

Tape #392 (side 1)
NAVAJO
Oakee James
April, 1969
Recorded by Tom Ration

The Breece Lumber Company,
The Checkerboard Area, the
liquor problem especially
in connection with the
young generation

This is tape 2 of the district council meeting at Fort Wingate. Navajo people meet from all districts, 16. These various people are to talk about different things, most of them are in Navajo language. So, I'm going to still translate it as they go along. In the first talk with the meeting would be one of the members of the old time leader as they know would be the best to talk first. And this is a man named Willy Sanders. He is one of the outstanding medicine man of the 1969, from 1966 to 1969. And Mr. Willy Sanders is an age of around 83 years of age. He has known all kinds of culture legends and ceremonial that he has take up to the Gallup Ceremonial's time. So he is going to tell us about how we are going about in this new world of ours, that he wants to start it with back of ancient time throughout the Fort Summers Long Walk. So here is Mr. Willy Sanders to tell us about what he knows to the councilman meeting.

Chairman, vice chairman, secretary and visitors and the leaders and the community of this hall, I am very thankful to say hello to you all..... My story is not much to talk about anyway, I'll tell you a little about times how we think that we have gone out this far with our families and what not. We are very glad to say a little saying of what I know, a little about things. I just

don't know where to start with, but then I like to start during the time what my grandfather and grandmother told me about in the earliest days. I'll follow the story that Mr. Rafael told us. That is the story we all Navajo got, how our people are originated and how they have settled down, up to 1969. During the time of our people's time they have quite a story about themselves, which some of us that still think that they have done a great deal for us to place us a place like we are now living in around Gallup area and on through the Navajo Reservation up on clear to Utah, and outside reservation as far as Albuquerque, New Mexico.... and close to Magdalena and parts around Farmington. We have a very big territory which we know that our Navajo people are still increasing, and I just can't say that we don't know how farther we are going to be growing and I think we are just about outgrown our reservation today in 1969. Our tribal councilmen and our tribal chairman are trying to get us as many land as they could for us. They are working pretty hard everyday, they have bought some land that are being state land and some land that belongs to the ranchers in the earliest days, and even that much are bought that we think that it will be still enough for as many as we are... So, in a way that our old forefather has done pretty good for us which we are overgrowing our reservation.

The time in 1860 and little further back around 1859 and '58 there was a story brought up by my great grandfather that in those days people used to live in peace. They wander around about here

and there for quite a numbers of years and in these days they say that they don't even know what flour and coffee are. Later on, American people came in with flours and coffee which we are now using today. In these days they just use wild herbs mostly and wild game for meat. This is a long story if a man tells it step by step it will take days, and so I just step over most of these stories that I have know. Maybe sometime later I might have another chance to tell you more about it. There was a time that people talk about monsters. I think that's happen in the earliest days and my people tells about their own people, their old ruin people like Mesa Verde and Kings Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, Pueblo Bonito, Pueblo Alto and alot of ruins that we see that we don't even know who used to live there and what happened. The story comes along all the way from the ancient time, which most of our Navajo people know how what had happened, but some of them has a religious superstitious that they don't tell about. There is just a few of them can tell what it was in earliest days. So I will keep that aside for awhile, maybe some of these superstitious people are in these class here, but anyway I'll sneak around and grab what I can. My people say that these ruin people used to be our own people during the time of (?) people like was which they call the mix up(?) people like we have today. We marry the white man, we marry a white woman or they marry a color people and color people makes a great difference in our past that we run into like Mexicans, like Isleta, all these tribes that they have to live with and things happen in these days..... and there was

just a few of them what happened..... THIS PORTION INAUDIBLE.....

There are alot of things about our old ways in the earliest days as we been telling each other so often when we are gather up. During the time of our Fort Sumner's time our great grandfather and grandmother used to tell mostly all different kind of tales among the Navajo story today that we have got all through the Navajo Reservation that we all think about, think about our livestock and our homes. We never forget about all of these things. As I have known for many years ago the time when most of these reservation school start out, there are alot of things that I remember how they happen to start out in the earliest days. When I was about 8 years of age or 12 years of age what I say that I remember the time when I was herding sheep for my folks. I remember the time when they were telling stories about the school that has been started at Tohatchi and Crownpoint was just starting. I used to remember the time when there was just only one train going west, coming back west once a week to the east. There was no place the train could meet each other. I remember all of that and then later on there was a lumber company that came in which was called Breece Lumber Company. It was going on in Breece Mountain or else Zuni Mountain. There were some Navajo men that used to run some these railroad going through the mountain. These little train used to go just anywhere you will build a little track and they would haul out a whole load of timber. There were, I used to remember that there was alot of white people that were sawing lumber. I think that's what they call a lumber-

jacks. There were all kinds that came from somewhere. I used to remember in time when I used to watch them loading timbers on the train and in these days I used to go hunt prairie dogs. Prairie dogs were good then. Prairie dogs doesn't eat nothing but grass, just like rabbit and sheep and we used to eat them. There were no danger in that time but I think we don't know about it. Time went on years after years and in these days the Navajo people that worked in the Breece Lumber Company, the white people used to make ties there. The railroad was still going eastward. There was quite a long time since I remember all these things. I was a very young boy then. I used to work on the railroad, help work on the railroad in Breece Lumber Company. I used to carry water for the laborers and then finally my father was one of the section gang bosses on the railroad in these years. So I helped on the railroad job too. These days ties were different, ties were not oiled, they were just being trimmed off and then was laid under the rail. It don't last long, sometime they last about 4 to 5 years and then people, the railroad people, used to keep changing every 5 years, throw the bad ones out and put good ones in and then finally it didn't took too long. They replaced oiled hides which the people had changed the old tie, track by track, all the way to the east. Right along side there was another rail going along and some of these old folks used to work on section gangs and then they been hauling loads of the ties from the Breece Lumber Company. They used to be hauled out day and night, as they been doing this for 4 or 5 years. And finally they went and put

oiled ties all the way through Gallup and then on to the west and to California and then they took the other track all the way into California. About something like 4 or 6 years later we saw two trains, one going to the east and one going to the west. All this time I remember all these things. There used to be just only 3 houses at Thoreau, New Mexico. One big store was standing alongside the railroad and these station house too and another house and a store was a Mexican store too, that was married to a Navajo that run the first officer.

I remember the time when they used to have chicken pull on 4th of July. There was no fences being find. They never did thought of anything how we was going to be about in about another 50 or 60 years. So for all this years I had been with my grandmother herding sheep. People had which they call squaw dance here and there all over the reservation and there was a few score dance going on every year.

There were alot of other different job that was going on at Crownpoint, people was building the school, the boarding school at Crownpoint with a man named by Mr. F. S. Stacker, Mr. Stacker was a short, heavy set fellow. He was very kind man. During his days, Mr. Stacker used to ride a horse around with some of his helpers, and then in these days the Navajo were not allotted land, allotted to their land and then finally in 1908 he had to hire somebody to help the surveyor survey the land and give the Indians their rights to... for their deeds of land..... Everywhere where they find the Indian living, they give them allotted

land which was a very good thing to do. During this time the Navajo had all rights of their lands, they had mineral rights, oil rights, coal, whatever they find in their land, it was their own. This is the way Woodrow Wilson had describe. So all this time Mr. Stacker had surveyed the land with some Indian people. And then there was what they call a Checkerboard area. Today it is still known as a Checkerboard area. So the Indian has a right on what land he's got and during the oil leases the Indian had all rights through in their own land. So wherever they find oil, the Indian had to be paid for their oil. Later on they had found some uranium around close to Indian land and then they had some leaser, uranium leaser went around and leased quite a few lands and the Indian got their money out of their leases. So that was a good thing. Everything that is found in their land, it belongs to them. This was the way everything is run throughout the Navajo territory, and I was about something around 19 years of age then when I was leased, I mean when I had allotted land. It was a very good thing that was done throughout the outside reservation. Today the Navajo people are very well pleased about their land, how the government treat them in the year of their time. I used to remember the time when we Navajo

people used to get about 50¢ a day and we thought that was pretty good money. The people of these days some of them finally the wages went up a dollar a day. And then the time we thought we was getting rich, sugar was 10¢ a pound, coffee was 15¢ a pound, and the flour was 25¢ for 25 pound. So everything was very cheap, but in these days there were no market for wool or lambs, so the Navajos had to just keep on raising stocks in their land. Finally one Navajo came home with over 1000 head of sheep. We thought we were doing pretty good in that day in these years. Finally, the wool was picking up in every way and the Navajo people was just weaving rugs all over. They had all kinds of wool then, they don't sell it, so they just starting to working and weave all the rugs they can. I still got a rug that is made in 1908. One of my grandma made the rug and she gave it to me as a present. Even that time Navajo people was sure in a very good experience by weaving rugs. They had some good jewelry smith in these days too. We all have a very good time in our day with livestock. Today the young generation are having a good time with their school. The way we look at them, some of them are well educated and they are getting all kinds of good work jobs. So this is the way we been grew up.

In these early days we have to have, we used to have over 25 head of horses or 30 head. Then everywhere we have we think that we own the whole land and it was not turther. The government keep on working on us until finally we don't have nothing at all. There was quite a few ranchers been among the Navajo territory and then all of a suddenly most of those ranchers went away, disappear someplace. I think the government work them out too. They are not suppose to live around or something. This is the way the government helped the Navajo people in their area. This kept on from time to time and up today there are Navajo... there are more Navajo people in the Navajo reservation. We are overlap our reservation today but still, the only thing is that we don't own as much sheep that we used to have years ago, not even half of the sheep that we used to own. So, I'm telling you the best truth that I can about what I know and some people says that you can't find good water on top of the mountains but we did. We found some good, clear, good tasting water and so that the Navajo tribe are trying to get as much water for us as they can today. Some of us Navajo people have running water for our houses and there is just a few Navajo who are like that. And I just hoping that we all will be like that if we, if our councilmen work together and try

to get us all the land they can for us. I think we will be very well settled down. Today most of the Navajo people has finding good homes with what they got from the Navajo tribe. The Navajo tribe is getting all the land that they can through the Navajo territory or outside the reservation and we are all working together as much as we can. And there was a project program came in which they call the OEO and the tribe has got us some money from OEO and this OEO has sure helped the Navajo people. Before the OEO started we didn't have no houses and after they started the Navajo people began to have their houses built here and there all over the reservation, especially the younger generation that are just being married. The lumber is just been gaved to them from the tribe and the OEO company. The OEO works a different way, but anyway the ONEO says that they would do more if they keep the money on hand all the time. And so I thought and most of us think that the ONEO has done a great deal for us by building us mostly all the houses in the eastern Navajo reservation. So this is the way we live up today... Long time ago we Navajo people knew that it looks like it was nothing to our name, but all of a suddenly all these programs came out and finally we had to work together on it and now some of us Navajo are well fixed with our houses.

So we think the OEO, we don't know who started it, but it came through. Now they are doing more and more everyday. The ONEO has a big problem for us which we like throughout the nation. I don't think it's just only the Navajos but then there is something like this in these other pueblo Indian reservations. So I think in the next 5 or 6 years most of our boys and girls that are just married will have a very good place to live, a happy place and we all do sure appreciate with what our government is doing for us but we are kind of way back behind on our stock which we know that our livestock is our money, but then most of these people think that there is no use talking about sheep again and livestock because most of our young generation don't seem to care about herding sheep again. All they think about is coming back and going back to different towns and have a good time in town. Just because that there is quite a few bar drunks in town where the Navajo people hangs around all the time and we can't do anything for them because that our younger generation is the worst of all. We can't make them understand or make them believe that it is not a very good thing to drink wine because that wine is no good for us and no good for boys and girls, which we know from our young age, we sure could have used it too but there is nothing that we got

out of it. We just got poured on and some of us has been run over and some of us been driving and ride things over. Some of us was frozen to death... there was alot of things that happen to us. In the past few years we have lost quite a number of our Navajo people. So today the Wingate High School is talking about the same trouble that they just can't make them understand make them believe that wine is no good for them. Some of our students are like that today, which we know that the principal and the disciplinary and the matrons are telling us that they try to make them understand and always, especially weekends, they take off to town and then some of them gets into jail. This is the way we know about it so sometimes we have to write to their parents that we can't do nothing for their children and some of them we just have to send them back home on account of they can't learn or they don't listen and they don't obey. That's what they tell us today that they think that they can't control them. So that is a very bad thing that we Navajo are today. In the earliest days some of our Navajo people, boys and girls went to school and there are getting old today. We never heard them doing such a thing as that in school, but they have learned very good education. Today some of these people in the ear-

liest days that went to school is the only one that we look up that they are very good dependable people. Yet, there are quite a number of other Navajo generation don't listen throughout the Navajo reservation and I don't see why... or I don't see they made a big mistake of that. They had to vote the liquor into our reservation which has spoiled the whole thing in our life. Some of us used to have a pretty good way of living and then all of suddenly start to use liquor and this is the end of our good way of living. So, which I am telling you so far in the line of a story how our people are going through life and I think it's not the Navajos only... there are other different tribes throughout the nation, I think they are the same way. There are just quite a few white nation are like that and the rest of them are, they are settled down for good in the way of better living. This is the way we look at the white people, they have big, large city where they live and that's where we find out things what they are doing. Some of them have big stores, big grocery stores, big dry goods stores, machinery stores, all kinds of different stores in these big cities and we Navajo people ought to be like that but we can't learn, we just don't know why. I think the Almighty made us that way, so the world will

be turning around day and night. So we just don't know what to say about ourself today, but we are very sorry that we haven't learned nothing yet at all. Just a very few Navajo people are living the right way, like a man would say that 900 out of 1,000 Indian will not get along good even they are taught to be educated but they don't seem to do anything about themself. So that is one big question throughout our nation, Navajo nation. But some of these days I think we will get down to a better way of living but in the way like I say that the government has sure helped us by placing us in a good house, but we use our own lumber. The Navajo tribe has a big saw mill that they own and I think it is a good thing for the Navajo tribe to own a big saw mill which they can use to saw timber and build houses with. Otherwise we have to buy lumber from different other country, but this we have got on our own land which we are now running it where they call Navajo, and there are just a very few of us Navajo that are trying to live in a better way of life and trying to teach others what they should be, but we are trying our best and worrying our heads off in the way to place our own people... some of us are born that way. The Almighty gave us a life in the way like we are living today. So I don't know who to blame, but

anyway like I say we are just trying to live in the best way of our life. This is what I know of myself. Since I grew up and open my eyes up today, sometimes I say that I think I'm the only Navajo that don't drink, but there is some others here and there that has a very good idea of keeping away from liquor. This is what I really like to hear because myself, I don't even have a taste of wine yet. But in the way I'm just trying to tell others that it is a very good scheme to try to keep away from wine as much as we can. So my good friend and my listeners whoever listen to this tape, I like to tell you that wine is no good for nobody at all. I think it is good for bad people and wicked people but not for good people. This is what I'm saying throughout the Navajo reservation. I have been in the leadership for number of years and this is the way I know about what liquor is. Liquor is no good, it is an evil thing. I think they should use it where all the devils are, where the wicked people are. I think they should have it over there not on our good world and our good earth. And so I think I will tell you this much about myself and about my people. I just do hope some of these days some of us will learn about what is going on in the world. And we are trying to say that we must

help our people out of this old liquor way business throughout our country. And sometime I always talk to myself that I wonder how will it be another 50 years from now. I wish I was still young, I want to see the rest of the time, sometimes I say to myself. But the only man knows about it is the Almighty that made us. Well, my friend I think will come to a conclusion and I sure do thank you for the audience and the communtiy listening to me this long and I will say thanks for listening and thanks to you all for coming to the meeting. Thank you again.

END OF TAPE