

We headed north following the Rio Grande, seeing clearly the canyons cut by the river through the volcanic slopes of the Pajarito Plateau. As we crossed into southern Colorado, the superb mountain mass of Sinaajini grew more impressive as we neared. Beneath us, the southern end of the San Luis Valley looked barren and uninhabited. Here once was an abundance of game -- elk and antelope, deer and bison, and here the ancient Navaho came to hunt, seeing always their sacred mountain before them. To the West, over the continental divide, the new Navaho Dam has now been completed at the confluence of the San Juan and Pine Rivers. Just above the dam site during the field seasons of 1959, 1960, and 1961, the salvage archaeology project of the Museum of New Mexico uncovered more comprehensive data of the early whereabouts of the Navaho and their Apache cousins. These sites, farther north than excavations made some years ago by other archaeologists, have extended the area known as Old Navaholand. These recent unearthings have revealed simple, crude hogans (Navaho houses) dating from about the middle of the sixteenth century. This date, ~~so much later than all other sources of Indian life in this region~~, seems to indicate that the Navaho may well have been the last migration to reach the Southwest. Whence and how they came has yet to be determined.

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The Spanish Colonists who came to New Mexico in 1598 came in contact with many Indian groups. During the years that followed, they wrote often of the Apaches, usually designating which Apache group, for there must have been several at that

time all speaking the Athabaskan language. In the chronicle of Fray Geronimo de Zarate Salmerón written in 1626, he speaks of the "Apaches de Nabahu" (or Nabajo), as being farmers who lived in this Old Navaholand area. Just when the Navaho as a group split from their Apache cousins is a matter of conjecture. They doubtless learned the rudiments of agriculture from Pueblo People with whom they must have come in contact, for all the archaeologists who have worked in this area found remnants of corn, squash and bean seed in their excavations.

Thinking always of the Navaho, where they came from and how they traveled, we could see from the air that the distance from Old Navaholand to Sisnaajini is not great, and though there are mountains in between, there are passes through which travelers can find a way. Because of its severance by a wide, low pass, Sisnaajini appears a mountain by itself and is a natural landmark -- Sisnaajini, Navaho Sacred Mountain of the East.

Following plans for a longer flight to photograph the sacred mountains of the South, West, and North, we left Santa Fe shortly after daylight on an early spring morning. We headed west toward the low end of the Jemez Range beyond which stretches the expanse of the Navaho Reservation. Crossing the Rio Grande, we saw below us on the river's western bank, the skeleton ruin of the once great Pueblo of the Tiguex Indians, who, in 1540, gave a friendly welcome to Coronado and his entourage. In a matter of minutes, seconds really, we could see on our right the living Pueblos of Santa Ana and Tsia, sun baked



on the adobe banks of the Jemez River near its junction with the Rio Grande. As we crossed a low, hilly divide at the southern tip of the Jemez, a vast expanse of semi-desert came into view, broken here and there by piñon covered buttes, while stark forms of volcanic cones rose above the terrain. To the north of us lay Old Navaholand, dimly seen on the horizon, extending to the border of New Mexico and Colorado and a little beyond.

As we flew over this arid land, leaving the Jemez Mountains behind us, Tsoodził, Navaho sacred mountain of the south, rose in tiered mesas to its eleven thousand foot snow-tipped summit. We circled several times seeking the proper foreground for this picture, finding such different country from the empty areas of the San Luis Valley. Thick clusters of cedar and piñon trees, broken by parklike openings, and rugged prominences built up to the mountain peak. We saw isolated hogans, sometimes three or four in a group representing a family unit, with sheep corrals and flocks grazing nearby. There was an occasional horseman, a car, a truck or two -- so few signs of life in this big empty-looking land. It seemed hard to believe that more than one hundred and four thousand Navaho People live on this reservation.

Turning to a northwesterly direction we were soon over land free of timber but covered with desert grass and low shrubs. We crossed Chaco Canyon looking down on the extensive ruin of Pueblo Bonito and other ancient sites of this once populous region. The Navaho have stories about these ruins and their

long forgotten prehistoric inhabitants -- the Kiis'aanii, ancestors of the Pueblo People. We crossed the Escavado Wash, a wide, dry river bed, capable of carrying a raging torrent following a summer thunderstorm. Soon we could see the green valley of the San Juan River, imagining how the Navaho must have followed it as the more adventurous among them sought new homesites.

History tells us of the many conflicts between the Navaho and the Pueblo Indians and Spanish settlers. It was Coronado who first brought both sheep and horses to this country, and later, following the Spanish Colonization, the Navaho, filled with envy, stole or traded for the animals they coveted. Horses gave them a new and better mode of travel and it was not long until they became stockmen. Horses also gave them incentive to hunt new pastures and remote canyons in which to hide their stolen booty.

We crossed the fertile valley of the San Juan, circling for a landing at Farmington to refuel the plane and to have a short rest. As we turned, TsoodziI, still though distantly visible, lifted its snowy summit into the turquoise sky -- the one high landmark -- TsoodziI -- the Navaho sacred mountain of the South.

After a short rest and a second breakfast, we continued our journey, following the San Juan River toward the Four Corners, that unique spot where the states of Arizona and Utah meet Colorado and New Mexico. Below us were many farms, for this is the most cultivated part of the reservation.



Green fields of alfalfa, fields of corn and oats, filled the pale landscape with rich color. With the completion of the new Navaho Reservoir, and as its stored water becomes available for irrigation, the Navaho will expand this region to include many thousands of acres of new arable land, acres now bordering the narrow productive strip of the river's valley.

Shiprock, largest of the volcanic cores of the Southwest, rises more than eighteen hundred feet out of the desert sea, its two great flanking dykes bringing to mind the Navaho legend of an eagle with outspread wings. Beyond was the Red Rock area I knew so well, and I could trace the merging of the dun colored landscape into opalescent red as we neared the Lukachukai Mountains. This 9500 foot range runs north and south, bisecting the reservation. It is densely covered with pine and fir, spruce and aspen, yielding a large timber reserve for the Navaho People. On the western side, the mountains slope into the Fort Defiance Plateau, the timber changing to piñon and cedar as the elevation drops. Huge red sandstone promontories jut out into the sage covered foothills, like giant ocean piers.

As we crossed the Lukachukai, I could see to the south of us, great gashes in the Plateau, splits in the land forming the Canyons of deChelly and Del Muerto. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, possibly earlier, the Navaho had penetrated this region where they may have found Hopi Indians farming in the Canyons and probably drove them out, or absorbed them into the tribe.

Once more we saw a high landmark -- Doko'oosXiid, Navaho sacred mountain of the West.

We turned southeast, leaving the western boundary behind us, and as we crossed Hopi land, that island reservation surrounded by the Navaho, we looked down on the rocky mesa towns of this sturdy Pueblo tribe. We landed at Winslow, Arizona for a midday meal and a needed rest.

Later in the afternoon we took off once more, heading home to Santa Fe, more than three hundred miles away. During the morning we had flown at a low elevation, about one thousand feet or less, giving me a closer and more detailed vision of the land. Now, with bumpy air rising from the warm ground, we climbed to about three thousand feet, and to my amazement we could see all the country we had crossed on the morning's flight. We flew over the painted desert, saw the petrified forest, and far to the south, the long valley traversed by Coronado as he came from Mexico seeking the Seven Cities of Cibola, bringing with him many horses and five thousand sheep.

To the north we could see the pifon covered mesas through which Canyons de Chelly and del Muerto eroded their way into the Chinle Wash. It was from the north rim of del Muerto that a small company of Spanish soldiers, sent out from Santa Fe to retaliate against Navaho raiders, bombarded a cave in the Canyon wall, killing most of the inhabitants. This was in 1804, the time of the Louisiana Purchase, when New Mexico and Arizona were under the rule of Spain, and Thomas Jefferson wondered about this far western land. From time to time the



Spanish sent many expeditions against the Navaho, trying to stop the depredations of Spanish towns and Pueblo villages along the Rio Grande. They bargained and they bribed, but like the ebb and flow of ocean tide, the raids continued, though there were intervals of peaceful pursuits and welcomed exchange of goods.

Following Mexican independence in 1821, the Government in Santa Fe, now directed from Mexico City, was struggling weakly to assert itself. Navaho raids increased in number and in strangth. Twenty-five years later, after our war with Mexico, both Navaho and Apache depredations were at their height. The Southwest now became part of the United States, and new expeditions left Santa Fe for Navaholand. The Navaho had no comprehension of such political and governmental changes. This was all a very wild, rough country then, the distances were very great for horse or foot travel, and water sources far apart. So in 1851 the United States Army established Fort Defiance as a first base of operations. As we approached the Arizona-New Mexico line, I could see the large grove of trees, some of them planted long ago, and now obscuring the Fort from the air, submerging it in a pool of shade. Close by, amid a cluster of wind-worn sandstone, was Window Rock, the present seat of Navaho Government.

Watching the passing landscape, the procession of Navaho historic events filled my mind as I thought of all that had happened to these people since they came under the rule of Washington, one hundred and nineteen years ago. The early

efforts of such a small segment of the American Army proved fruitless in its effort to quell the Navaho raids, for in this rugged country it was no match for the Navaho, so skilled in guerrilla warfare. In 1863 the Army commissioned the famous scout, Colonel Christopher (Kit) Carson, to bring the Navaho to terms. Through a scorched earth policy, he destroyed crops, killed or captured livestock, finally rounding up most of the starving people.

Then the commanding General decided to move the Navaho to a new environment -- to Fort Sumner, more than three hundred miles away in eastern New Mexico on the Pecos River, and the captured Navaho were forced to march to Bosque Redondo, as they called it. It was the first time they had ever been conquered -- they were being sent into exile. The year 1864 became a tragic milestone in Navaho history.

Our plane approached Gallup, New Mexico, and as I looked north across the reservation, I could see Shiprock standing above the desert, more shiplike than ever from this height and distance. And beyond, rising above the great promontories and canyons of Mesa Verde, glistening on the far horizon, were the snowy summits of Dibéntsaa -- Navaho sacred mountain of the North.

For many miles east of Gallup, as we continued our journey, we flew directly over the route of the exile march, the Long Walk, as the Navaho call it. Looking down, one could visualize the straggling line of slowly moving, destitute people. It was in early March of 1864 that the Long Walk



began. The People were moved in groups, some twenty-four hundred in the first, others following during the spring until a total of some eighty-five hundred Navaho had made the long march. Only the very old and the very young were permitted to ride in the few wagons they still possessed. They had nothing left, only a few horses, some sheep and goats -- that was all.

Those four years of exile were tragic years indeed. Lack of understanding, lack of supplies, lack of communication were the cause of much hardship and suffering. The exile began near the close of the Civil War. The Government in Washington had little thought for one small group of captured Indians so far away. The wonder is that Congress appropriated \$100,000 for Navaho rehabilitation. The money was entrusted to two individuals who were to proceed to Independence, Missouri, there to purchase the necessary supplies. These were the days of the Santa Fe Trail where long, heavily laden wagon trains labored across nine hundred miles of prairie. Of the original appropriation less than a third ever reached its destination.

Yet the Navaho were willing enough to do what they could to better their condition. They learned to make adobe bricks; some became blacksmiths; they did their best to farm under most adverse conditions of drought, wind, insect infestations, and illness among themselves. An epidemic of smallpox struck and many died, reducing their number to a little over six thousand; many were ill from undernourishment; all were desperately homesick. Finally, on hearing of a plan to move them

to Oklahoma, several Navaho Chiefs agreed to go to Washington to plead for permission to return to their own land.

One can imagine the revelation such a trip must have been to these men; the long horseback ride to Independence, the first sight of a railroad train, and the long trip to Washington, the realization for the first time of the great size of the United States; the arrival in the capital city and a meeting with President Andrew Johnson. Shortly after their return to Fort Sumner, General Sherman was sent out to draw up a treaty in which the Navaho promised to stop their raids, a promise quite faithfully kept, with a few minor exceptions. In return, the Government of the United States promised to give them a new start by supplying tools, seed, and three sheep per family; also one teacher for every thirty children. In one hundred years this last part of the treaty is only now being fulfilled.

So the humbled Navaho, in the fall of 1868, returned to their mesas and canyons, their deserts and mountains, to begin life anew. But more hardships were yet to be endured, for in spite of efforts by Major Dodd, the first civil agent, the promised supplies and sheep did not arrive. That first winter was grim indeed. The Navaho ate what they could find on the land, pifon nuts, roots, other small edible plants, and some game. The promised sheep did not arrive until the fall of 1869. Then the People felt a new surge of hope as they began to till new fields, to start new flocks, to build new hogans, and to live the free life which was the very essence of their being.



As the memory of all this history flashed through my mind, we were flying rapidly home to Santa Fe, as the long shadows of late afternoon reached across the mountains. It seemed incredible that in the course of a few hours, I could have seen so closely and so clearly practically the entire twenty-five thousand square miles of Navaho domain, and looked down on areas where so much history had taken place. It gave me new insight and understanding of the Navaho and their land. It was a memorable day.