

Tape #192  
NAVAJO  
Donald Cutter, Sr.  
Recorded by Tom Ration  
August, 1968

CLAN HISTORY,  
GENERAL INFORMATION  
ON NAVAJO TRIBE,  
TALK WITH THE BOSS.

A.-- Tom Ration  
Q.-- Don Cutter  
L.-- Austin Leiby

- A. It is better at the pow-wow 'cause they control themselves...the way they want it, but in Gallup, they don't know, we are all...
- Q. Mr. Merry does most of it at Gallup? How about the food that the Indians eat, was it better at Gallup or better up at the pow-wow?
- A. Pow-wow.
- Q. What about the living quarters where they stay?
- A. Well, when it is raining, I think it is better in Gallup...
- Q. It rains pretty often up in Flagstaff doesn't it? It rains often enough up in Gallup too...
- A. Yeah.
- Q. How long have you gone, have you gone to the pow-wow the first time that they had it?
- A. I have been working with the Ceremonial, I stayed there for four days...
- Q. In Gallup...?
- A. Yeah, in Gallup.
- Q. Do you work also up at the pow-wow?
- A. Yeah, at the place where all the performers are.

- Q. One of the big problems at Gallup is that the merchants there in town sell so much liquor to the Indians...
- A. Oh yeah!
- Q. Is that a problem also over at Flagstaff?
- A. Not too much, not as bad as Gallup!
- Q. Not as bad as Gallup... Do you think that more people come to Flagstaff? Or more to Gallup?
- A. I think more people come to Gallup.
- Q. Why, because they have more publicity?
- A. Well, it is in the heart of the Navajo reservation...
- Q. It is closer to the center of Indian people there?
- A. Yeah, that is right, some of them, the ones that don't have no transportation, they can walk in...and then when it is over they just have to go over the mountains.
- Q. Do you think, they fell more at home in Gallup, I mean...
- A. More home in Gallup...
- Q. But the program isn't as good?
- A. Well the program is not as good as the ceremonials... well, they like that program, but they think it is better...
- Q. Where they have more to say about the program?
- A. Well, it is just like more of their own race, more like when they didn't have no ceremonial.
- Q. Do you think when they get the new grounds at Gallup

that it will be better or worse?

A. It just depends...if they have more.

Q. If they get it...

A. If they have got more law and order, it will be much better...

Q. Well, they may have, they are talking about having it down there in that Red Rock Canyon down, which is east of the town, that wouldn't be so convenient though, would it...?

A. Church Rock?

Q. Yeah, I think so...

A. NAVAJO LANGUAGE...

Q. What tongue are you speaking...well, it is getting pretty late in the day for you and you probably...we usually close up...now, well it doesn't make any difference, but maybe we would if we can talk tomorrow morning...early would that be better for you? Say... eight-thirty, nine o'clock...?

A. From morning for...as long as we talk...

Q. Okay, okay, good...so why don't you come back then... what time is convenient for you in the morning...8:30 or will it be better at nine?

A. 8:30...

Q. 8:30...fine...we open here at 8:00 so there is always somebody here...I usually come at 8:30, and...

A. 8:30 will be alright.

Q. Okay, so it will be fine...because we have alot that we would like to talk to you about, particularly what the progress of your project out there...

A. I wonder if there is a place where a fellow can stay here...for a bunch of us here...that wouldn't be so hot...

Q. Might be there at the Indian school itself...

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THE FOLLOWING MORNING...

A. That is a recording, huh?

Q. Yeah, we walk out in the hall, come on out in the hall, we can talk out here and...now, let's go and see if it picks up...you see, it automatically picks up your voice...and closes it down, this is what this things is, you see...

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Now we will walk out...and that machine will pick up my voice...

A. What I wanted to say was what we were going to talk about today...

Q. Well, we are going to talk about everything and the whole program.

A. Well...

Q. We would like to know more about the progress...well, the program up there and what you have done, and if you are doing it at all... things like that...

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A. I was going to say that how long have you been working among the Navajos?

Q. Just what...one year, not very much, and I am the only that has been working there, not with the program... just for myself but except for that, nobody has worked with them...at all...

A. Well, I notice they got some stories, over at Santa Fe.

Q. They do? At the museum or where?

A. Museum?

Q. Oh!

A. Yeah, I might show you sometime! A heavy wall on top and later on sometime, if somebody might bomb the whole thing...

Q. Ha...where is that at?

A. It is toward the mountain over at Santa Fe, they call it the Navajo Museum... They have got alot of songs and stories and mostly...they...even build a statue of the man who told stories about, like this old man, the great medicine man, they call him Straight Hair Cut, he cut hair...like this Pablo, he was one of our greatest Navajo historymakers and history tellers... he died, here about, he was 119 years old...when he died!

Q. He had time to tell alot in 119 years...

A. His statue was over there too!

Q. I know that the Mormons up in Utah have everything buried underground, of course, they are expecting the end of the world to come...

L. Well, they hollowed out the middle of the mountain and all their files there!

Q. I think on microfilm in that case...

L. Tom was telling me last night, that in his family he goes back five generation stories, this each one of them they had their medicine man...

Q. And you are working on that now?

A. Yeah, it is what they call a Ki-aa-ni Clan...you know this Gorman, Carl Gorman, he is a Ki-aa-ni Clan, he is the same relation on my side. See, way back, many years ago, say about 3000 years ago, when everybody was wicked, you know, they were mostly doing all bad things, and this came up and in those times, people didn't have no clans in the same lines they can marry anybody in between any place. And there from there on the children don't was not born right, they were born crippled, one eye, and talk funny way. So, some of the people, they had a good mind, they started to study about, what is wrong. And in the family, why is it that the children are being born that way...and they study long and finally, they find out, goes through the clan!

- Q. There was too close intermarriage?
- A. There were too close intermarriage...and so, from there on, this man, his name was A Long Curly Hair, he was the one that started and then, Teec-Shoni-Nez, that is the way that they call him.
- Q. And where did he live?
- A. He lived between, you know where Red Rock is, down near Tohatchi Mountain, down in that canyon there... north of Gallup...way down there...east of Shiprock...
- Q. Yeah.
- A. He lived in that canyon, we called him Long Yellow Hair.
- Q. This always was Navajo country?
- A. Yeah, all Navajo country...he was the first one that was started to gathering people up and talk about things, like you boys do. Talk about how everything was coming about before.
- Q. He was back many hundreds of years?
- A. Way, way over...about four generations...maybe five, maybe more over...
- Q. And then he passed this down through, through his clan of his time.
- A. Yeah, and this is when all the people started to have crimes you know...
- Q. This man sort of became the one in charge of story-telling and history?

A. Yeah.

Q. And it was the clan that you belong to, huh?

A. Yeah, Ki-aa-ni Clan, they were separate from the, and then comes Mud Clan and then comes Mountainside Clan... I have got the books over there that tells about it... and then comes Water, Salt Water Clan... Four of those clans were the first one that was made, and all out of these four clans, one was a Ki-aa-ni and was the one that went east, the Mud Clan went southwards, and the Mountain Clan went westwards and the Salt Water Clan went north. So, these four was suppose to make clans among each people, each family and so they spread out four ways...I think it took them about, at least, 1 or 2 years, just to make clans among people and so there are all kinds of clans, like the Bear Clan, Eagle Clan, Rock Clan, Tree Clan...

Q. Each of these are sort of a subdivision of the 4 clans?

A. Yeah, the four started out to be clans...so they now...

Q. Now taking these four original clans, would there be a Bear Clan in each one of these or...?

A. No...

Q. One Bear Clans...

A. One Bear Clan, one Wolf Clan, one Eagle Clan....and one Earth Clan.

Q. You had to marry inside of your own...?



- A. No, no...some other clan!
- L. Sometimes they married into some other clans too?
- A. Yeah...so when that started and then from here to increasing of humans started better way.
- Q. No, do you think that the clan system is responsible for the Navajos becoming as many people as there are now, there are many more Navajos now than there were many years ago. Is the Navajo population increasing now?
- A. No...last year...the tribe I think they counted up to a hundred thousand...
- Q. Because most Indian people are disappearing you know, and most places what they find where there used to be 1000 people, there are now only 50 or 100.
- A. Well the reason why this is, this is the story from the Navajos. The reason why that is, these other Indians, like Laguna or Hopis or Apache, or these other different Indians...they don't carry their religion and when they first started and the Navajos think that the way that they were increasing was that they still holding their old religion, from way back, I mean stories and every belief that they had...
- Q. Learning more about it than they knew before?
- A. And they are still using herbs...the medicine herbs, always should be used. A lot of these Navajos don't go

to the hospital very much...like they, just recently they found out about cancer...and they know how to cure cancer. See, my wife, here she went to this hospital first and they told her that she has got cancer, and we went back to Gallup to the Indian hospital and they told her that she will live two or three weeks... and that is all. So, we went back home, to my wife was crying all the time...and we went to one of the biggest medicine man that we know of and she told him all of the stories and all the herbs and everything and she said, he told her, why don't you take this and this and this and certain amount of time, according to the moon and so she done that, and she went and took all, but stay outside all the time on the sun. See... sit in the sun all of the time and while she is getting this medicine she has to sit outside where the sun shines on her, because I think for at least 2 hours at the time...for three months...she will be alright.

Q. That is good anyway.

A. And so she went out, and we got the herbs...and the herbs...

Q. Who do you get the herbs from?

A. Well, we don't tell...

Q. I just wanted...

A. We get the herbs up in the mountains...we see some of

the herbs here along the highway, but there was a whole bunch of them mixed up, I think it was 24 different kinds of herb medicine that I guess that is nothing for but sores...

Q. So you had to gather them and mix them yourself?

A. Yeah and she takes it...for about two months time, she was alright and we went back to the doctor...and told her that she was going to die in two weeks. And so the lady she said that she was going to die in two weeks, and she tried to get some...I mean this doctor tried to ask us how she got well, but my wife don't want to tell and so she is the only one that knows how she got well.

Q. Well, they won't believe her anyway and so...no use telling...

L. Tell him the story about your son and the two birds.

A. Oh...you mean the... oh, it is way back, you know the baby boy...the baby boy that you have seen around here?

Q. Yeah.

A. He was about, a little over 2 or 3 years ago this happen...we had nothing to our names, nothing at all... we were just poor and go to different jobs, here and there...and we don't have hardly making nothing...and then maybe we work one week and the job is over. And so we went clear to Phoenix all down this line, farming,

we don't make nothing and then we work among these houses...work at houses around here, plastering...and painting house...I was on some of these contractors... in 1957, can't do nothing. Can't get up, just stay in one place. So, one day the little boy was going to school and he was thinking where else can we go and we got land up there, we have got our own lot of land... and so this was around 1957, and then in the evening when the boy came back from school, they were playing ball, you know, baseball and way out in the fields and one of the boys was a catcher, saw the ball way back in the field and he said, Peter, Peter...stand still, there are two birds on top of your head...and there were two bird on top of your head, 2 blue birds and one was a female and one was a male, and Peter just then when he heard that voice, he grab up and he catched the two birds on top of his head. And he brought it up to me and take it home and he said, "Daddy, I catch two birds!" I was just wondering how he catched these two birds and he told us, that it was on top of Peter's head. And so we went and ask the medicine man and the medicine man's name was Manuelito, and we asked him and he jump up and he say, "Boy, that means good luck!", he said, "Good Luck!"...and so he gathered us all together all our family and he ask, what can I wish and he asked my wife, what can she wish, and all the family, and so

I wish myself that we could live a good way and have plenty of money and my wife she wished for sheep for all the rest of the family, they wish for horse and cattle and stuff like that...and when we all wished... then necklace and everything and all of our whole family wished. And then he blessed these two birds... with his own prayer ways and song...and then we had a night chant, the next two nights and we turned the birds loose early in the morning, that is the way that they used to do it you see, and so this old man said, you take about two weeks...and he don't know where the money or anything comes from he said, and so we fooled around that two weeks!

Q. Where did this happen out at...?

A. At home...the next two weeks we were branding some horses and another fellow, some cattle he was cutting ...lambs you know, and dragging lambs...we were working for some people you know, and then two white fellows came and two white fellows came and he said that he told me, he asked my name, who is Tom Ration, and there are some of these people, I think they told him...I was the one that knows everybody around here...and so he called me over and I went up there, and he said, you want a job? And I asked him what kind of job, and I want to have alot of these Navajos to lease their land

to us for uranium rights...rights from Window Rock, you see, and he showed me the papers and we want you to work for us. And so he parked his car and he stopped there and he said, "How much, how much do you want for this, how much money you gave me?" And I was just teasing...I didn't mean it, and I said, I will do it for \$100 a day...and so he said, wait, I will talk to my partner and so he went over there, this was a Blackjack Company...one of the big companies that came in. And he went and talked to his partner and he got up and came out again, and he said, it is a deal, \$100 a day and so I said, \$100 a day...and I went pretty near two months and everyday I was paid \$100 and...

Q. That is a nice way to get paid...

A. And then from there on, we start to buy cattle and sheep, that is the way that we got out cattle...

L. How much do you have now?

A. Oh, we got a little over 200 head of sheep and about something around 50 head of cattle...and we have got around 27 good horses, riding horses...

Q. What do you do with the riding horses?

A. Oh, we used them for cattle...

Q. You don't rent them for people to ride?

A. Sometimes...we have got some rent over there at Bluewater Lake...

- Q. Oh, where they have got that resort...we have got about 10 head up there...so, this is the way that I started my money, you see...and the reason, I think it is true the way that...
- Q. It looks good, I am going to look for some blue birds.
- A. The bird itself will come to you and one night, way back...I think it was about a year before this was happening...and there was a blue bird way in the night was singing, right on the east side at the window there, and the blue bird was trying to get in and we open the window and the bluebird came in and stayed with us all night long, it was a cold, cold night. And so we just turned him loose, we didn't catch him and we didn't know nothing about it...and so that is where the luck started coming in...
- Q. With the Navajo, is the bluebird always the good sign?
- A. Always good luck...and the yellow bird too, and the humming bird, that is always luck too.
- Q. Were are there any birds that are bad luck?
- A. Yeah! The black crow...
- Q. He is bad luck to anybody...how about the buzzard?
- A. Yeah!
- Q. He is bad luck too?
- A. Yeah, anything that is red-looking like that red-speckled bird...that gypsy...that is bad luck!
- Q. Woodpecker...

- A. Yeah, woodpecker...and oh, there is alot of things that are bad luck...
- Q. Well, over in California, that used to say for money the scalp of the red-headed woodpecker that was their money before the whiteman came...but...they must have liked him...this was up in the redwood area of California and there were quite a few of them and this is what they used for money...
- A. In the Navajo religions, Navajo ways of doing...the bluebird is used for all kind of medicine, in prayers and everything...and the two bluebirds...one is, should be female and the other one should be a male...and same way with the coyote too, there are two coyotes that are different...one is what they call the white-tailed coyote and one is, he is a good one and not the coyote, just the ones that are on the prarie...bad one...so, the one that has the white-tail, that is a good coyote, that one won't, they claim that the first coyote that was made, way from the beginning...I told you...that is the way that things were among the Navajos and so I think it is telling the right stories...
- Q. Yeah, maybe we ought to go over and get a cup of coffee.
- A. Sounds good!

END OF TAPE