dropped beneath us to the red desert to the west, we could see Monument Valley ahead of us, sun drenched and glowing red. The beauty of the monoliths was startling from the air, so different from the ground aspect where one looks up at them into a contrasting blue sky.

In the span of a half hour we were over the southern end of another timbered plateau extending down from Utah, and Tsegā Canyon emerged beneath us. Following up a small tributary we saw suddenly the cliff-dwelling of Be-ta-ta-kin, the most beautiful of all in the Southwest. The gracefully arched cave with sheer clefts of rock at one end, protected the buildings from storm and wind. Richly green foliage nestled close to the spring these inhabitants were fortunate enough to have at their front doors. So completely do the buildings blend into the rose colored rock of the cave, that the shadowed doorways were what made the cliff-dwelling visible.

Cutting across the western edge of Black Mesa we turned southward over an expanse of yellow sand as yet another desert extended all the way to the Grand Canyon, the western boundary of the reservation. A short flying time brought us opposite Doko-oslid with the Little Colorado River diagonaling our foreground as it contributed its share of water to its mighty brother. Once more we saw a high landmark—Doko-oslid, Nav-ho sacred mountain of the west.

*Slight changes
10/16/62*

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