

Last Day at
SIDE 1

July 1, 1979

(V)

Now we're putting up pictures of the Draper Farm because I want to hear about the last day at the Draper Farm and how you got there anyway.

The whole thing started with my going up to the Park Service to see Mrs. Puckett up there who's been there for years in the park service. And she wanted to see my dummy and I took it in and I had done some pictures of this woman way up the canyon that Johnny Guerro took me to and she was a weaver. and I had gone in to speak to her and then I showed her some pictures and then I walked around behind her and there framed behind the two top bars of her loom was a mummy ~~... cave~~ ^{between} ~~...~~

oh yes she has long hair

and yes, and then I did just one picture of her ~~herself~~.

interruption.

Now we're back in the canyon and you had taken just one picture of the lady with the loom.

the lady with the loom and ^{then} the next year that I was ... well, the year that ^{I saw} I saw the woman at the park service she said "Has Betty Mitchell seen this picture?" And I said "well, who's Betty Mitchell?" And she said, "this woman's daughter." She had been to the Indian School and ^{she} had a job there in Chinle. And she picked up the telephone and ^{she} called her over and she came right over and she said "these are the only pictures that have ever been done of my mother."

You photographed that lady more than once. I've seen a picture of her with her hair up and then down at the loom, isn't it? Or not?

I don't think that I... maybe I did her twice, I'm not sure.

But anyway, she was... I took these out and gave them to her.

well, you know the Navajo never say very much. ^{Then} Two days later I was over there with Dave and Corky Jones and we were in the Schultz' 4-wheel drive jeep.

Q oh, was that one of the last trips you took to the canyon?

L Um-huh.

Q Was it THE last?

---pause---

Q You don't know. ~~WNN~~ neither do I.

L Well, you'll have to wonder about that. Anyway, two days later she, this Mary Mitchell, called me at the lodge and she said would you ^{come} ~~ride~~ up to our place this afternoon and if I ride ~~in~~ in the car with you you won't have to have another Indian guide. So we picked her up and we got up there and this was just the whole works. And they had done this just for me. It was a fabulous day.

Q Do you think that they didn't want another Indian guide or ~~that~~ they wanted it to be a surprise, or what?

L I don't they wanted it to be necessarily a surprise. That's just the way they do things.

Q And she had gotten all of the family together?

L The entire family was there. Her widowed father --- I thought I saw him a minute ago. ^{When is he?} ^{I saw him a minute ago} No, you haven't gotten him out yet.---

Q Well, ^{I think} there are even more pictures in the B & W. There was a widowed father. It looked like there were children and these two ladies with the beautiful colored skirts with the corn.

(5)
L - Arent they wonderful? And they were just as natural, you know, and I could have worked for weeks trying to photograph them and there would always have been a wall there, you know. And here they were *in just*

E - So ~~you~~ ^{them} had a whole feast day *for you & let you photograph?*

L - So they had a whole feast day and I was just turned loose. Here he is. This is the widowed father, you see. And here are these two lovely old people that just went down and got there arms full of corn and came up. I've got another shot of them somewhere with *them...*

E - here they are making corn meal and tortillas. *Roasting it*

L - Yes, I've got the whole thing with them roasting it and how they built the fire. *& everything...*

E - What did they do when you got there? When you arrived what were they doing?

L - I don't know. One of them ~~was~~ ^{ed} butchering a sheep, I know.

E - Yes, there are pictures of that.

L - Yes, yes there are. And that was part of the feast, of course and I had to eat some.

E - Of Course.

L - It was just an unbelievable day. It really was incredible that... all of them just so natural and I was part of it. It was fantastic. I never had such a day, really.

E - Did they roast the corn? or did they make corn tamales?

L - They made like, well normally Navajo fry bread, but it was like a tortilla and I got either in B&W or in color all the different ways they fixed the fire, you see, Here they were putting the corn on the hot coals. It was a fabulous day It really was.

E - It looks like there were a lot of children.

L - Oh yes, there were about 30 all together, the whole family. Just literally the whole family.

E - And it looks like they were dressed up for the occasion.

L - Yes. But I just love this one and ^{then} I have another shot with them and it shows the mummy cave which I can't remember..

E - Yes, they're coming more from a distance, and you can see behind them.

L - Yes.

E - Where is it? You have the Draper Farm photograph from the air you've done that. Or from the rim of the canyon.

L - From the rim of the canyon. Yes, I have done that.

I've got several good things of it.

E - How did you happen to choose to photograph the Draper Farm over the years? It seems like you have quite a few things of it.

L - Well, you're looking down at it from one of the new overlooks. on the north side of the canyon. and it's just down there, this lovely little place. I may have done that after I had been done there and seen them, I ^{just} don't know.

E - Well, some of the earlier photographs, I know were done before these, this last day at Draper Farm, but some of them done from the rim were a different, earlier trip.

L - Yes, I think they were.

E - Who went up to the canyon with you? Was it just you or did the Schultzes go? *or the Joneses?*

L - No, the Joneses were--- Phil had loaned us his four wheel drive jeep.

You know I have a lot of b&w things of all this too and possibly some of the story. *is.*

E - ~~in~~ in the black and whites.

L - What is this one? Is that looking down?

Looking down *from the rim on the farm?*

E - That's.... they're in a pickup truck and one of the ladies. "

L - Oh no. We were coming back down out ~~fox~~ ~~max~~ of the canyon and that's what we saw. *That* really doesn't belong with the series.

E-And the mocassinmaker's not part of this series, is he?

L-No. Phil Schultz was there the day I did the moaccasin maker. That was another day. ^{entirely}.

E- Well, you've often called the Draper farm the "last day at the Draper Farm" so it must have been one of the last days of that particular trip.

L-It must have been the last day of that particular trip.

E-Were these people who were familiar with your book? Did you know or did you have any indication of that? *your book on the Navajo?*

L-I did have at one time up in there. I remember they were... they had a hay beler but it was in under the shade and I was trying to...

E-Oh yes at the alfalfa gathering.

L-finally this man who was running all this, I asked him if I could make some pictures and he said ^{did he say} "yes" would you give these boys a quarter each?" ^{and} I said certainly. then he came over and he said "You don't need to give them a quarter each. I have a copy of your book." He'd been making up his mind whether I was the right one or not, I think.

I've had such funny interplays of things with the Navajo people.

I don't know whether I've told you --- it doesn't relate particularly to this things but --- I was all scheduled to go up to photograph Dr. Frederick Young at Los Alamos and I went in to my file to get the date of another portrait ~~xxxx~~ that had no relation to that, and right next to ~~it~~ it was the envelope which said ["]May 11th 1958 Fred Young, honor student, University of New Mexico." I'd photographed him, intending to use him in the book, but didn't because he had all of his electronic stuff and it just didn't fit with the book so I didn't use it.

And I'd forgotten all about it. ^{that I do} ~~and~~ I took out the negative and I made him a couple of prints

and took them up and all morning he didn't say a word to me-- not a word--but he was very cooperative with anything I wanted to do. That was the day that Mary went up with me and we did that whole series and ~~that~~ ^{that} was a ^{different} series. to do.

And then after lunch... In the morning he was all dressed up in a regular suit.. we went over to his house. I was to photograph ^{his} he had a big print of shiprock over his mantle.

And they wanted that. ~~He~~ And he was suddenly just all Navajo. And then I finally said to him, "Fred I'd like to take you out somewhere ~~where~~ I can get just something of you against a sky or a mountain or something." He went over there and out came ~~his~~ headband and on went his headband and he couldn't have ~~possibly~~ ~~been~~ ~~more~~ Navajo ^{possible}. Here, was this brilliant scientist up at Los Alamos doing all this.

E-Isn't that interesting.

L-Yes, it's terribly interesting. And they use a flash of that on the TV show. there was one ~~shot~~ ^{shot} quick place. The BBC had sent me to do those. And in the film that was on the TV there was just one sudden little quick ~~shot~~ ^{shot} of the still of mine, of his earlier days. But they couldn't, because of security reasons, I suppose, I felt the film lacked what he was doing now. But they couldn't because of security reasons, I suppose.

E-Well, the last day at the Draper Farm was certainly a lovely gesture. that they made for you. It was a great and beautiful ~~gift~~ kind of Navajo gift.

L- It was wonderful. It was a Navajo gift, no question about it. I treasure the memory of that. It was just a beautiful, wonderful day. I've got of both B&W and color.

E- And they let you just go about and photograph [?]

L- Oh yes, anything I wanted to do. The only person that I haven't gotten a good photograph of is Mary Mitchell herself and I've got to get that. because she was the reason for the whole thing. I don't know how I missed it. I got her sister--I got a good portrait of her sister.well, this stirs lots of memories when I look at these.

E- Were you up the canyon most of the day.

L- Certainly we went up in the morning and we didn't get home until late ~~in the~~ ^{in the} afternoon. I'm sure.

It just capped everything about the canyon to me to have that whole episode up there with those people. Now I've gotten to know pretty much most of the people who lived in the canyon. It's like that fellow with the alfalfa baler, he was making up his mind whether I really was the one ~~that~~ ~~who~~ who had done the book, and so forth.

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E-I think it really was and is a beautiful ending to the book as a whole on the Canyonde Chelly.

L-I would love to end it with all this because I think it's really a...of course, the main thing about the canyon is that it's been inhabited for two thousand years. But aside from that, the Navajo have been there only about two hundred, you know., but then, that's quite a while, after all. The Hopis were in for a little while and that's where the peach trees came from. A priest from the Hopi Reserv. planted them, was the one who started those peach trees up in there.

E-Were those the ones that Kit Carson later burned or something or was that a different story?

L-Let's see. Well, that's a different story I guess. Of course he was sent over there to round them up and take them on the long walk as they still call it. A lot of them hid up on that rock. What is it?...oh dear. ~~that~~ there's one rock that you can get up on the back side of it. ~~There's~~ ^{where} hadn and footholds.

E-Fortress Rock?

L-That's right. ^{it was} Fortress rock. There were a lot of them that hid there. And ^{new} of course they couldn't round up everybody out of those canyons. There were plenty of places to hide. And so that when they finally came back from the long walk, what was left of them, ~~they~~ ^{these} some of the ones who had escaped shared their sheep with the ones who were coming back.

L- I did this to show... that is a bucket without any bottom ^{to} ~~in~~ it. The water just filters through the sand ~~xxx~~ and that's where this particular family got their drinking water.

E-So they'd take a bucket without any bottom and they'd push it down in the sand?

L-Push it down in the sand. and that's how close the water can be to the surface. Sometimes of course it comes up on top and sometimes it doesn't.

This particular day the wonderful feeling was the relaxation of the older people who are usually, you know, so reserved.

E-Yes, all the photographs there's a beautiful warmth and friendliness about them.

L-yes. wll it was certainly there.

E-I remember the day I was having lunch here and one of the

young women that you had photographed in the book doing some job had come by with her... she had two little boys with her. And she stayed in the dining room to speak with you and I went off in the living room with one of the little boys that was very shy and he would hardly talk. Then he said "Do you know the book?" I said, "Yes, I do." He said "My mother's in it." I said "Would you show me where?" He knew exactly which page it was on, where she was.

L-Really?

E- Uhuh. He was so proud of it.

L-Isn't that nice? Well, of course the whole point is that well, of course I did that book from their point of view--- that's the whole point. ~~And~~ they see the difference. I ~~had~~ had an older Navajo come in here one day---a man ^{about} in his thirties I should say, and he'd never seen the book and he wanted to see the book and he went through every page and ~~um~~ ^{so} they like it and I don't care about any other part of it.

E-Well, that is important.

How do you feel that this book on the canyon is diff. from that book?

L-I don't think ~~that~~ it's particularly diff. except that it's a place and of course the thing about the canyon that is so extraordinary, ~~in~~ of course there's been a great deal of erosion that's gone on, but it's the perpendicular quality of that canyon, like no other canyon that I know of in this country. Grand Canyon steps back ~~at~~ ^{with} mesa. Canyon de Chelly is just this abruptness and I have that in that color slide, that big color print.

E-Oh, you have ~~that~~ in lots of photographs of beautiful sheer rock walls.

L-Yes, yes. Well, I've tried to get that quality and hold it and heavens, I've got more stuff that I haven't printed yet. More than enough, you know, ^{because} in b&w. But it was wonderful this day. ^{because} This was the man whose little wife I had photographed.

E-Oh, I see. That's the husband of the woman with the loom.

L- Yes, that must have been the next year you see. I suppose after her death. ~~that~~ my memory now is very difficult on remembering year by year.

E-Well, I think I like this section particularly ~~part~~ of it in color, because the beautiful shirts and the skirts seem so appropriate somehow to the canyon and the color of the walls and

the way things are.

L-Yes, ~~that's true~~. I think they do, I think they do. Well, I've got lots of ~~val~~ larger color things too, but that was a day I'll never forget because it just summed it all up.

E-How did it, in a way, sum it all up for you? I have that same feeling too but it's kind of ~~difficult~~ ^{hard} to put into ² words.

L-It is hard to put in words. Well, it was just that I ~~was~~ accepted by them, I think, as much as anything else, as somebody that understood them. I don't know whether I could put my hands on it right now, but ~~I've~~ ^{I've} had the most lovely little note from Fred Young. The night that Will Clift's and my show opened up in Los Alamos I ~~was~~ ^{was} up there for it and Fred was there, to my surprise. I just didn't expect him to show up. But he was and I wrote him a note and thanked him for coming and so forth and I will have to find this little note, because I've saved it I know, ~~it was~~ ^{expressed it, they could just} about, well, ~~now he just wanted to put in words~~ ^{that was what he wanted to say} what I put into pictures, ~~and~~ ^{it was very touching, really.}

E-I thi k one of the nice things about ending with the at the Draper Farm is that, particularly ^{with} the way your photographed over the years, you have a lot of the canyon as a place but it's ^{it's} a lot af photographers shy away from trying to include a sense of the people ~~that~~ ^{that} live in that place. ^{How important it is...}

L-Have you heard what Richard Avedon is doing?

E-~~He's here now?~~ No

L-~~Yes, he's around~~ He's here, you know.

E-In Santa FE?

L-Yes, he's around, somewhere. I don't expect him to come to see me but he's got a big van and ~~xx~~ everything and he's going to photogrpah the Indians. And he has this and he takes it out. He's got a huge white sheet and he stands them up in front of that and phtographs them. And I suppose they...he's paying them very well or they wouldn't do it, you know.

L-laughter.....

E-Well, I guess that's one of doing it. B,,t the thing that intrigues me is that in the photographs that you have of the people in the canyon, you have such a strong sense that those people...there's

just a rightness about them in the landscape.

L-They belong there, they belong there. Of course, they belong there.

EX In this series I don't have any of Alice ^{Navajo} Yantzee down at Standing Cow. and of course I've done a lot of things with her.

E-And even Nesbit Jake in the buckboard coming along ^{in the canyon.} It's a beautiful series.

EX L- Yes, yes.

E-And the woman herding the sheep that day in her red skirt, the sheep and the goats going over the hills.

L- Yes.

E-And the truck getting stuck in the wash. That's a wonderful little series of photographs.

L-I've got one of Johnny digging it out. Digging one of those big things out. And then I've got the series ~~ended~~ of them here of course-- the day Mr. Benawise ((SPELLING)) who was at that time Superintendent of the National Monument, took me up to a rock called Newspaper Rock, which is right at a bend of the canyon. Now the canyon was running, oh, at least two feet of water that day and on the side that we were, this whole rock was just covered with petroglyphs. I was photographing quite a few of those and then all of a sudden I heard this CHUG CHUG and this tractor came along with a Navajo driving. It was the first tractor owned by a Navajo going up the canyon. And he went across without any difficulty, ~~it~~ went ^{across} in the water. Then there was a truck with about ten Navajo in it following him and they immediately got stuck. So he turned around and tried to pull them out and pulling from that end just made the back end of the truck go down deeper and deeper and then the thing that was fun to me was to watch all this. And I was right there with a long lens on my camera anyhow. And I got all this, ~~the~~ ^{the} whole business of getting them out of the water there. Most white people would have been ~~just~~ furious with themselves for getting stuck but the Navajos were just having fun out of the whole situation. It was fun.

E-^{It was fun} Delightful and funny.

L-Yes.

(11)

L-And then finally Mr. Benawise, we were in one of his big trucks with a winch on the front, and he hooked on to the back of the truck and pulled it back. And then, when they got all the Navajos out of the truck, the driver speeded it up and he made it across without getting stuck again.

E-How did the Navajo come to be in Canyon De Chelly? Do you know?

L-well, when they first came down into this part of the country, they came down over around where Navajo Lake is now. That was where they first really began to weave. I don't believe--- Corky doesn't either, Corky Jones---we think that they knew how to weave before they came down here, because they did not copy the kind of loom that the pueblos were using. Which if they hadn't known how to weave before, they wouldn't have done that.

At least I don't think they would, it doesn't make sense. Then they just sort of drifted west, and they ended up over there in the canyon area. And of course all along the checkerboard area, still lots of them there. Thousands of them really. And they're not on the reservation land and they're not on... Well, they're ⁱⁿ just sort of ~~an~~ an isolated pocket that doesn't belong to anybody that has any jurisdiction over them.

E-Who had lived in the Canyon before the Hopi?

L-Before the Hopi? Oh, it goes back to cliff dweller times, you know. From about the beginning of the first century. or second century. Because Earl Marris ((?)) when he did the archaeology in Mummy Cave found all sorts of things and then down at Big Cave, which is not very far below where Mummy Cave is, he found a very important site there with all sorts of artifacts and stuff in there.

That was one thing that I went up to Boulder to photograph. I've got photographs of a lot of the stuff that came out of that cave.

E-And the beautiful moccasins.

L-Yes, those wonderful moccasins. Good for you for remembering them. For the moment I'd forgotten ^{about} them. Yes, they were wonderful. Pattern on the underside so ~~that~~ they could be trailed....(chuckle)

E-Isn't it ingenious? It's very sophisticated weaving, also.

L-Oh very. It's beautiful, beautiful.

E- There's a book on southwestern baskets done by a person from ~~the University of~~ ^{the} southwestern arizona and she has several examples of that kind of

moccasin that were woven. I think, as you say, they're almost 2000 years old.

L-Yes, they are. There are all sorts of things in that cave. I've got prints of them somewhere. It certainly fills me with a lot of memories when I look at that whole bunch of slides there on the lighttable.

E-Well, that last day at the Draper Farm seems like such an important event and such a nice completion to a very long project.

L-It was a very important episode in my life, I know that. And I just cherish the memory of it.

E-When you first started photographing the canyon you have a great many things from the air. Did you photograph mostly from the air, or both?

L-I've only flown over it twice. The trouble is that I don't know where lots of the places are that I've photographed. Now I'll tell you who was here recently was David deHarport(?) from Denver and he had lived in the Canyon for seven years and he identified a great many places for me and he wrote on the back of the prints that are over in the gallery. So I've got that, his notes there on the back of that.

E-I think we have it, maybe on another piece of tape, you had spoken about how when you were young you remember a photograph of Curtis's that hung over the mantelpiece.

L- Oh yes, and I know it influenced me. My father had been down in this country somewhere, probably Colorado, and he came back with this big print. It was at least 24 or 36 inches wide and it was the famous Curtis one with the seven Navajo in the foreground and we had it over our mantelpiece for years and years. And I found an old picture in an old Kodak book of our ranch house over on the western slope in Colorado and here was that picture on the wall over there. So, it just was always there. I don't know whether those things influence you or not, but I sort of think they do. ...but, no, I've only flown it twice. E-Why did you ^{actually} start the Canyon de Chelly as a project? How did that come about?

L-Well, Dr. Schultz was instrumental in that. He was a doctor over there --which place was it on the reservation?-- and Mrs. Schultz was a nurse over there. They were there four or five years and so he got to know the Navajo very well.

And it was through the School of American REsearch that they gave me a grant to do a book on it, which is not quite completed yet, but I hope soon will be.

E-Well, you photographed a number of years on that project, didn't you?

L-Yes, but I had done things before. I'd done things up in the canyon and I'd done things from the rim.

E-You have some things from 1932 or ^{around} there, I think. One or two that you'd taken early on.

L-Maybe I have. I didn't realize there was any that early.

E-Well, I'll check it. You had made some early photographs of White House, hadn't you?

L-Yes, oh yes. Everybody photographed it. I was there the first time in 1930--you brought that to mind, right now--- and that was the trip that Betsy and I went down across Utah to the north rim of the Grand Canyon. That was the year that the bridge had been built across. And we crossed the bridge and we got to Kayenta and those were years when gasoline ^{down} on the highway was 15¢ ^{a gallon} and it was 50¢ at Kayenta. That bothered me very much and I looked at my tank and I said well, I've got plenty to go 72 miles and then we got lost and got off the road and drove around and finally ran out of gasoline and that was when I took the ten mile hike to get gasoline. Oh dear, mercy. I made her stay in the car in case another car came along and that was what got her interested in the Navajo people because when I finally came back -- the trader's wife took me back to where the car was--- ^{we came over the hill and} here was this little old Buick. And here she was sitting on a rug playing a form of gin rummy with ^{this} whole bunch of Navajos. One came along who spoke English and he gave her all the news. And then it was the next year that she was offered a job as a visiting nurse out on the reservation.

E-Do you suppose it was as a result of...?

L-Oh, yes, definitely it was a result of that. That was what that was all about.

E-You must have been surprised when you came back.

L-~~WELL~~, Oh, I didn't know what in the world to expect, but one finally came along who spoke English and he gave her all the news.

(11)

When I left her it looked as though you could see about a hundred miles. Well, it probably wasn't more than 30 or 40, but anyway, it looked a very long way. There wasn't a hogan, ~~xx~~ there wasn't a sheepherder with a flock of sheep, or anything, there was nothing visible. So that was why I felt ^{that} I had to do something about getting ~~myself~~ lost.

E-Well, how did you know where the trading post was?

L- I didn't.

E-Well, did you just strike off in any one of 360 degrees?

L-No, I did know where Cosimicharran((??)) was at Chinle. That's where we were headed for. There was a Navajo man in a wagon with a little boy came up to me and I tried to get him to take me to Chinle. But ~~h~~ he wouldn't do it. But he reached around under a canvas and gave me three wonderful peaches that he'd just gotten at Chinle. And then he went on and when he got up to where Betsy was, he just stayed to see that everything came out all right. And you know, they were coming to help and see what they could do.

E-It's interesting how they know you're there.

L-That's just the extraordinary thing. You don't know where they are and they know very well where you are. They certainly do.

E-That's almost like the time you lost that lens, and how they knew that. So that's one of the first times...Did you go to the canyon on that trip in 1930?

L- Well, that's where we were headed, you see. And we went up as far as the White House in a horse and wagon, in 1930. And I did the same old shot that everyone's done from ^oSullivan down but I did do one from the other side. From the back, which is different from the others. So much of the ruin ~~was~~ that was on the ground has just gone, and then the park service when they took over, they stabilized that by planting trees along there.

E-The cottonwoods that are there now?

L-Yes.

E-So those weren't there when you first went?

L-No. ...I have a new print of Antelope House looking down on it from that new thing out there. I don't know whether I've shown you that or not. I guess maybe ^{not} I haven't ~~g~~ a good black and white print of it.