

1968
The year 1968 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the ~~Navaho~~
~~Long Walk into exile.~~ One remembers the return of the Diné to the
land that was their home after those four devastating years, bereft
of all possessions and with the taste of defeat still bitter in
their memories as they turned to the task of rebuilding their lives.
For a time there was apathy among many who felt frustrated in return-
ing to their old ways and knew not how to adjust to the new, but
slowly they did adjust, and now for more than two decades they have
marched steadfastly along the road we call modern civilization.

A new day has arrived for the young Navaho as they adapt themselves
to the white man's way. Many are absorbing this life with eagerness
choosing those occupations sympathetic to their inclinations, some
simply leading a new kind of life, many continuing their traditional
way. Many young Navaho face this great change with sureness and con-
fidence.

A short time ago, as I was driving from Gallup to Shiprock, I over-
took this young couple walking along the highway. They had been to
the Window Rock Fair, and after I picked them up to give them a lift,
we dropped into easy conversation. We drove more than thirty miles
before the young man asked me to stop. We were in the empty desert
country which extends for miles along this highway and there was not
even one hogan in sight. I watched them walk away finally melting
into the landscape, thinking of the tremendous changes that have come
to such young people as these. There are many thousands of young
Navaho who are pushing aside the traditional ways taught by their
parents, wanting to partake fully of our American culture. But there
are also many, both young and old, who are concerned about this, and
who are trying to preserve the ways of their people.

end of the Navaho
exile to Fort Sumner

Many who know the Navaho well think that the great days of ceremonialism are past. Possibly this is true, but I cannot believe that the old ways will really be lost. Another generation will want to know all those things that their grandparents can tell them, and I am sure that there will always be some who can, and that a new interest in their traditional past will come. Who can say whether there will or will not be a great revival? We can but hope that those essential qualities that are the birthright of the Diné will never be lost. Song and singing are the very essence of Navaho being, and as long as the Navaho keep singing, their tradition will endure.