

EPILOGUE

DEDICATED
TO
ELIZABETH WARHAM FORSTER, R.N.

Dear Betsy:-

This is as much your book as mine. Not only have you shared completely in the making of it, but you have also taught me to understand the Navaho People, as well as any white person can. Our association with the Navaho goes back to a vacation trip in the fall of 1930 when we were misdirected (by a white man) on the road from Kayenta to Chinle on the western side of the reservation, and got ourselves wonderfully lost ending up with an empty gasoline tank. How we laugh now over this experience, yet how important it was, for it led you to a position as a field nurse to the Navaho.

I can see us now, sitting in the old Buick wondering what we ought to do. I, being the daughter of a hardy Colorado Pioneer, Had to do something about our situation immediately! We were in the middle of a desert, visibility in every direction was fifty miles or more. We saw nothing, not a distant hogan, not a horse, no sheep, no herder- just empty desert. So I set forth on foot on foot leaving you to guard the car, (from what I dont quite know!), in hope that another traveler might come along and give you gasoline. How well I remember my thoughts as I trudged along, recalling every tale I had ever heard of people lost in the desert. How mortified I was that I could have lost my way. I remember meeting a Navaho man and little boy in a wagon coming toward me. I tried to talk to them, saying "Chinle" and pointing in the general direction of that distant post., indicating that I would pay

them to take me there. But the man shook his head and reaching into the back of his wagon, handed me three cool, delicious peaches. Finally, after an emotionally stimulated walk of two and a half hours, I reached Frazer's store. The trader was away, but his understanding wife took me and the needed gasoline back to you and the car, a distance of ten and a half miles. I remember imagining how worried you must be over my long absence. Never will I forget topping a gentle rise in the undulating desert and seeing the lonely car completely surrounded by NAVAHO INDIANS, like a swarm of ants about a dead object. When we arrived, there you were in the midst of the gathering, happily playing cards with your visitors! Your ensuing tale of how the Navahe had arrived one or two at a time, seemingly from nowhere, to find out what the trouble was and to offer help, both surprised and interested me.

A year later, I remember my concern when you came to tell me that you were accepting a position as a field nurse sponsored by a private organization. I asked countless questions, how would you live, how would you get along way off there all by yourself? Later, when I came to visit, I found you in snug though primitive quarters. As I listened to your account of your experiences, I too became interested in these people, impressed by their rugged character and their mode of life. From time to time my visits revealed the work you were doing, your understanding, your patience, your kindness and generosity, for you literally gave much of your substance as well as your knowledge and your skill. I saw the response of the Navahe

People to your attitude toward them, and your willingness to go anywhere at any time when a call came for help. I know too, of lives you saved, the succor you gave, still unknown to any save those to whom it was given. When the depression came and there were no more funds to continue your work, you had to leave. I went down to help you pack and move. I can still re-live that final morning when six of your best Navaho friends arrived to sit and watch our every move; then solemnly and without warning, they all stood up, bowed their heads and wept in unison.

During the past twelve years, together we have hunted out old friends ~~after many years~~, finding many, making many new ones, and exploring nearly the whole reservation. I have watched old friends after a lapse of twenty years turn to you at once for medical aid the minute they saw your face. What fun we have had gradually evolving this book. Your understanding of the people, your help when I was after difficult pictures, your sound criticism and encouragement, have finally brought completion. So, as a tribute to our long and happy friendship, this is your book.

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