

Gregory, H. E.

U. S. Geological Survey

Water Supply Paper 380

Washington - Government Printing Office 1916

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"Canyon De Chelly - a wagon is the way to go"

Arizona Highways, April, 1959, page 10 - 28

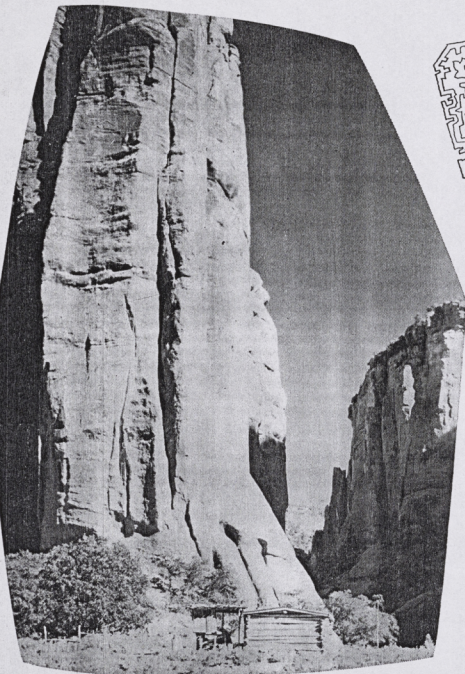
PHOTOGRAPHY:
WAYNE DAVIS

CANYON DE CHELLY

... a wagon is the way to go...

by EVELYN BRACK MEASELES

Phil Draper's place—Canyon del Muerto

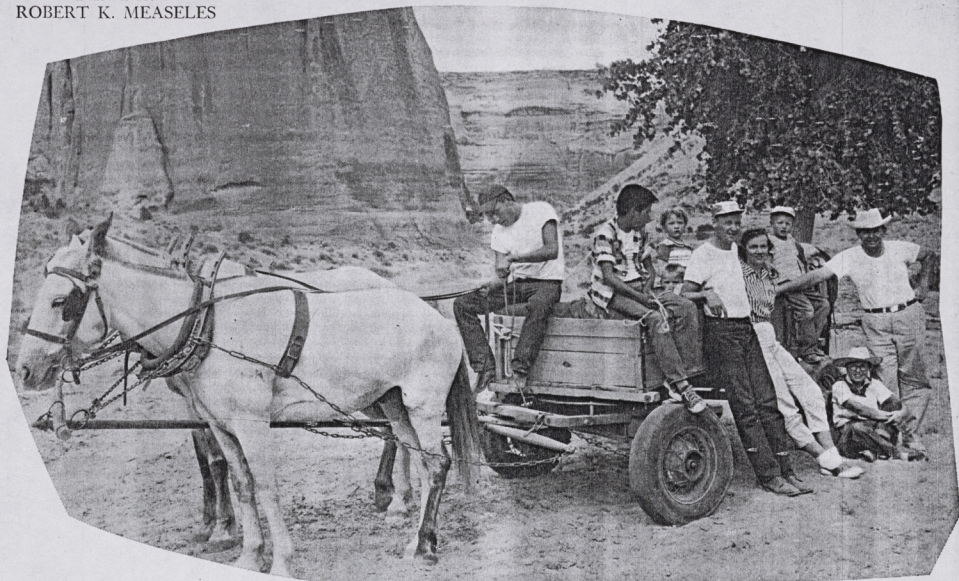


From high in the Kaibab Plateau, from the country of cloud-shadowed mesas to the place of the hidden desert, Arizona is a land of canyons. One of these is the Grand, others take their names from descriptive phrasing like the Marble and the Oak Creek, and some from the legends of time forgot like the Ghost of Blue Canyon.

De Chelly is a canyon. It is different. Its name neither tells a story nor describes its beauty. Like the others it has its share of dignity, grandeur, splendor, but it also stands separate and apart, for within the chiseled features of its passage was left something of the history of man. Wherever you find his story there must be with it also something of his spirit; so it is here and we have followed its narrow paths and listened to the stories of its people and have been rewarded.

Some few of us who live here at Chinle in the northeastern part of the Navajo Reservation feel the summers well worth the isolation of winter, for with spring comes talk of the canyon. Have the Indians gone in yet? Are the peach trees in blossom? Are the cottonwoods out? How is the wash? When are they going to throw off jetty poles? Relatively dull! How wrong you are, for the canyon has become for us, as for the Indian people who live there, a way of life. There corn and peaches thrive; sheep graze with pastoral contentment in quiet clumps of trees; children leave from these ancient hemmed in walls and go to school in places far away and remember the way the sun shifts on the red sandstone walls . . . how the wind flutters the cottonwood leaves . . . or hear again the resounding voice of a solitary horseman as he rides

DRAWINGS:
ROBERT K. MEASELES



By Wagon through Canyon de Chelly



down the canyon, his voice a giant echo off the great walls. Medicine men hold sings for the sick here and life is leisurely and wonderfully peaceful. No stranger enters but he must go out the way he came and the canyon remains secure and unchanged for those who come after and for the few Navajos, those fortunate ones, who can stay forever.

These things, both known and felt, these intangibles, we share with people from places near and distant. In the depths of winter when summer is only a spoken word and the companionable fires of homes have replaced the campfire of some canyon rim or mesa top, we reminisce of camp days almost forgotten and plan ventures yet to come.

On such a night last winter we were visited by the Wayne Davises of St. Johns. We talked of the past summer and trips made and thought of. With the Davises we share a keen appreciation of the delights of camping though we have one wide divergency. Wayne and Esther are mountain campers; living close to the White Mountains as they do, they prefer running water, tall trees, grasses and mountain greenery. We are the desert nomads, hold-

ing that shifting dunes, canyon walls, long shadows and rugged barren mesas are the true wonders of nature. New to this country six years ago, we learned quickly from the words of Joseph Wood Krutch, another convert to Arizona, that the only thing little about the desert is the man who enters it without respect.

Wayne and Esther had been up Canyon de Chelly with us in October and both were intrigued with it. As we talked of the canyon, savoring again the autumn venture, we planned yet another trip and this time we thought of a wagon as the way to go. Leisurely, slow-paced, open as the sky, it would be one of the "old ways." We thought of Chauncey Neboyia as the one who could arrange it for us . . . Chauncey who can put quarters on moccasins so they will stay forever, who is a canyon Indian himself and who says so proudly like it is royalty he speaks of, and who knows the canyon trails and history as one always knows a thing well loved.

And so we made it happen.

Out of the Cottonwoods came Chauncey. With Navajo disdain for premade plans, he announced he would accompany us only part way; his brother Francis Yazzie would be the wagon driver for the remainder of the trip and another brother, a younger one would go along for company. This brother, his name was Don, is one of the young Navajos, who stay only the summers on the reservation and spend the winters in Holbrook going to school.

The entrance to the canyon is not impressive: The walls are low and the floor is wide here; sand stretches from the rock cliffs on one side to the rock cliffs on the other. Invitingly beyond, you see the walls rising progressively higher. On the floor Russian olive trees grow luxuriantly, planted there as protection against erosion, and native cottonwoods are plentiful. A wishing pile is silhouetted against the sky across the canyon to the north and a hogan is built on the rocks there overlooking the entrance. The rich reds of the canyon walls, made richer still by the striking sun and shifting shadows, are exciting.

Cut into the western slope of the Tunicha mountains by several small streams which combine near Washington Pass and flow in a westerly direction, the position of Canyon de Chelly is in the center of the ancient pueblo region. That is, it is northwest of old Cibola, the modern Zuñi, a little north and northeast of the old villages of Tusayan, now Hopi. The great Chaco ruin lies directly to the east and the ruins of the San Juan are northward. This canyon could have been a resting place for a migratory movement in any direction.

This name of de Chelly sometimes gives visitors a start by its pronunciation of *Shay*. The name is known to have been used before 1849 and is of Indian origin, probably being derived from the Navajo name of the place, Tsegi.

De Chelly is located in mesa country. The great, hulking, shadowed Black Mountain looks down on it from the southwest; it is also the place of the red earth smeared with greys and ochres which most call the painted desert but geologists know as the Chinle formation, but mostly it is the place of conspicuous bright red sandstone: the canyon itself.

The canyon floor was sandy, the kind that is dry and deep. Even by wagon, travel was not easy. It is said that the canyon has two seasons . . . dry and deep and wet and deep. The only divergency from these two is

more of the same. Whiskey Creek sources above Twin Star Buttes and meanders down to Wheatfields and thence into the canyon of de Chelly. High above Tsailee the creek bearing the same name courses its way down the mountain and finds its way through Canyon del Muerto. From these sources water moves into the Chinle Valley some fifty miles away. Thus the floor varies from a veritable river at some seasons to a thick dry sand at others. When dry it is deep and loose, a burnt white color; when wet it is a dark brown ochre. Canyon travel is never a luxurious dalliance. That is, travelers cannot stop just to be leisurely wherever their fancy dictates or it is likely they will be digging out when ready to start again. We have dug out of both quicksand and thick, churning dry sand within three days of each other and I have heard folks claim it happened to them at one and the same time. A friend of ours in a similar condition once remarked that it made no difference if he didn't get out of the mud for when it dried up, he would be stuck in the sand anyway. The canyon traveler is in the same predicament.

The Park Service does not assume risk for vehicles traveling in the canyon; in fact unless you have a four-wheel drive, canyon travel is discouraged. It is not getting stuck in the sand that is so fearsome, for even trucks do not sink from sight in a quicksand bog. It is a head of water coming down the wash from heavy rains in the mountains, of which the unwary traveler may know nothing, that can be disastrous. Sand and water flow through the car, it sinks ever lower and even though it can perhaps later be pulled from the canyon itself, it is impossible to rid the engine of the sand and water accumulation. Several cars and trucks have been lost in such a way since we have lived here. It was not only the novice who was caught; experienced canyon drivers have been in perilous circumstances, too.

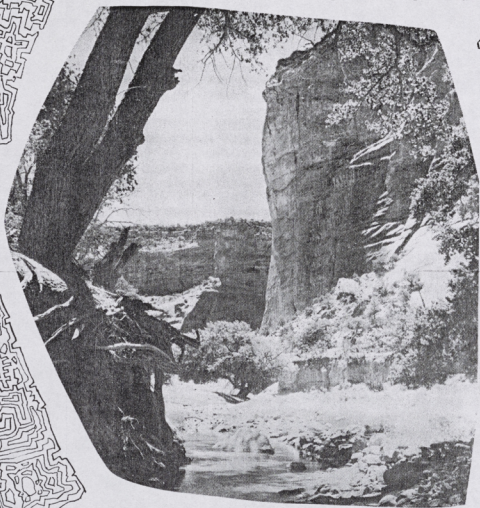
The canyon roadway is not always in the wash though it appears so from the rim. Veering back and forth, it is sometimes found in the cooling shade of the walls. This shade is such a contrast to the sun of the wash that one feels cloistered from the world he left only a few moments ago. Even here though the traveler must yield his shaded roadway, for just beyond the shadows there is always the brightness of the sun. The shade of these walls is criss-crossed by areas of cottonwoods, their green accentuating the intensity of color. This color changes with the seasons: should it be spring a faint tinge of green is caught against vermilion sandstone walls alive in a bright April sun; summer will show small islands of deep green cottonwoods against the sand of the canyon floor, enriched by the red of rampant walls and a deep blue sky; in fall the golden cottonwoods along the sculptured surface trap colors varying from bright orange to deep warm browns. No matter what the season one has the urge to stop and drink deep of the wonders of nature.

The canyon walls are of sandstone. Of porous texture, they are a natural collector of water. They weep slowly and the root stained water leaves abstract patterns on the sweeping curves and the vertical surfaces of the canyon. Aside from the Navajos themselves, it is these beautiful and strikingly abstract patterns which entrance artist and photographer alike. These bold, black vertical lines make us aware that long before man chose his brush and paint pots, nature was the great designer.

It is approximately six miles from the canyon entrance to the junction. At this point the wash diverges to form



Spider and Speaking Rock—Canyon de Chelly



*In Canyon del Muerto
Sunlight and autumn—Canyon del Muerto*

two canyons of great height and extreme narrowness: de Chelly is due east and del Muerto lies to the northeast toward Tsailee Butte.

Junction has a wideness not felt at many places in the canyon. From the rim overlook it is actually rather hard to see del Muerto forking into it. Here are good examples of the so called petrified sand dunes. One of the conceptions of how the canyon was laid down geologically includes the submerging of sand dunes in water, thus cementing the wind stratified layers of sand. Their design is one of concentric patterns. When standing alone they appear much like the old style domed bee hive.

Just before junction we saw our first full size ruin. It is like a landmark. Here the walls are about six hundred feet high with the ruins approximately one hundred feet up in a wind-hollowed crevice. The canyon wall is bounded at the bottom by sand dunes blown into crescent patterns by the spring winds.

Much like the child who always saves the best-liked gum drop to the last, we cast our eyes only momentarily at Canyon del Muerto looming in from the northeast and continued on up Canyon de Chelly. This canyon is generally harder to travel in than del Muerto. The sand is thicker and it always seems especially so right at the junction. We had to scramble off as the horses strained and pulled to get the wagon through. Horses are the Indian's pride and we were amazed at the strength and endurance of the animals. By canyon standards a good horse is not necessarily the one which can run the fastest; a horse that can pull well in the sand is also prized.

This wagon in which we rode was a true composite: body by Indiana, the trade name of practically all wagons on the reservation, axles by Ford, tires by Goodyear and seat springs by Chevrolet. The Navajos are quite artful in taking a little bit of this and that and creating a rubber-tired affair of some quality. No offense to Goodyear certainly, for you could see the cords on which the rubber was vulcanized, but we had tire leaks before junction. Francis had a hand pump and, fortunately, strong arms. He and young Don took turns and pumped and pumped and pumped until we could go again.

The first major ruin in Canyon de Chelly is seven miles from the mouth of the canyon and is the well known White House, the Navajo *Kini-na e-Kai*. This ruin can be seen by taking the rim drive to White House overlook. For those who want a touch of the canyon proper, there is an excellent trail, well maintained by the Park Service, one may take to the canyon floor and proceed to the ruin itself across the wash. The first written mention of this ruin was in 1849 when a detachment of troops came out from Santa Fe. In the company was a Lieutenant J. H. Simpson, a topographical engineer who also had the capacity for investigation and the genius for detailed observation. This expedition camped in the Chinle Valley and Lieutenant Simpson made a side trip into the canyon. In his notes he mentioned ruins at several points but described in detail the Casa Blanca which later became the White House.

This ruin consists of two distinct elevations: a lower portion which is now only a large cluster of standing walls on the bottom land of the wash and an upper part which occupies a cave directly over the lower section. Separating the two are some thirty feet of vertical cliff. However, during the period when the houses were occupied, access to the upper ruin is believed to have been

through a passageway or door in the center of the ruin and directly over the part where the lower village was four stories high; then the cave floor would have been less than four feet from the roof of the lower building. It is the upper portion which has given the ruin its name, for the main or principal room, situated near the center of the cave, is covered with a wash of white clay which has remained to this day a startling contrast with the shadowed recess that surrounds it. It sets there like a boxed jewel, a challenge to photographers and to those who make impressions with brush and paints. The lower ruin is now fronted with cottonwoods, Chinese elm and sand willows placed there by the Park Service and Branch of Land Operations in an effort to stabilize the wash and divert it from the lower buildings.

This walk to White House affords the visitor not only an exhilarating climb but a glance at one of the most striking reminders of the pueblo past. In addition there is at the bottom of the path a hogan, an Indian dwelling of the native type. This is in turn surrounded by a farm site such as those seen throughout the canyon.

After harvest season the canyon belongs again to the spirit of the Basketmakers and the Pueblo people, for the canyon is abandoned by the Navajos. They drive their sheep up steep trails to the topside and there they dwell for the winter months around the settlement of del Muerto or scatter themselves along the vast irregular rim of Canyon de Chelly.

At Chauncey's camp we built a fire and cooked our meal in aluminum foil. The guides thought such an innovation was strictly grand.

From Chauncey's place it is only a little way to the beautifully named Cherry Orchard Canyon. We have always meant to explore it but our efforts have been limited by time to only a short distance within the entrance. This side canyon was perhaps well populated at one time for there are evidences of a one time agricultural abundance. The petroglyphs on the canyon wall are large and different, stick figures of red and yellow with a semblance of feathers in their hair. There is also a surface ruin of some size. The view from Cherry Orchard looking up de Chelly reveals the full impact of the canyon, stressing high vertical walls, beautifully chiseled sweeps and curves with the wash a river of sand, confined always by the bare rock cliffs whose sides are almost plumb.

And so we came to dynamic, spectacular Spider Rock. Square based, jutting, it rises to a height of some eight hundred feet. The top surface is so small in comparison to the mammoth base that the rock actually looks taller than it is. We camped where we could get a view of both Speaking and Spider Rock. We like the looming massiveness of both of these much photographed and well known landmarks of de Chelly. Speaking Rock is across the canyon from Spider Rock. It takes its name from the uppermost part which can, if your imagination is wildly working, resemble the head, its mouth open as though about to speak.

It was cloudy, dark angry clouds hung heavily over Spider Rock and the campfire felt good. Having always hankered after the life of a pioneer, I hastily did an about face after only one day on a wagon. If I said that this night we tarried long and drank deep of the wonders of the canyon after dark it would be a gross overstatement. After camp clean up, we followed the children to bed in short order.



Three Turkey Ruins in Narrow Canyon

Sunrise in the canyon is beautiful. The sun picks up one highlight and then another until the canyon is full of warmth and sun. We were thankful that we were hearty campers and active hikers for sore and aching muscles had been dispelled by a good night's sleep and we were ravenous.

The ride back from Spider Rock to Junction does

not seem so far as the trip up. We looked forward to the turn into Canyon del Muerto. It is strange the way we who live here get to be about the canyon. We are zealous in our preferences of a certain curve, a particularly high wall, a special petroglyph. We avidly proclaim the features of our favorites, pointing out its outstanding virtues, its certain beauties. No one of us ever convinces

the other that his is not the perfect one but it gives zest to our reminiscing and our talk of the canyon. We have our favorites too, though seemingly we have chosen the whole of Canyon del Muerto to be our own. We know many of the Indians here, we eat from their apple orchards in the fall, from them we buy blue corn to rack over peeled cottonwood poles for decoration. For us this canyon has a more personal quality. The towering walls are closer together, undercut and jutting so that the sky seems to be only a cobalt blue thread tying them together. We feel comfortable here, we know the way. It is not that the canyons are so different, it is only that they seem so to us. As I have said, other devotees feel equally strong about Canyon de Chelly.

Canyon del Muerto comes into Canyon de Chelly from the northeast. Shortly after the turn there is a seep where Francis watered the horses.

All refreshed, both man and beast, we started on our way again. Up the canyon we saw more and more ruins. The children were keen and perceiving now and shrilled and pointed as each new ruin appeared. Each time we are in this canyon we sense that it was indeed not the ancestral home of the Navajo but was for many hundreds of years the dwelling place of a pueblo people. The evidence is everywhere. It is said that in Canyon de Chelly and its branches there are more than 300 prehistoric sites and 138 major ruins. Of these, Canyon del Muerto has more than its share of a civilization that existed before Columbus, the Battle of Hastings and Roanoke. Most of these ruins are within wind hollowed caves set back in the sandstone walls, the caves having formed some sort of protection for the ruins for these many years. Some of the ruins too are on high projecting rocks. The climatic conditions and the great wind hollowed caves of the canyon are unexcelled for the preservation of ancient walls and fragile pots and baskets. Many of the ruins are believed to have been outlooks or farming villages and occupied only during times of stress or during the farming season, as these ruins are without kivas. Kivas are sacred chambers in which the religious (and perhaps civic) affairs of the people were conducted. It is believed that only when a village became permanent were these constructed. The kivas found in Canyon de Chelly and Canyon del Muerto are all circular. It is also assumed that principally an area of cultivable land determined the location of these outlooks and villages.

The Spanish gave this canyon its name. They had come here early, looked on the land and gone away to create the sturdy outpost of Albuquerque, the stronghold of Santa Fe and to mingle with the pueblos of the Rio Grande. But they remembered the land to the west and in the land to the west the redman remembered them. They remembered the horses and the armor that arrows found hard to pierce and they remembered the men who sang strange songs and who wore flowing purple robes with crosses upon them and this that they remembered they painted on the canyon walls at the ruin of the Standing Cow. In time the redman stole horses from these, the men from Mexico and the horses flourished and the redman learned to ride so that he and the horse were one and they took sheep also and the sheep flourished and now they did not hunt in vain for food. With the horse the redman developed a new concept of war . . . that of the raid . . . and he was quick and savage with it as men always are with war.

COLOR PORTFOLIO

CANYON DE CHELLEY CANYON DEL MUERTO

BY

WAYNE DAVIS

The color photographs in the following portfolio have been selected from several hundred taken by Photographer Wayne Davis on three long visits to the Canyon de Chelly National Monument area within the past two years. "To me the area," the photographer says, "is one of the most interesting I have ever tried to photograph. I visited there during spring, summer and autumn. The canyons dramatically reflect each season. Autumn is especially delightful because you not only have the towering canyon walls but vivid autumn color in the trees and vegetation on the canyons' floor. The colorful Navajos and their small farms, the many ancient ruins in burnished cliffs, the sand and water, sky and cloud make the area a photographer's dream." The photographs were taken with a 435 Graphic 11 camera, and exposed on Ektachrome. The photograph on the opposite page shows Antelope House in Canyon del Muerto with a Navajo summer dwelling in the foreground. The photograph on the last page of the portfolio shows Mummy House in Canyon del Muerto.

In retaliation for these raids there came to this country of canyons and badlands a young Spanish soldier, a lieutenant named Chagon. He reined his horse on the brink of a certain canyon and peered down into its seemingly peaceful depths. He knew this was the place, the stronghold of the Apache de Navaeau, canyon Tsegi, their canyon in the rocks. He saw that he was overlooking the junction where the canyon split and he thought to reconnoiter the left fork for an encounter with the marauding Apache de Navaeau. It was there he led his men. Before he left that canyon the old people, the women and the children, a part of the tribe who later became the Navajos, were dead. Remembering those they had killed there the Spanish called it Canyon del Muerto, Canyon of Death. For the Navajos it was a dark time, but the world far to the east knew it only as the year of 1804 and they wondered not of this canyon and its people but of Lewis and Clark, who were traversing the country westward to the Pacific. Thus this canyon, known for years to Indians, mountain men and Spanish conquerors as the "other canyon," became separate from the one called de Chelly though sharing with it a common canyon entry.

The first well known and major ruin of Canyon del Muerto is Antelope House, a canyon floor ruin. It was built hard against a towering overhanging wall and is believed to have been one of the larger dwelling places of the early canyon people. Prior to the establishment of the canyon as a national monument the wash eddied around the base of the ruin and much of it crumbled and washed away though the overhang did afford it some protection. Antelope still has a few towering walls of beautiful craftsmanship. They stand erect, prominent and proud against the sandstone wall. The ruin takes its name from a procession of antelope painted on the flat cliff wall to the left of the remaining ruin. They are beautifully rendered in earth colors, blending in with the canyon

wall so well that those unaware of their existence would surely pass them by. There are four of them, all near life size. Their bodies are painted a rich sienna, they have white rumps, throats and bellies. Three have white antlers, one has the same body coloring but a black face and black antlers. It is said that in those early years of 1800 there were many antelope in the Chinle Valley so the artist probably had plenty of opportunities for observing the antelope. There are other petroglyphs on the wall too but the antelope take precedence for their beautiful craftsmanship.

These antelope are allegedly the superb artistry of "Little Lamb," a young Navajo medicine man who had great facility for healing those who were "sick in their heads" by the power of his prayer. The petroglyphs were supposedly painted in 1804 just shortly after the Spanish massacre of the Navajo people which gave the canyon its name. One can still see the narrow ledge he used as his artist's scaffold. Further up the wash are scooped out toe holds he may have used to climb to his rock canvas.

Across the wash from Antelope House is a great hollowed out cave known as Battle Cove, so named by Earl and Ann Axtell Morris in their archaeological digging there in 1929. It is appropriately named for it was the scene of a prehistoric massacre sometime back in the aeons of time. The besiegers attacked from below, established their line of offense and, gaining the heights, committed savage murder with heavy stone axes. Apparently none of the inhabitants were spared, not even babies and young children. The victims were left and their bleached bones buried only when the cave was occupied by the next set of dwellers.

It was at Battle Cove that the Morris discovered the now famous "Weaver," who has since found repose in the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The "Weaver" was an excellent mummy wrapped in a feather cloth blanket made wholly from the downy breast feathers of the golden eagle. The pit inside which the mummy was found was empty of earth and rock as it had been protected by a pole and matting covering and as such was an exceptional find. Inside the outer feather blanket were two largish sheets of spun and woven cotton. It was the first cloth of this size and quality that had been found, though fragments had been located in previous digging. With the mummy was an implement of the weaver's craft, the spindle whorl. The mummy bundle was cat cradled with over three miles of spun yarn, and with the body were many excellent baskets and bowls, some filled with food.

From Antelope it is only a short distance, about two miles, to the ruin of the Standing Cow. This ruin is noted for the beauty of the petroglyphs as well as the number that grace the wall. It is now only a surface ruin and its remaining storage bins and pits are still used by the Indians who live there. These Navajos, the family of Crooked Neck, a maker of mocassins of fine quality, are the only canyon Indians to live in such close proximity to a ruin. Crooked Neck always has a largish field of corn with melons and squash vines intertwining among the corn stalks. To the visitor, used to row crop farming, it is intriguing to see the corn growing in barrel-like clumps.

The ruin's name comes from the painting of a blue headed, square rumped cow with a gorgeous pair of black tipped, upright horns. To the right and below stands a small white calf. Then there are the large circles or rather

a series of circles, four altogether, painted up a ledge that looks accessible until one tries it. It is almost an optical illusion, as about half way up to the circles the ledge turns outward and only those braver and more agile than I would attempt it. These circles appear at one place and another throughout the canyon but nowhere are they more beautifully depicted than here. Of the four circles, two are concentric, having five circles one inside the other and look like bullseyes, one is a sort of half circle with the inside filled with yellow, the fourth is a smaller circle which has inside rings with shapes that look like hands groping out from its sides. What do they mean? What message was left for us here? I have heard some say that they are the Indian sign for eternal life, others say they have no meaning except for the ones who painted them there, but all those who see them go away with their own impressions, their own expressions of what they mean, for the circle in its form is powerfully designed, always eternal, and these are massive and boldly presented. Probably the most well known of these petroglyphs is the mural of the marching conquistadores. The artist who depicted the band of marching warriors had perceiving eyes and a good sense of form and proportion. The horsemen are hatted, ride white horses and carry spears. With them is the purple robed priest who has the Christian cross on his robe. This mural has depth even on the flat wall surface, as there are smaller horses and horsemen around the main group. Our favorite at this place of so many favorites is one that is fading. Barely perceptible, the color worn, is a solitary horseman on a blue horse. He wears a red tunic and carries a lance in one hand, with the other he holds the reins of his horse. The colors are so faded that the petroglyph looks as though it is seeping back into the wall itself.

It was at the place of the Standing Cow that canyon Indians of long ago determined when to commence planting. Here the sun never touched the canyon floor during winter and in spring the Indians watched the sun's progress down the north canyon wall. In late April when it reached a certain fixed point, planting was begun. In fall when the sun hit a certain fixed edge along the mesa top on the south side of the canyon it was time to harvest.

At Standing Cow there are quantities of peach seeds from the years past. As we got out to look and to wonder over the petroglyphs we saw under the overhang where they would get the least dust and the most sun row upon row of opened and pitted peaches. Close by was a small quantity of cactus pear, a rich bluish-red that goes to purple and prickly to touch. Further down toward the marching priest petroglyph were several new bales of green alfalfa making a geometric pattern against the red of the sandstone walls.

Travel was slow, the sun was hot, but our enjoyment was such that we did not notice the heat so much. A delightful respite from the sun was walking along the canyon floor close to the walls and absorbing the beauty of color at close range. We were excited by the textures, rubbing our hands over the sandstone, feeling the roughness of the wind-eroded crevices, the smoothness where giant blocks had fallen off leaving smooth vertical surfaces.

We had planned to camp below the ruin of Mummy House but with the night coming hard upon us we stopped about three miles up from Mummy at *Tseabato*, the Big Cave. Almost totally encircled, Big Cave is hidden from view by a high, winglike and tapering rock,

gracefully furled under at its uppermost part, and from a distance looking almost wafer thin.

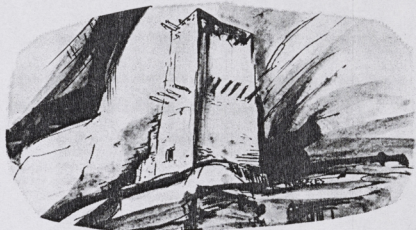
Big Cave was the home of the basketmakers and with one exception is free of cliff dwelling occupation. It is indeed a giant cave, being something like twelve hundred feet long and varying in depth from thirty to seventy feet. Archaeological finds of the basketmaker period were made here with virtually every shovelful of dirt and accumulation removed. The burials at this "grandfather of caves" were exceptional and included mummies, beautiful baskets and sandals of bright colors and exquisite patterns. There was also jewelry of shells and stones and turquoise and other rich and rare objects. The basketmakers were also keepers of great flocks of turkeys. They were not kept for feasting but for their feathers which were made into blankets. These turkey feather blankets were similar in appearance to the rabbit fur ones made in an earlier basketmaker period. The blankets were soft and warm and made by wrapping the feathers on cord warps and wefts as the rabbit fur had been.

Any entrance to Big Cave is almost hidden from view by the tall, reedlike Lukai grass. It grows profusely along the high benches of the wash where it can get sufficient moisture. Its hard nodes and flaglike leaves give the portions of the canyon where it grows a certain oriental flavor, rather incongruous perhaps, but effective to see.

Next day our first goal was Mummy House, the ruin only two miles away. Mummy House is generally regarded as the most striking of the remaining canyon ruins. Some have claimed it to be one of the most spectacular spots in the entire Southwest, and though it may have served a utilitarian purpose for the pueblo people it was certainly built with an eye for beauty.

Fronting two coves in the sandstone walls of the canyon, Mummy House sits on a promontory with a commanding view. Ostensibly located for defense, it has served well aesthetic demands of photographer, artist, archaeologist and tourist since first they came upon it. Located three hundred feet above the stream bed, its most striking feature is a magnificent three-story tower with roofing and floor beams projecting from it on three sides. These projecting beams cast effective shadows on the tower walls and at certain times of day the tower itself through contrasts of light and shade seems to stand out from the vertical canyon wall to which it is attached. The beams of the lower floor are about four and one half inches in diameter, those of the second about three inches while those of the roof are about two and one half inches and occur in pairs. They are all on eighteen to twenty-four inch centers. The roof material is of cane or willow sticks. They are one half inch or less in diameter and laid neatly in a horizontal pattern. The rooms of this structure are unusually large. The entire length of this one hundred and ten foot bench is virtually all taken up with seven rooms of varying proportions. The south and east sides of the tower and part of the front wall are decorated by inlaid small stones in the masonry. The ruin is built of stone and east of its center is a tremendously large rock which overlays the front of the ledge. The pueblo craftsmen built the front wall over and under it. The coves on each side are beautifully formed and colored, varying from a deep pink to a vermillion. These coves are connected by the narrow bench on which is built the stately Mummy House. The cove to the west is about one hundred feet across and seventy feet deep, the eastern cove is about

two hundred feet across and approximately one hundred feet deep. Both are covered with the ruins of the Pueblo III period. The western cove can be reached only by the central ledge, which in turn can be approached only by access to the eastern cove. Directly in front of this eastern cove is a vast loose sliding slope of old debris going more or less gradually down to the level of the canyon floor. This debris is only representative of the vast quantities of trash tossed over the cliff edge by the cave occupants. Much has slid to the bottom to become a part of the canyon floor or has been washed or blown away. This vast accumulation must have taken hundreds and hundreds of years. The towering overhang from the eastern roof protected much of this sloping mass of debris and the basketmakers who preceded the pueblo people in using these coves used this soft slope for a cemetery, and as such it yielded to archaeologists many fine specimens of this particular period. Looking up at Mummy House one wonders of the families who lived here. Why did they come? What were their traits, their frailties, their endurance? Archaeologists can fathom for us the dates the dwellings were occupied, the abilities of the pueblo builders as artisans we can see for ourselves but all of us must leave to the imagination the personalities of the people who lived there.



The Pueblo III period, with whose houses the coves at Mummy Cave are covered, is sometimes known as the Golden Age of Pueblo Culture. Their crafts were abundant and brought to a par excellence pitch, especially the pottery and jewelry making. These old pueblo people had an appreciative eye for beauty and a genius for detail as the visitor to any Southwestern museum is quick to discern. Mummy Cave is believed to have contained as many as ninety rooms though some were purportedly used for storage. No kivas can be traced in the western portion of the cave though there are discernible remains of three and perhaps four kivas in the eastern cove. One of the kivas at Mummy is an artistic accomplishment that has lasted through the years. Cleared of debris, its roof no longer in place, this kiva has a white band circling it about three feet from the top. This band is about five inches wide and is decorated with a meander in red.

Above the band are several block designs. Two could be of butterflies. These conjectures of what could be is only one of the many facets of enjoyment offered in this canyon. History, archaeology, artistic satisfaction, geology, the study of people who cling to a culture and a way of life as old as man himself . . . all are here.

From Mummy House we traveled about two miles

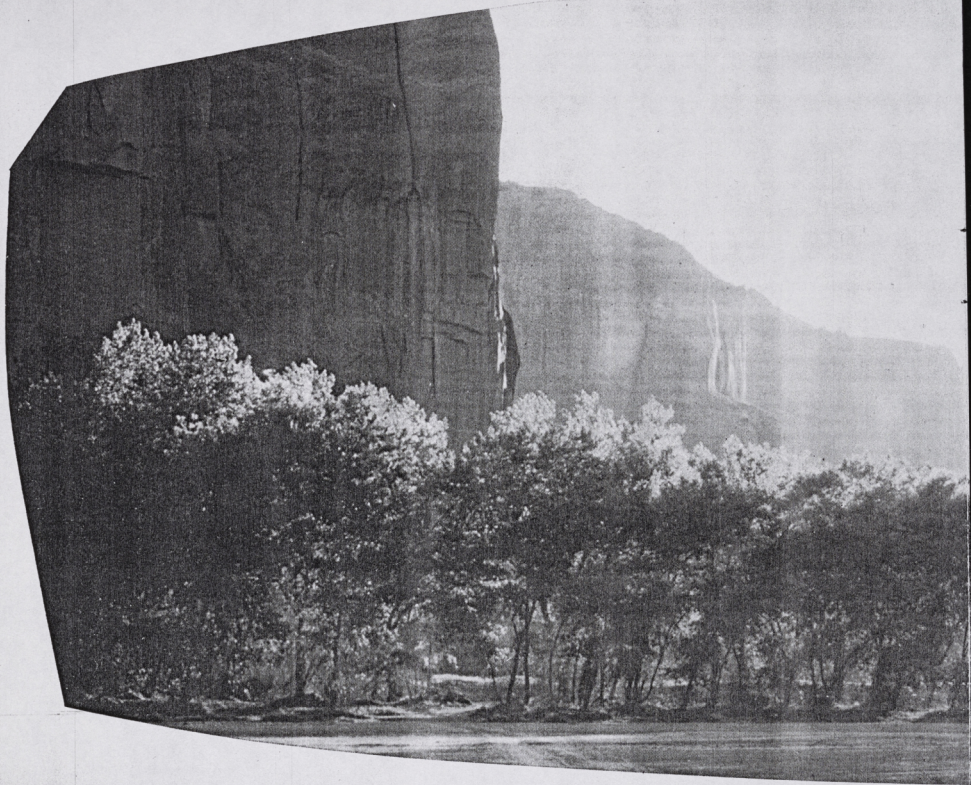
more toward the canyon's source before coming to Massacre Cave. We gazed up at it remembering the young soldier, Lieutenant Chagon, whose exploits gave this canyon its name. The name Cave is actually a misnomer as the place of the massacre is more like a ledge. It is accessible, but a pretty tough climb. When Lieutenant Chagon came here in 1804 for an encounter with the Navajo, the Indian warriors were away on a hunting trip or perhaps on a punitive expedition of their own to the Spanish settlements. The remaining canyon Indians, the old men, the women and children, having been warned of the Spanish coming, retired to this hiding place deep in the canyon. The lieutenant was beginning to fear his long march was to prove fruitless. Legend has it that an old woman who in her youth had been a captive of the Spanish let her hate overcome her good judgment and hurled vindictive epithets on the soldiers as they marched below, thus revealing the hiding place. Lieutenant Chagon tried to approach the ledge from below but was repulsed by rocks and arrows from the ledge. Hurriedly he split his group, directing one to return to the canyon's mouth, ride around the rim to the hiding place and attack from above. The remaining soldiers camped below to cut off any escape. This was an effective maneuver, for from the rim the bullets, both those directed and those ricocheting, were a deadly fire. With assistance from the rim, the lieutenant began an attack from below. This two-pronged attack was fearsome and no Indian lived to tell of the deed. For years their bones were there, whitened and half buried by the blowing sand but now all are gone and only a few bullet marks are mute evidence of the massacre. It was the first of two sad parts of Navajo history which were to transpire in the canyon. In 1863 these ancient walls saw the soldiers of Kit Carson ride down from Tsaile through Canyon del Muerto and drive the Navajo toward the canyon's mouth. The Navajo had chosen this retreat supposing it impregnable. At the same time other soldiers were traversing Canyon de Chelly destroying as they went. It was winter and the Navajo knew the meaning of it for it was bitter cold; the wash was frozen and man and beast perished from the chill winds that assailed the canyon. The Navajo also knew the meaning of hunger for his sheep had been killed and his orchards destroyed and there was nothing for him to feed upon, and finally at this place, his beloved Tsegi, he felt his spirit crushed as four thousand surrendered in Canyon de Chelly and made the long walk to Fort Sumner, in Spanish the Bosque Redondo, in Navajo *Hwalte*. The canyon saw it all. There at Fort Sumner the people died from diseases they knew not how to cure, from food they did not know how to prepare and they died from a saddened spirit, for always they asked to go home to the desert with its few water holes, to the mesas standing erect and proud, to the place of the piñon and juniper and to the canyon, their own, the one called Tsegi. In 1868 it was recognized as a tragic removal and the Navajo was allowed to return to his own land.

This old man we visited on the last day of our canyon trip did not make the long march to Hwalte but he grew up with the stories of it. His place is here at the head of the canyon where it broadens out and where the cottonwoods are of huge girth, their roots exposed by the cutting of heavy August rains. Cottonwood growth is lavish here and affords shade and aesthetic satisfaction as

they stand acid green in spring, butter yellow in fall against the massive red canyon walls. Sometimes the shade is so intense that the whole canyon seems to be in shadow. It is here the old man lives. His name is Philip Draper. Now there may be a dozen people named Philip in the Chinle area but to canyon devotees Philip is just one name and one place to go. A visit with him is the high point of any canyon trip. His place is as far up Canyon del Muerto as you can go by mechanized vehicle. The remaining miles to the canyon's source at Tsaile you must see on foot or horseback. Towering regally above the bluff where Philip lives are three monumental columns. They stand like silent unrelenting guards over the peaceful canyon. On the other two sides are towering red cliffs of stone, seemingly thrust up in one last mighty effort to make an island of isolation in this vast hurried world. In this wild rugged place of quiet solitude Philip lives alone, doing his chores, tending his orchard, herding his sheep. His dwelling is simple, his cook pots black from a vast accumulation of soot. Old, slight, greying, palsied, he has a mammoth spirit and a simple philosophy regarding the dignity of man. It is a philosophy he would find hard to fashion into words but one he lives, which is better.

Below the bluff and away from the cut of the wash he has planted fruit trees with loving care: the apple, the peach, pear, plum, apricot, nectarine, the grape. All are there. Many years ago, before the archaeologist came with his shovel and keen eye to locate and preserve for us the great show place of Mummy House, Philip ordered young fruit trees from places far away and planted them here to flourish. In the fall his trees are resplendent in reds and yellows, his fruit choice and sought after. If you ask him, he will show you his pride, an apple tree sprung from a seedling, carefully tended, his beloved Great Falls. It tastes something like a Jonathan and a red Delicious combined and is invariably a contender for prizes at the Navajo Tribal Fair. He condones visitors graciously and inquires of sheep dipping time and branding, of spraying and pruning, of progress on the Fair. His entries are always plentiful and he is an avid contender, seeking aid and advice from Branch of Land Operation's employees about fruit choosing, color and shape. We like to think of Philip as one of the "old" Indians, by which we mean one who has the capacity for change and adjustment without losing the old values of industry, simplicity and dignity. Old and bent though he is, there is a certain stateliness about him . . . not in his physical frame surely . . . but in his attitudes, his deep respect for the things of nature, his belief in the future of his children, in whom he finds much pride. Years apart by virtue of time of birth, cultures apart by environment, we have nonetheless the greatest of respect for him, for he exhibits the tenacity of heart that must always accompany conviction. It is a basic quality in man himself no matter what his race, his time or place of birth. Such a quality creates an innate dignity, a certain grandeur of spirit that makes all of us aware of certain truths that men live by.

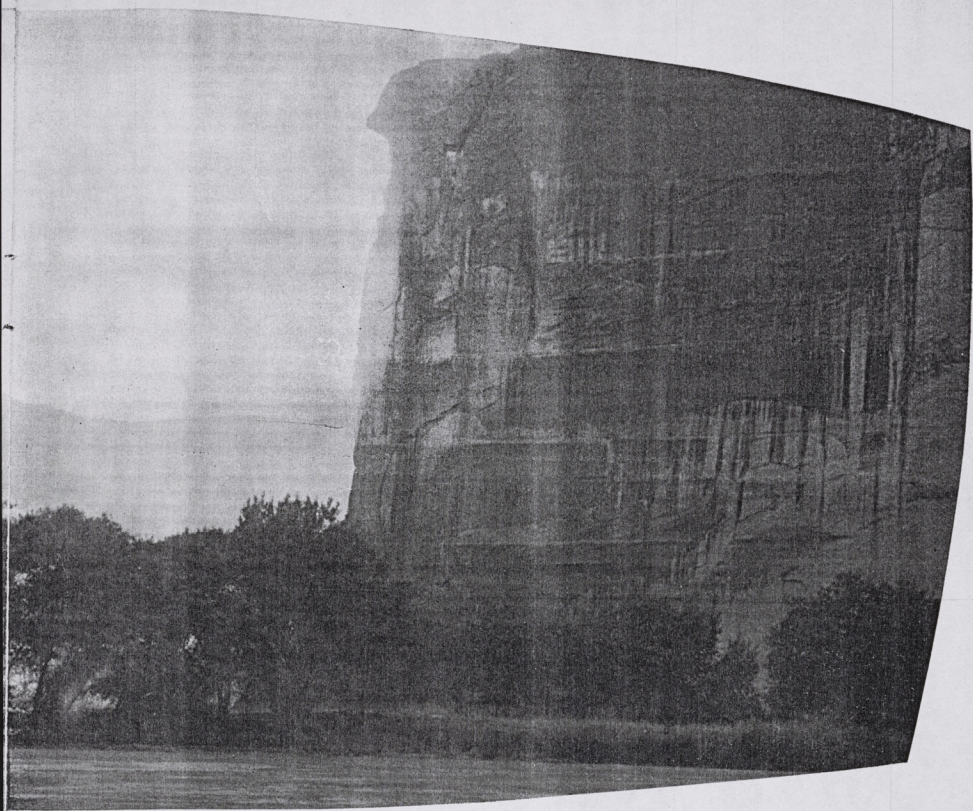
And so we sat with Philip on the upland and watched his orchard below. We listened to the wind and saw the sun. We made supper and ate slowly, savoring the canyon's peace and it came to be night. Tomorrow we would go back to Chinle to remember again and again this trip by wagon and the way it had brought us close to the canyon. The towering stone fingers cast bulky



Towering canyon walls survey sandy wash in Canyon de Chelly

shadows; our campfire was bright and alive and smelled fragrantly of piñon and juniper. Such vast aloneness in the deep canyon created a feeling of wonder about life, creation, the endurance of nature and the quality of man. The silence was disquieting but peace seeped through like a bright blanket and we began to talk of those others who had sought shelter here. What were they really like, those people who were here so long ago? As a part of the stream of mankind what did they think and feel as they fitted the stone, sharpened the axe, made the basket? In their constant struggle for existence did they sense the beauty of the canyon, their hiding place and home? Did they feel secure in the protective strength of the sheer rock walls, the comforting narrow passage? What of those unknown ones, those restless seekers after places unknown and far away, those few who saw the canyon's venerable majestic grandeur and passed on leaving no written word of their seeing? And what of those builders of stately Mummy House who with stone axe and aesthetic eye hewed and chipped and fitted and

created for us to see this pueblo masterpiece? What of the Spanish who came first on the coveted horses and then those other Spanish soldiers who came and gave this canyon its name, Canyon of the Dead? And what of those soldiers of Kit Carson who also traversed the canyon, were they fearful at night when they took their blankets from their horses? Did they lay awake wondering in the stillness? All those had been here: the soldier, the adventurer, the conqueror, but none of them could claim it. It was not theirs. It has after all remained an impregnable fortress, harboring its secrets like a miserly grandfather. It belongs forever to the Basketmaker who made his pole and mud slab houses at Big Cave, to the Pueblo dweller who loved the sun and to the Navajo who tends his quiet fields in the recesses of the comforting walls. In returning to their own land from Hwalte they had dispersed; some looked to the north at the volcanic pinnacle of Shiprock and some to the south at the mesa and butte country and some to the west at the beauty of Monument Valley; to the east they felt the



cool winds off the snows of Mount Taylor and here just east of center they came to Canyon de Chelly with its quietness that soothed the spirit and over all the land given to them they started again.



INFORMATION ON TOURIST AND CAMPING ACCOMMODATIONS

Canyon de Chelly was made a National Monument in 1931 and is under the administration of the Department of Interior, National Park Service. Entry to the Reservation and to de Chelly may be made from Gallup, Chambers, Holbrook or Flagstaff. All roads except that from Chambers will be paved by the summer of 1959. Tourist accommodations can be obtained at Thunderbird Ranch (make reservations in advance), excellent camp facilities are maintained by the Park Service in Cottonwood Campground. Two trading posts accommodate the area: Thunderbird Trading Post (John E. Wade, manager) and Canyon de Chelly Trading Post (Camillo Garcia, owner-manager). Both posts have a wide variety of camp supplies. There is also a cafe open for three meals a day in the Thunderbird Trading Post; reservations can also be made there for the canyon trail trips provided by Thunderbird Ranch. Visitors are requested to register with the Park Service on their visit to the canyon.

