

Tape #355
NAVAJO
Tom Ration
Interviewer-Terry Carroll
October 18, 1968
Side Two

THIS TAPE WAS HARD
TO HEAR DUE TO SOME
TYPE OF INTERFERENCE
(MOTOR OR OTHERWISE)

- Q. I'm talking to Tom Ration. This is October 13, Sunday and we're talking at the Smith Lake Chapter House and Tom is telling me a few things related to the Chapter House and anything else that is appropriate.
- A. You know long before this chapter houses were ever been made we put up a chapter house over at my place.
- Q. Where you live now?
- A. Where we live right now. I was the first one that started...
- Q. In this area?
- A. In this area, Smith Lake Area, and then...
- Q. You were the first one that had a chapter house?
- A. I was the first one that had a chapter house.
- Q. Did you build a special house for it?
- A. Yeah, we made a big hogan for it and the only time we have meeting was during the summer time 'cause it was warm. Winter time it was hard to get to the chapter house 'cause it's cold and during that time I used to hold Cassemero Lake too, same place and Thoreau.
- Q. All those three areas?
- A. All these three areas.
- Q. Cassemer Lake?

- A. No, not Cassemer Lake, yeah is Cassemer Lake down there, not Mariano Lake though, just Cassemero Lake.
- Q. And Thoreau and Smith Lake, all the people from that area, would come?
- A. Yeah, that's the time they had split these chapter yet.
- Q. Why did you decide to put up a chapter building?
- A. Me? Well, in those days it was to me, I think it was good for the people just wanted to help them just wanted to give them idea, what should be done in a way that it might be good for us, it might be good for our people, it would be best to talk, talk together and see what they doing. In those days you don't even know nothing, they don't even care to go to Window Rock or any meeting, just stay home and take care of their stock, just go to the store come back, came home, that's all they done, they never went to meeting and so I decided to see what I could do for my people so I went on and build a little chapter house.
- Q. When was that, Tom, when you built that?
- A. It was way back in 1924.
- Q. 1924, and that was the only one in this area. Did alot of people come?
- A. Sometime, if I have both areas they used to all of them come, we have over 100, they come horseback though, they don't ever come in cars. Some time they come in

wagon, that's the way I start them out.

Q. During the summer?

A. I think that's the only reason they kept me for 7 years. See, I tell them what to do and I think what's right, sent their children to school and find jobs for them and talking to other people for them and tell them what's going on at Window Rock and what's going on in Gallup or Albuquerque or any of those big cities.

Q. They probably didn't keep you just because you built the chapter house, but you know you're so valuable to them?

A. That's right. So, they think a lot about me...and willing to help me with anything I can ask for.

Q. Very few people are ever that lucky, you know it? Nowadays people...it's hard to get anybody really think anything for you, you know, they like alot of people like to do things for what they can get out of it, but to get some people to really appreciate and know what you are doing is for them. You really have to work for that.

A. And then later on we moved to Smith Lake. There used to be a church there, a preacher, he was a Protestant and he build a big house there and then from my home we move to that house 'cause that preahcer was very kind to the people and then we had it in winter time there,

summer and winter. And then finally, we starting to get something built for us for ourself, we don't have to bother storekeeper, or preacher or anybody else, just make one ourself. So, we went and talking to the tribe, we didn't know a tribe had alot of money that time and then since we found out that the tribe was pretty well-off so we talk about building something with our own money so this what we made.

Q. The Navajo tribe paid for this?

A. That's all their lumber, windows, labor and everything put up by the tribe. Yeah, there is other lot of good things going on. I think they be ready pretty soon, so I be going in. When my brother comes I'll tell you...I'll talk to my brother and he'll tell you what...

Q. I want to move the car back there.

A. Yeah, Herbert.

Q. This is for my own use, not for the Indian program.

The Indians don't benefit that much then?

A. They have a trading post out here, right out here.

Q. King?

A. No, this one Smith Lake.

Q. Oh yeah, I've heard that, yeah...

A. His name is Buddy Powers, and the people that live in that area sure they live all their lives and their sheep and cattle, and annual, when the time is coming,

market time they are better off to go to their local trading post where they can give you a top price. Since these trader will know that they are their regular customer. This saves the wear on their cars and pickups just going a short distance to sell off their lambs and so forth like cattle and then on the other hand, it is richer from Gallup they paid the announcement fee to put it over the radio to encourage the people out on the reservation or out here to come in and they said they'd give them a top price over in Gallup and then they said they'd give them a gallon per head with the amount of lambs they haul in, if they haul 10, they get 10 gallon bonus of gasoline.

Q. They give them a gallon head for gasoline?

A. Yeah, on top of the price. You can never tell, you probably get your money alright but they probably set the scales back a little bit. Nobody checks it, the only people who checks it is the scale inspector. So, you'll never know whether you benefitting out of it or you're just going on a long run for the same price that your local trader will give you for less running around. You will go to your local trader and then you save all the gas expense, the wear of your vehicle and then probably, I think you'll probably cost in there to about \$10 you have about 5 people out of your

family just going down to eat down there on the side. So, in cases like that people out here and the local trader man they get the price that they will give down in Gallup without going down there. In other words, let's say a gallon per head on a lamb you get it during the time when you make a sale, I mean when you sell your lamb. Out there this trader he probably never gave you no bonus but man when the time comes or an emergency arises he knows that you're his customer. You could go down there and probably get that 10 gallon on your credit, where you will have to run down to Gallup for another 10 gallon and it will cost you money, 10 gallon see. But it's still just going down there, to me, you don't benefit nothing out of it. In other words, all they want is your lamb, they probably give you a gallon and 1/2 for lamb, but they probably set their scale back just that much for whatever amount of pound they set back, they give it out on the side and they still they get even break in and then in and then the trader when they ship them off to the lamb they buy from the big companies they get their profit out of it.

Q. They're probably not losing anything?

A. No, same with piñon...

Q. They do the same thing with piñon?

A. Yeah, they set their scale back and then they'll say, well, my price is high up here in the city of Gallup and where the trader can give you the same price out here.

Q. They say that this guy...what did you say his name was?

A. J. B. Tanner.

Q. No, the trader over here.

A. Chief Buddy Fox is what they call him, Chief Buddy Fox.

Q. They say he's pretty honest, is that right?

A. Yeah, he's pretty honest, in fact, if you're his customer, where you buy selling a steer and it runs into the neighborhood of \$135 and just looking at if it your steer, if he thinks that you raise good product of steer, man, he'll give you \$135, just for your nice looking stock, he'll probaly give you \$5 more since you trade with him, see. In other words the more business you give him, he'll treat you right, where he thinks he can give you a bonus he'll give it to you. That the way it is.

Q. You know what alot of Indians say good things about him, he treats the Navajo right.

A. And then these local traders you know, when you're in need of gasoline or food in a state of emergency you can go up to them and h'll give you credit, while downtown you still have friend down there but you run down

there but when you do that and no money you have to have a bracelet or necklace or silver belt to pawn down there to get your money and then you chase back out here.

Q. In Gallup?

Q. Yeah!

Q. Well, that's not right.

A. You see, if you need money you can do the same thing down here, trading post. Since this is your local trading post you feel that your jewelry is right at home. Down in Gallup, when you pawn something the next thing you have to worry about your jewelry might go into dead pawn and then you'll never get to see it again. Out here these people they give you a break. If 30 days comes up, just go and tell the trader I couldn't make it in 30 days will he extend it? It's extended because he knows that you got sheep and cows and then he knows that you just only sell sheep annually and wool, so he keeps it there, while down town they keep it for 30 days and then when 30 days comes up if the jewelry cost about 90 dollars they only say they can give you about \$30 when that darn thing goes dead pawn maybe they sell for about \$100.

Q. That's not right.

A. And they lie these people just like myself and there

is probably a few other people that just sneaks around and just sort of kind of figure how this thing work, so that they know what goes on, just like down Gallup onw time, down at Navajo Shopping Center, say maybe about 5, 6, 7 years back we pawn about \$80 worth of silver belt down there for \$25 and that Tanner he says \$5 interest one month, so I paid the \$5 interest. That bastard never mark it down. Come 30 days come down there and he said it's gone. So, from then on I don't fool around with these people no more.

Q. How much, can you give me some good reason why you think, I mean for the tape recorder now you're already said some of them but, why would it be a good thing to move the ceremonials to Window Rock in your opinion?

A. My opinion is because see, this is the general, Indian Navajo Tribal Headquarter down in Window Rock; where if the Navajo tribal council can establish an inter-tribal ceremony and invite these other tribe from the other reservation from other state to go there to perform then these people coming out say California and all these tourists from all over the United States then they know they have seen something that...that's the reason they coming out on the Navajo people and the other tribe instead of in Gallup. In Gallup the people will know that these people, the Indian people are compensated to come in so they are compensated to come

in to perform. Yeah, they can pay the performers but there's no money that comes into Gallup that only the advantage to the city of Gallup, and all these merchants and alot of these people, you know Indian people they got beads and what not that they bring over, they trade, they trade among themself. So, in Gallup say some people walk by them, well, you never know who is a merchant some of these guys out there being a merchant and buy some of those things off these people. Good jewelry and they are good jewelry, but the next thing you know they'll have that jewelry the same store where they probably double the price. That's one way they can sure get their profit, and the same thing with these dead pawn.

Q. With what?

A. These pawn, you know these jewelry when they are dead our jewelry probably worth \$60 when you only pawn it for \$20 and it goes as a dead pawn they sell if to \$60 and then they are \$40 richer while you are \$40 poor, right? So, next time when you out and I'll tell you a little more.

Q. Well, I'll stop by and see...I'll turn this on, now if you...

A. I'll have it all recorded and then I'll have it ready to you when you come, we're going to have some more meetings after this and while I'm on the meeting I'll

take most of the record in Navajo like today see, it's best for me to get it in the Navajo because they all talk Navajo according to their own law that even if I know how to talk English they tell us that don't talk Navajo because the rest of the communities are mostly uneducated. So, be sure and talk Navajo so they can understand the meaning of what a person is going to say, see? See, like him, this policeman he knows how to talk English so you and him together, you can talk English to each other and the community inside and the chapter house you got to talk Navajo.

- Q. O.K. Tom, I never enjoyed talking to cops very much, he sort of scared me at first, he said what you doing here, you know. I said, I'm waiting for Tom. He said, ah...Tom don't want to see you, you don't know him. Yes I do!
- A. He's my cousin.
- Q. Yeah, that's what he said.
- A. He's a nice fellow.
- Q. Yeah, he turned out to be pretty nice.
- A. Yeah, that's the way it goes, they been talking about sheep and land all those sort of things and he says that some of these people think it's this trader, he's very honest man, treats the Navajo people right and he tired to help them in the best way he can, so he talks

about the trader and they talk about the land and how it's going to be set up and they talk about the timbers and about the home improvement, all those things.

Q. What kind of improvements?

A. Home improvement, better home, built by a better housing, let us take the people off the dirt and right now some of them are still living in the dirt. Dirt floor, let us build better homes for them, put some more children in the school, give them more education that is what they were talking about today. And the livestock and the water, all those things they have been talking about and I was going to introduce you but you was not in there so I just told the community that I had a partner of my boss here I want you to meet but I think he went home but he was out there I don't but I tell them I work with him so it's alright, and they said because white people know what they're doing. Yeah, that's the way thing's going and they talk about this cattle guard here, like the way...like where we turn in there should be a cattle guard next...like these there is no cattle guard here and we have got to work together with the road department see what we can do with them to build us some cattle guard, that's what they talk about too, there are alot of things, just coming new all the time.

Q. You look like you were right on the ball up there with everybody?

A. Yeah, I don't know if I can make them appreciate my help or things like that stuff like that. I think they are away up there, it's over there, there's nobody home here.

Q. I'm going to Isleta, where are you going, you want a ride down there, well, just sit here or you can sit in the back. I'm going about 10 miles past Isleta, I'm going to let you out, you can cross over to the right highway. You went to California? What did you do out there? Where in California?

A. King City.

Q. King City, now that is in the valley, isn't it? I am just trying to think of where that is.

A. Near San Francisco...

Q. On, near San Francisco?

A. Yeah...

Q. How far from San Francisco would you say?

A. Well...

Q. What's that?

A. Oh, about 150 miles.

Q. Oh, 150 miles...it isn't over in the San Joaquin Valley is it?

A.

Q. Was it close to Fresno?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah, it was close to Fresno?

A. Yeah.

Q. I used to live out there near Fresno and King City is familiar...that place near there...are you from Fresno?

A. No, I just visit there.

Q. What?

A. I have a son there...

Q. I never have been down there...

A. Brownsville.

Q. Are you going to go to work down there in Brownsville?

A.

Q. Did you go over to the Salinas Valley any...?

A. Salinas?

Q. Yes, did you go over there?

A. No.

Q. Have you been hitchhiking about every year to California?

A. No, just this year...

Q. Oh, this is the first year that you are going out there?

-----INTERUPTION

A. Try to do better work with the jewelry, all those things...yeah, they have done pretty good, so far, we have everything is new to us here again and so, we start off in a different way. That girl used to be

secretary here...and she told me, where she is working in Albuquerque now...and so she told the people, I hope and you people will do good like we have done for you, we have put out alot of things for you...she told me and one of them got up and said, we appreciate your help...and so we see what we can do and what we are to do, but they told us that we have been changed around...and this one was the vice chairman and they didn't have no secretary and he put them back on a secretary job...and I don't know how long it is going to ask, but it is a job around the area here and we need more better roads, we are going to do some shallow wells...and they talk about that...what do they call about shallow wells, springs you know, you set up some cement blocks, down in the ground...and that is what they call shallow wells...and I think the Squaw Dance in a way is just about gone now, it is getting old, I am thinking that this might be the last week that we are going to have weather and then the Yeibichai the fire dance.

Q. Yeibichai is just in the wintertime?

A. Yes, just in the wintertime...

Q. Fire dance?

A. Yes, it is the season now...the fire dance...and all the they want to, help all they can and all

the ceremonies...they come from and they say that they told the people to save all the money that they can and put it in the time for them some place that can be used for well be up today...because the change that they are going to make in Washington and it is going to be like old there might be, there might be hardly pretty hard to get jobs, that is what they say...so that is why you do the best you can and then you are going to around and after the election, everything changed,

Q. Will things get harder after the election?

A. Yeah, after the election everything changes a, cause if the takes over, then everything changes, but if the Democrat gets along...President, it will stay the way that things are...

Q. What do the Indians think is best for them, Republican administration or Democratic...?

A. Democratic.

Q. Democratic? Why do you say that?

A. Because they say that there is more money coming up when the Democrats come in, they think that most of the Republicans are rich people, and so they don't, they think that they don't care about the poor, that is what they think but they know that there is millions of Republicans are poor, that is why they are voting

that way, Republicans is better than...I mean the Democrat is better than the Republican... Every Indian that is born in the reservation that are growing into Democrat...I don't know why, somebody had an idea in the first place, they were teaching the other Indians...

Q. Well, what about under the Eisenhower administration, did the Indians...did they like that administration?

A. Not too good, no...

Q. Why not?

A. Because of the reason that most of them are associating with the white people...that is what the real problem is... Well, I don't know what is going to happen next.

Q. Well, what else do you talk about in the chapter meeting.

A. Well, they talk about the chairman too, maybe not but he was in there when they talk about it...they was talking about the chairman. They said that the Chairman we had didn't done any good for us, all he done was against us.

Q. You mean Nakai?

A. Yea, that what they said.

Q. Why, what do they mean by that?

A. 'Cause Raymond Nakai made agreement with the government that we should pay for our land, before that, we would

not pay for the land here or the place where we live. Now they have to pay for it, and that's why they made the Indians have a hardship.

Q. Oh, I could have been against that.

A. You don't think it's that?

A. No, I'm in favor the Indians to have the land you know, it's their land anyway.

A. Well, I think that's just because they think it's just like in their early days some ranchers sell land and he keeps it for himself, but today it looks like it's going to be the same way. It's like pretty soon these white people might hate them. We might be all get into boxes where we can live together like the Pueblos 'cause that's what they are trying to do with us, you see?

Q. And the Navajos wouldn't like that?

A. No, they like to be scattered out, that's why they... oh, look at that somebody's had a wreck!

Q. Looks that way, well, the line's going anyway.

A. Yeah, I bet you somebody got hurt because see all these lights here and all those cars, somebody had a good wreck. Let's go easy and find out further down the road. Let's stop...you stop on the other side. Oh, it's just a big truck, you stop up here and wait for me by the gate there.

- Q. O.K. I'll go wait at the gate....Just a by-word, that was an accident in which one of the occupants was killed, apparently is a relation of Tom Pation, I think a wife of his uncle. The apparent cause of the accident was drinking.
- Q. I had an interview on this day October 18, 1968. The machine wasn't working properly so I didn't pick up the recording. The gist of the recording is as follows. Two Indians Pamon Arminez and another fellow who's name I didn't catch was hitchhiking between Albuquerque and El Paso. They were Indians or of Indian blood and they claim to be Indians from and living in the area around Brownsville and Matamores, Mexico. They travel all around the United States, they have worked in places like Fort Meyer, Florida, they have worked around in the area of Lima, Ohio and also worked in Michigan and Wisconsin. In North Dakota they worked in beet fields according to them and they have worked in Colorado beet fields in the southeastern part of the state. Their English was pretty bad so they couldn't tell me too much about what they knew of their own ancestry and their own history. They are... they worked also in California, matter of fact they just returned from King City, California north of San Lupez. Their most liable contribution was that they

like the United States and they enjoyed traveling through it in a hitchhike fashion. The original interview which was not successfully recorded was much more lengthy than this, but this is just a summation of what they said. Let's see, I'm talking to Stephanie Iyalla at the Blake, New Mexico, who has some information for us concerning Mexican Indians. O.K. Will you tell us a little about past routine, just forget about that, you always act like it's a bomb. When did Parraqueten erupt?

A. I don't remember exactly the date of this, except they were plowing here, this was on church property see, and everybody had to go work and you know, instead of getting money to the priest they used to raise corn and raise chickens and raise stuff like that for the priests you know, and one day they couldn't get those mules close to this area you know, and one day and they saw the smoke coming up so this place is called Rabbitt, you know, Conejo, and the one they have now is the government gave them after it erupted.

Q. But the new town that the Mexican government...

A. The new town that the government gave them is Parraqueten. They did you know, they went from house to house on horseback and got all these people out and by 2:00 well, the whole shebang...well, the only thing

you can see from Rabbit or Conejo, as we call it, is the church steeple, you know...

Q. The only thing left?

A. That's all you can see now.

Q. What time of the day did Parraqueten begin to erupt?

A. Well, when they saw this, it was, it must have been in the wee hours of the morning 'cause that's when they get up to cultivate you know, wee hours of the morning, and it went up at 2:00.

Q. How did it go up, did it just pop out of the ground...?

A. Well, they said that it...you know just sort of like big colorful water, but it isn't you know, it's lava you know, start shooting up, rocks and everything it exploded for miles, he said, you know, I didn't see it.

Q. Were there any warning signs before it erupted?

A. No, that's all they saw, just a little smoke from a cigarette you know, and the mules and oxen would even get close to that area, it was a big area you know...

Q. And your husband, Mr. Ayala actually owned part... some of the land that was covered?

A. Yes, not right here, but where they were plowing that particular day but he owned some of that land, he's got another piece of land now that the government gave his mother and him while he was over there near Parraqueten, Conejo, that is all under hill it is under

a huge mountain now, and they tell me they're starting to cultivate now...

Q. It is good land?

A. Yeah, orchards are all over the place.

Q. Orchids?

A. No, orchards.

Q. How long was your husband born at Conejo?

A. He was born in Conejo, he was born in a little in Corrales, this is like Corrales but this was the same area, you know, but they call it La Raya, they call it the line.

Q. The what?

A. The line, La Raya, but it is just like the land in Corrales and things like that you know, La Raya. But he actually lived for many years in Conejo.

Q. Well, what type of Mexican Indian is he?

A. He's Aztecan.

Q. He's Aztecan, how long did he live around Parraqueten before he moved?

A. All his life, I guess...oh, you mean after he moved from Conejo to Parraqueten. He came to the states... well, you know they were leading the Braceros at the time remember?

Q. Was he one of the braceros and he was a very young man and the government, the Mexican government gave them

a raise...they lost everything you know, they lost everything.

Q. In Parraqueten?

A. Yeah, they lost everything you know, from this volcano you know, they lost all their furniture, they just moved out and moved out running you know.

Q. How long was it afterwards that the Mexican government gave your husband and the other people from Parraqueten permission to come to the United States as ?

A. Well, I'm not quite sure, he told me but I'm not quite sure you know, he's told me alot of times...I just don't remember, I just don't remember, it wasn't very long because you know, maybe 6 months, maybe sooner than that.

Q. How did he come to be living over in the Parraqueten area in the first place, do you know?

A. All his folks live there for many, many generations, I guess, as far as he can remember, his grandpa, his great-grandpa, and everybody in his family.

Q. Does he go back to Conejo?

A. Toand from, yeah.

Q. Does he go back every year?

A. No, just whenever he's got the money.

Q. That wouldn't be very often in my case.

A. No, not in his either, he didn't go this year if he

wanted to, we were re-modeling the place, so he didn't go.

Q. Tell me a little bit more about Parraqueten, anything you can think of referring to what happened and the... anything about Parraqueten and the land about there... have you been to Parraqueten yourself, how would you describe the volcano?

A. Well, there is huge mountain, you know and you can't get too close because it's still bubbling, burning...

Q. You mean it's actually still bubbling?

A. Oh yes, it doesn't still run out you know what I mean, you just hear it grumbling, and thundering and all that and you can't get too close to it.

Q. You can actually hear it?

A. Oh yes!

Q. Can you walk up to the top and look down in it?

A. No.

Q. They won't let you?

A. They won't let you, too dangerous.

Q. Can you think of any stories, Stephanie, about what people did when this thing erupted, any individual stories like some woman grabbed her cat and ran away somewhere or you know anything about that?

A. No, but I'll tell you what Tony tells me, he described things you know 'cause I'm quite interested you know.

He describes you know, those wagons...there's no road there was no road, there is a road now, but there wasn't a road up there, you know. They used to go horseback, see, it's way, way up in the hills, he's way up in the hills you know, and there was no road. So, they make those wagons you know, with great big wheels of pieces of wood you know.

Q. Just carts? Caretas?

A. Yeah, caretas, and then they used to pull it with a wagon you know, ox, you know and he said you could just see them people coming down from the hills you know, all over in them things you know, was their babies and here they come.

Q. Was anybody trapped or killed?

A. No, the priest was all over you know.

Q. The priest got everybody out?

A. Because you know, they are so much out in the hills that they didn't have like a mayor and this and that.. it was always the priest, everything like this say you go so mad with your wife well, the priest was the one that settled disputes and if you wanted to get married the priest would do it and if you wanted to do this, if you wanted to have a child the priest would intervene...the priest was right in there you know, they were from the hills...actually the priest was sort of

education then and doing things for them 'cause you know, they're pretty naive and you know...

Q. Were there many Aztec Indian living right around Parragueten?

A. Oh yes. Of course, there is alot of lava you know... like... Mesclados.

Q. What did you call that?

A. Lava you know, they mix with...you know with Spanish people.

Q. Mestizos.

A. Yeah, that's what they call them over there, Mesclados.

Q. Mesclados...but is Tony pure Aztec Indian as...

A. No, I don't think so because Ayala used to be a Spanish name. Lucim used to be something else, I don't know, Lucim is his first name.

Q. What else did people do when they heard about Parragueten.

A. Some people tried to drag the saints you know, they are very devoted Catholic you know. They drag them so far and they are great big statues, you know.

Q. You mean some people were actually dragging the saints to save them?

A. You know how they make a broomstick and drag things around, you know how they used, you've seen them in T.V's haven't you?

Q. The travois?

A. Yeah, uh-huh, you know, make them out of you know, trees, or something, but they drag or pull on this. That beautiful thing that you call pampa...we use it for alot of things, you know they made those things and tried to drag it, but there were no roads up there so they dragged them.

Q. Out of the church?

A. Out of the are, you know out of the whole area, not only the church but out of the whole area, see, they were dragging several of these things.

Q. Did the priest encourage them to take these statues?

A. No, no, no, he was trying to make them go, no, not him, he wanted the people out, he said nothing because the carts would get as many people as they could in everything, burros and everything they could so they could go out because there was no road, he was afraid you know, he was afraid they would run back around, he had no way of knowing what time the volcano would erupt. So, I asked Tony, what did you do, and he said the priest was just like a wild man he said he just kept pushing people and kicking them, you know, going in the house and just you know (Spanish) you know as far as he can you know, so he was good and mad from one place to the other.

- Q. How old was your husband who owned this land or when this eruption occurred?
- A. Oh, he was quite young, I don't remember exactly, but I guess he was...he must have been around 18 or so, or maybe...
- Q. 18, right around 18?
- A. 18 or 20 years.
- Q. Was Conejo's the only town destroyed by the...?
- A. Conejos was the only town.
- Q. Did it destroy fields as well as...
- A. Everything, everything they had.
- Q. What time of the year was it?
- A. Well, they plant twice a year over there.
- Q. I guess the corn was already up.
- A. Well, they bloom twice a year over there so I wouldn't know. See, this is up, I wouldn't know, they plant twice a year so I don't know yet, but see, right in January they are picking their corn, they have water-melons in December so I wouldn't know if it was winter or summertime, that I don't know but I know I was living in Arizona and the first Braceros we got over there was the wintertime you know around December when the first crop you know, was the first lettuce crop and they all said they came in the spring.
- Q. Oh, they did? They all said they came from ?

- A. See, they give priority to the ones that didn't have no money you know, no money, no thing, the government loaned them some stuff to buy blankets and stuff they paid them, no furniture, no nothing, a whole bunch of times they need money you know,... It was like a nightmare he said that bubbling and bursting...see, it was and it shook, it shook.
- Q. It shook the earth?
- A. Oh yeah, just like earthquakes do, he said everything everytime it went out he said that gurgling and burping and just you know, that tremendous force he thought the whole earth was just going to give in, he said he was scared three days later he said he was way, way down in La Jolla 'cause that is where they all went, you know.
- Q. La Jolla?
- A. Yeah, he said they were way down there and he said the first night they had to sleep on the floor and they were hard you know, and he said that rumbling and that awful feeling you know, he could feel it at night all, all over La Jolla, it was just covered with dust, hard and everything was just covered with dust.
- A. Yeah, he said it was awful way down to the, they had so much dust he said they had about 2 inches of dust.

Q.

A. Yeah.

Q. How far is La Greya?

A. Oh, that's pretty far, but I wouldn't know when we have the

Q. And your husband's name is Tony Ayala and he actually owned land there? Did he own it himself or did his mother own it?

A. Well, his mother

Q. His mother owned it, how much of her land was destroyed?

A. I guess all, whatever it was, 65 acres.

Q. 65 acres? How much land were they give to compensate for?

A. I don't know.

Q. Was it good land that they were given?

A. Oh yes!

Q. What did they raise?

A. Corn, corn was the main crop and beans and cerrantos.

Q. Cerrantos? What's that?

A. Sort of look like a bean.

Q. Well, I've heard of that but I can't place it.

A. Well, it sort of looks like a bean, you know.

Q. I've heard of it but I can't place it.

A. It is sort of like a bean, it looks like corn or it has lots of oil...they feed pigs with it, and themselves

- too, 'cause it's so oily see? Corn the
they go so far with corn but if you they'll
go all the time, I mean they'll eat it all the time,
corn alone, the hog shouldn't eat corn all the time.
- Q. I think I've heard of it in that connection, feeding hogs.
- A. The yellow, it very good and that's what they raise. Of course, they raise green and red chili, they raise vegetables and stuff like that, their main crop is chili, corn and beans.
- Q. Just a little bit off the track from Paraqueten... How do you compare Belen chili with Mexican chili, which is hotter?
- A. The same.
- Q. The same, I've heard some people say that Belen chili is hotter than any chili in Mexico.
- A. I don't, I would think Jalapeno and and a whole bunch of it, is the same as Mexico, we used to doctor it up with avocados, our very best chili, I used to doctor it up, but the heat you know, I can't stand it.
- Q. How long did the Parraqueten continue to erupt?
- A. I understand from what he says, I understand I think it was two or three years but you... know...
- Q. It just continued...

- A. It just continued and then it stopped flowing of the lava, just it still gets angry now and again, but not to erupt the way it did the first time, it just keeps working there, you know, rumbling you know, and all that. They're afraid of it...let's see 1957 when we were there and we were up there and I didn't like the idea of that thing making that awful noise, I didn't like it, I was frightened.
- Q. Tony took you over to the...
- A. Well, yeah.
- Q. Did he show you where his farm used to be...in the general area?
- A. No, just in the hills he said I used to live...we were in the hills quite far you know, we went horseback and then we tried to see the people of that church but I was kind of afraid you know, I didn't want to go too close and he showed me all you know, from way up this hill, you know, that are made out of that lava stuff you know, of course, grass coming up now you know, alot of things are coming up, and we stood up there for a long time and he said my...you know we used to have a centennial and all my relatives were buried there and this and that.
- Q. They're really buried now?
- A. Oh yeah, there is a mountain as big as I am...

Q. That's probably one of the biggest monuments in the world.

A. Yeah, and it was right in the middle of the, see this little church? It was right in the middle of this area, you know, this little church and the place where the land is, I forget, he had 15 or so many acres or for sale, I don't what that is...10, but that was donated to the church and you see each one of the men worked with, told the priest so he would .

Q. The priest actually...

A. They had to feed him somehow you know, the priest, that's the way they fed him, that's the way they fed him, but it's very pretty over there, colorful, people are very poor, of course, but beautiful. You never seen a beautiful place than over there, very colorful. Anything they make they take the roots you know that tile, I don't know what you call that kind of tile, you don't see very much around here...

Q. I think I know, is it red?

A. Yeah, and they dye it over there, of course, they dye it mostly red because they have a dye you know, up in the hills you know, we have a dye, but they dye it all colors, very colorful, very pretty and Parraqueten they lived here and then the road comes and then you go down, you see the big jungle, the park and you see

all this beautiful stuff. There is alot of Mexican tile and all that. It is beautiful, flowers, hills around the park and you see all this beautiful stuff and they

Q. How far was the church from the mountain?

A. Well, you drove up town and the church was right in the middle of town.

Q. How many people lived in town?

A. Well, he said there were about 70 houses.

Q. 70 houses, were all these houses destroyed, every one of them?

A. Yes.

Q. Did Tony who was of Aztecan ancestry, did he live in town or live out on a farm?

A. No, he lived in town, they were quite poor, this is a hill you know, this...hill is very, very far from everything, very far from all the big towns, see, and they made a sort of a little Indian settlement of some kind you know, and they had their place way off you know, where they...that's the way I understand, up on a little mesa you know, they lived right there and then down below they did all their agriculture. Now that's the way I understnad it and I used to tell them, you know why did you live with each other? Well, he said there was so few of us you know, like maybe one lives

over there, like I live over there and I said why not and then they don't have water like we do here, they don't dig wells you know, they have a well for all this thing here.

Q. They don't have separate well, they have one common well?

A. One common well.

Q. How much property did he lose, I mean in value, in terms of what it would cost now?

A. I don't know.

Q. You don't, but they were given about 65 acres?

A. I don't know how much they gave them but they gave them whatever they had, I suppose, I don't know.

Q. Is...well, is Parraqueten located, which direction from Conejos?

A. Parraqueten is located, I say in...well, I don't know... it's up in the hills and then came down, I don't know.

Q. Is it further towards the ocean, Parraqueten?

A. No, it's right there you know, it's not any farther.

Q. Is the Mexican government give land to everybody that had lost?

A. Yeah, but he said they would never be able to farm this place here, there is just a mountain through there you know...

Q. It is quite unusual for a mountain to be...

- A. Where agriculture was...you had better believe it.
He had tried at several places, but it took him a long time...you should talk to him.
- Q. Yeah, I would like to visit him.
- A. And then you can see the orchards all over the place in between your rocks...maybe a little walk, a little deal you know, to hang onto and they grow beautiful you know...trees like that in their orchards.
- Q. It's alot prettier than here, huh?
- A. Huh?
- Q. It's alot prettier than here?
- A. You mean this area here?
- Q. This area here.
- A. You know it's a desert, yeah, you know what I mean?
- Q. Yeah, but there is much more vegetation there?
- A. Oh yeah! This is south here, over there you get nothing.
- Q. They what?
- A. They plant twice a year, or they harvest twice a year. It's about 270 miles, this side of Mexico City.
- Q. Stephanie, do you remember Tony telling you how they managed to live when they got over to where they had fled to?
- A. Well, the first man, you know, the priest...well, see the priest was their mayor, their everything, he was

the one that went to the government, set up food and lodging and everything when they ran from this Conejo.

Q. Did he tell any stories about whether they had enough food?

A. Well, enough food, you know, not for everybody, I don't think, but what they had they made enough of and they just lived wherever they could until the government found a place for them to go and they had no blankets, no nothing, all they had was food, strong men...

Q. Did they stay with friends or...?

A. No, it was just, a cuartel, where the soldiers' lodge you know, cuartel...

Q. Oh, they stayed sort of in a soldiers barracks?

A. And they gave them grass shacks and then they had to do their own cooking out in the open.

Q. Like camping out wasn't it?

A. Yeah, they lived like that until the government gave them new land.

Q. Well, when the government gave them new land after their escape from Parraqueten did they also build structures and houses for the people or did the people have to do that themselves?

A. No, they did that themselves, they pulled their strength in, whatever they had you know, they build it themselves.

Q. Did the government help supply any building material, tools?

A. I don't know, he never did say, but I think so, where else could they get them from...like lumber and tools, I guess the government helped them. But he said if you ever wanted to be scared and think the world was coming to the end, you see the eruption of a volcano, you want to die, die right now!

Q. I imagine that was pretty frightening, yeah!

A. Yeah, he thought he would never be alive the next morning. He said he never prayed the way he prayed then, he just kept running and pushing people, the old people, and stuff like that, pushing and pushing.

Q. Was there much panic?

A. No, because there was not too many people, you know, not thousands or even several hundreds, there was only 70 houses there, about he said. Most of it was clubs, I guess, you know how it is, married. He said the Mendoza's were there and they can give details.

Q. Which Mendoza's?

A. You know

Q. You're not Indian so they won't talk to you? Gee!
What else can I ask you?

A. Everytime that I think about something I want to tell you I should write it down.

Q. You should do that...

A. Yeah, I am going to do that because every time I think about it 'cause he has told me alot, at night when he talks about it.

Q. Did the people think that this was some kind of omen or manifestation of the rath of God or something like that? God was punishing them?

A. Yes, for a long time, they did.

Q. Did the priest encourage that?

A. No, the priest told them that you know, it was one of those things. They kept blaming each other, you know, for not living a good life.

Q. Could you speak a little bit louder Stephanie, it is hard to pick up. What you say is pretty valuable, the best interview I've had so far on subject like that.

A. Well, lots of people fear God you know, and they said well, this is you know, the kind of thing where they would all be dead you know, they were leading such a simple life, you know.

Q. It was just a natural occurances. I guess...then what happened, did they leave many animals behind?

A. Everything they had, they had left, but they were poor people, very poor, whatever they had, 2 or 3 cows maybe, maybe a few chickens.

Q. Did Tony ever go back, I mean how long was it after eruption that Tony was back where they used to live,

maybe at the chance of getting their furniture?

A. Well, they didn't, you know, because the law wouldn't let them go, see, the law didn't want nobody around after while.

Q. Oh, did the Mexican government didn't let...

A. The Mexican government wouldn't allow any of them to go, and then of course they saw this because you see, they saw it multiplying and before you know, there was a huge mountain and they knew that they had nothing there and then several more grew around this mountain, and you know, you'd be surprised how a big one right there you know, and then several little ones all around here.

Q. Several small volcanos?

A. No, several hills.

Q. When the volcano started when it just started building, was there a hill there before?

A. No, no, just where they were cultivating.

Q. It came right up in a field didn't it? A corn field, did they own that corn field?

A. The priest did.

Q. Oh, the priest owned that particular corn field?

A. Yes, that is what he supported himself with.

Q. How much land did the priest have, would you estimate?

A. They call it a parcela, whatever that is.

Q. Parcela, or parcel of land?

A. Whatever that is, I don't know. Maybe 10 acres, I don't know.

Q. And Tony, after your husband, Tony, left Conejo and went over to Parraqueten, how long did he live in Parraqueten before became bracero?

A. I guess, well, maybe 6 months, maybe 8 months or so.

Q. 6 months, less than a year then?

A. Maybe something like that, you know, in Parraqueten, but we started the home he says...some of the people of Parraqueten, they went down to where they have the statue of Relleno Zapata.

Q. To ?

A. Yeah, that is the capitol, some of them went over there and the rest of them went some other place, he used to tell me his immediate family, you know, like uncles and his mother and all that, they just follow, they went right to Parraqueten, you know, the other people had kids someplace, you know, they had school in another mountain, you know, like those Indian villages that is what they look like too, that one up here, they have the well right here, you know, and all their stuff right here, and they haul them. All the rivers you see, up in the mountains right there. They get together you know because of the gato montes...

wildcat, gato montes.

Q. Gato montes...wildcats?

A. Yeah, gato montes, you know, it is wild, I think it is part of the one end of the world, and the river way down there.

Q. Did Tony ever have a desire to go back to the volcano?

A. The old country, oh yeah, he has.

Q. What has he said about that?

A. Well, he hopes someday to go back there.

Q. He thinks he'll go back there and live?

A. Just one of those things, I guess, you always want to go back, but I don't think he will, though, he got too used to this place.

Q. Did he ever tell you about life where he lived in Conejos before the volcano erupted, did he ever mention anything he used to do...what would he do for entertainment in Conejos?

A. Well, they pulled together, you know, well, they used to have dances you know, their way of dancing you know, was not like ours.

Q. How would they dance?

A. Well, I suppose that they used to do the Zapateado.

Q. What?

A. Zapateado, whatever that is, I don't know.

Q. Zapateado?

A. Yeah, I don't know what that is, I never have actually seen the dance, there are alot of them but I have never seen Zapateado, and they used to carve things, you know, they have mohogany out there, they used to carve things for pastime. They even put a gate at their house, you know, carved out of that mohogany.

Q. They even carved out a gate of mohogany?

A. And doors, you know, two doors for a gate, you know. You know how they build at home don't you, they have well right there this is the wall and then they make another wall here, you know and there is all the rooms there see, there's all the rooms as many rooms as you want but not connected. You go in this room and go out and you go in and there is a great big porch right there and then this is where the gate is right there, you have to go in this gate otherwise you see a big wall you don't see nothing.

Q. The one that is shaped like a U?

A. No, it's a square deal.

Q. Oh...square deal?

A. Yeah, just square, like that but they build their home right in there, see?

Q. So, they leave the central part open?

A. Yeah, it's a patio, that's the patio and then they have the 2 doors right there, big ones you know, the big

doors right here.

Q. And the rooms don't connect to one another?

A. No, if you want to go in this room and you want to go to the next one, you have go out this door and in the other one, in here is the great big porch, and you go in this room and go in this other one and go out and they have a kitchen all by itself and it's suppose to be right in the back of this place, this is where the kitchen is.

Q. So, in order to go from one room to the next you have to go outside?

A. That's right and go in around.

Q. Does one family own this things or does it belong to alot of families?

A. No, one family.

Q. One family, why don't they connect the different rooms?

A. I don't know, I never asked.

Q. Is that the way the houses were built that were destroyed at Parraqueten?

A. No, that's the way the houses are in Conejo, and that's the way the houses are built in Parraqueten now and that's the way they were when they were destroyed but they only leave a little part of the yard and then another one is built right there and there might be another little yard and then another house there and

the whole village is right there, in this one area and they live right in the middle there, like they built a hole around here is the remaining house they will build an area around that and then they build a pond right here, they build a pond right next to the house, but they don't have streets, they used to have

but they used to have streets but they are building there, but they had some before.

- Q. What else can you remember, Stephanie, about Tony's describing the eruption of Parraqueten. Was there much smoke in the air?
- A. It was just black like the sun had gone out.
- Q. There was actually no ?
- A. Oh yes! It was completely dark, they went in darkness. See, 'cause they moved there, within two days they moved into Los Reyos.
- Q. To where?
- A. Los Reyos, they call it, they moved in carts, you know. And they moved there, cart and everything, whatever they could and they worked one night and two days and they got to the place. It was really dark and by 3 o'clock you could just see the guys who were ahead of him.
- Q. It was actually like a big black fog?
- A. With dust.

Q. With dust.

A. And then

Q. Did the earth ever shake do much that he was thrown down?

A. No, people just panicked, people start crying and running, you know.

Q. There were alot of noises too?

A. Oh yeah, very much, he thought it was, you know, the end of the earth.

Q. He thought that?

A. Oh yeah.

Q. Did alot of people think the world was coming to an end? I probably would too when I was there.

A. Everyone of them, they thought that they would never get anywhere. One of those great big grumbles that they would be gone, the earth would just open its mouth and that was it. That's what he's said up to now, he said one of them grumbled and I would be way down there but nobody got hurt. They just got away fast.

Q. How fast was the lava advancing, could they actually see the...at any time see the lava coming down on the city?

A. No.

Q. I wonder how fast it went?

A. I don't know.

Q. How far did they go the first day before they stopped?

Did they get to Los Reyes?

A. No, they walked all day, that night and the next day they got to Los Reyes but I don't know how far the first day.

Q. They just camped out that night...did he ever say anything about his experiences that night while they were still in the state of panic probably?

A. Well, nobody was hungry, nobody wanted to sleep, they just build a fire.

Q. They weren't hungry?

A. No, nobody has no food, no nothing. The government was notified by the priest so he could get help and they took the priest in. They continued on their journey.

Q. Do you know exactly where they were going or were they just going?

A. Yeah, the priest told them.

Q. How far did they go before they found out...before the priest told them where they were going, do you know, was it the first day?

A. Oh yes, right away, he just kept going from one to the other, we were all going to Los Reyes right away, we're heading to Los Reyes. Going with their house and kids

and wife.

Q. Did the government supply them with food while they were moving at any time?

A. No.

Q. I guess they were pretty hungry when they got to...

A. Well, he said everybody was panicky, they were afraid that Los Reyos was going to go under too, because they could feel the earth and everybody thought that Los Reyos was going to go under and them too.

Q. How far is it to Los Reyos?

A. I don't know.

Q. How far?

A. I don't know how far it is.

Q. They walked all the way?

A. They is nothing there where they lived except a hill up there, covered with lava...great big hill, great big.

Q. Tony has never been off that hill before and he was the first ones to go and blow down in the hole?

A. Yeah.

Q. And he was the one that went and told the priest?

A. Yeah, him and two more of his kinfolk you know.

Q. He and two more?

A. Yeah, those three told the priest, it was so hot, you know, they were close to it.

Q. It was right in the middle of the field, there was smoke

coming out of it.

A. Just like a little cigarette, you know?

Q. How large was the hole?

A. Just like a cigarette.

Q. Just like a cigarette hole at first, and then he went and told the priest.

A. He said, oh my God and when he saw it you know, hysteria, he saw the volcano and he said, run, children, run!

Q. That's what the priest said and the priest knew right away that it was a volcano developing.

A. He knew right away, and by 10 o'clock, oh no, he said, that was the least of my worries, my feet were bleeding 'cause I lost my huraches, he said that was the least of my worries.

Q. He just started walking barefoot 'cause he lost his shoes?

A. One time during the trip he said he was pushing a cart and was helping other people and make beds on the hillside and I guess one of his straps broke.

Q. One of the straps to his huraches?

A. Yeah, one strap broke.

Q. What did he have in the cart that he was pushing?

A. The family, a baby.

Q. A baby?

A. Yeah, a baby.

Q. I'm interviewing the wife of one of the survivors of Parraqueten, Mexico. I told you they were good people. No, this is the best one I've gotten so far. Well, her husband is related to the Aztec and he is going to tell her the story, anything that you can think of that he knows, just say one day tell me one of the stories or legends you know, that he knows, you know and it doesn't have to be exactly perfect or anything just as long as you remember and on Tuesdays and Thursdays I'll come over here and interview you for an hour. Will that be O.K.?

A. Okay.

END OF TAPE