

American Indian Oral History Collection
Transcript Record

Tape Number: 662 Side: 2

Date of Taping: 6/11/70

Field Worker(s): Veronica Velarde

Location: Dulce, NM

Tribe(s): Maricopa Apache, Ollero Clan

Narrator/Event: Buster Vicenti,

Additional Narrator(s): _____

Subject(s): Maricopa History

Current Events

Per Capita Payments - Beginnings +
Consequences

Land + Ranching Issues

Comments: Tribal History
Current Events
Land Tenure

AMERICAN INDIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

University of New Mexico

Tape Number: #662 - Side 2

Tribe: Jicarilla Apache

Informant: Buster L. Vicenti (age 62)

Informant's home address: Dulee, New Mexico

Band or Clan: Ollero

Date and location of interview: June 11, 1970 Dulee N.M.

Field Worker: Veronica Velarde

Date of transcription: ~~June 1, 1970~~ 9-70

Contents: Jicarilla History → Today.
Per Capita Payments: Beginnings of it and its consequences

Evaluation of Interview: It was very comprehensive and many names and dates were given which are important in that it may lead to more research.

Future Prospects:

Will talk to anyone about Tribal History

Tape #662 (side 2)
APACHE-JICARILLA
Buster Vicenti
Dulce, New Mexico
June 11, 1970
Interviewer - Veronica Velarde

Tribal History:
Beginning and consequences of
per capita payments
Land and ranching situation
(past and present)

This tape is a continuation of our interview with Buster
Vicenti.....

QV. You can go ahead and continue about the BIA.

AV. Well, I don't know..... but I think that the BIA is a
function is very definitely needed even today in the fact
that as a new organization that has been functioning since
1937, but I don't think that we feel the impact of all the
responsibility and maybe not to be throwing any broad hints
at any individual, but the people that act as the governing,
you might say the spearhead or the governing personality at
times get out of hand and I think that is the reason why we
have to be pretty careful in our selection of our chair-
man because I think we need somebody in there has the wel-
fare of all the people instead of all, periodically we have
a lot of trouble with our chairman going off and pulling
parties and getting drunk and stuff..... We know some of
these and we know that this is positive, takes place, and I
found out for a fact that they might be able, not able to
function as a governing body of any given people. I am not
saying that a man that drinks is not capable, I wouldn't
want to say that, because I think there is a lot of people
that drink and are still capable of handling their business.
But for myself, I feel that we need the cushioning, or I

don't know if that is the right term to use, of the BIA to back us up on all our functions, and we also at the present, right at this moment, we have a Secretary of our, in the case of Abeyta, that acts as a whole thing. In other words, he has control of all the finances, and he is an accountant and he takes care of all of the functions of our people and he knows more about it than the rest of the organization. I am sure that if he were to go up there, well he would almost direct you to Gabe (??). Do you verify that?

QV. I do.

AV. But the whole thing that I, I think that the BIA has been able to control, the other day we had a land claims committee, not claim but just allotment to different people and there was quite a bit of conflict between our people and I think that it was up to the tribal council, it would have been more conflict as it was, the land operations personnel instead of the committee that is on the board of the..... they have most of the Apache boys on it. But there is still a lot of criticism and a lot of dissatisfaction in the way that they handled that, and I think that we still need the BIA in order for guidance, in order to clear some of these things and keep them functioning the way we would like. We, I think that most of us in this generation, I think feel that we own the reservation and that we like to run it like

we did, before, but I am sure that right at this particular point, I don't think that any of us can turn back the pages of history and this is the way we are going to run it because we have wanted things that white civilization has brought to us. Just the fact that we are land conscious now and we start dividing the land and saying this is my areas here, and before we had never thought about that, in saying that this..... if we see our neighbors cattle we just look at it, and would pass on. But now we are getting land conscious and we say, we better get that fellow's cattle off, or take him in for trespassing. So I think all of this is perhaps maybe not a detriment to our tribe, but I think we can look at it, it has hurt us to the extent that we are trying to function under the whiteman's rule and not understanding it thoroughly as to what the whiteman's rule is providing for us. And the something.....

- QV. I was interested in what you think of it? Where the money comes from....?
- AV. Well when it was first brought up that we had so many millions of dollars in the treasury, I went to this, we talked about it and particular with John Mills Baltazar. We said, well I don't think that we ought to give it out to the people. And then the superintendent, that was Hubbgood (??) disagreed with us, cause he said, well we know that we cannot give the people justice by denying them the money, and that they will not be able to function because they will not get an equal

share of the money. Of course we had a lot of disagreements on that, there were a lot of people that agreed with us and in that continuous day. In other words, right today people will go out and say, Rebecca, will you sign this petition, we want some more money? Your mother would sign, and so would I. Because we want the money, in other words it is almost natural. I don't think that you can place that on nationality, I think if you called anybody and said, hey we have \$1000 coming, do you want to sign this petition, so we can get it. I think that all of us would sign. But what John Mills and I was trying to hold out for, was that if we could get enough money in the Treasury, and then we have enough principle that we could derive a given sum from the dividends or from interest of this money accumulated in there, that then we could make a perpetual setup where we would not have to be continually striving for funds to function now. Now this might be an afterthought, where they started the council it was financed with perhaps \$100,000 and I would dare say that their budget has reached nearly \$1,000,000 right now. You can verify that. You can check that and see if I am about right. It cost about \$1,000,000 to run this tribal setup as it is today. Of course we have a lot of functions, that was the reason that we, that I was more or less let out. Of course, John Mills went out as the chairman and in later days this might not interest you, but John and I got together, and he said, well, he said, "keep it

coming." So you can see that the change of something given out is always, influence a certain group of people. Now for some it didn't influence them in a good way and some of them made good use of it. Now I would say that... a certain percent... so when we decided, after they decided to give out the money, well we felt, or I felt and I think John knows mutual agreement, that it wasn't going to do our people any good. And then we noticed that when the money was given out that the people started drifting to town cause they had money, where they never did have any money. Perhaps the quick striving for a living, and a lot of them got rid of their livestock and it was a downward trend. And I was talking to livestock men and they said it was the natural trend for downward grading of livestock on the outside. But I don't think we hastened that downward trend by putting out per-capital. And I think that most of the people that were wise and maybe it may not be the downfall of our tribe, but I know one thing, that it doesn't help us a whole lot, because of the fact that this last capital payments that were made out, there was a lot of friction between the council and we got a letter. I think you can get a copy of that letter, that the Area Director wrote to us, I guess you recall that, don't you? You received one, and yet I think that they made a mistake in that in focusing attention to that and trying right around and invest \$2,000,000 in a movie company and then people say, "Well you said that you don't have no money."

And that was exactly what the Area Director was trying to point to to the people that they were short on funds and that they were, and then turn around and I thought it was a mistake.

QV. Well, I think it is a big gamble.

AV. Well I think that well make it back, but then still if, still if you was right about it then you should not have write that letter, you should have just let it go. And say, well you got the money, so what? But I think it kind of pointed the finger, it gives the people, the ones that was asking for money. Where did they get this money, well then I think maybe I, you might not see eye to eye with, but I think that they could have set it up on different points like this educational fund, because that is still going to be the backbone of our people here as to maybe educate to them to the point where they are educated instead of just taking them through and giving them one year of the university and saying, well I know everything. The people that learn something, I think should be versed in the fact that the longer they go to school, the more ignorant they get. I think that they know that there are limitations, and I think that he has been educated. And that is the way I feel about it, but of course, that is one man's opinion. But, we have a little history to go where, we are branching out and we have an election this year, and I think that, we are going to have a lot of disturbance, and in fact this is the prediction now.

QV. Is this an election year? (Tribal)

AV. Yeah, that is what I understood. Is it, I don't know.

QV. I thought it was next year?

AV. I don't know the reason, I said that was because Gabe was talking to someone on the phone and he said, well this is election year, and I thought chairmen would serve.....

QV. I think that they are talking about those state elections.

AV. Could be, could be. But, was this just last year that they put Charlie in there.

QV. I believe so.

AV. This last year, well if that is the case, then he has to serve 4 years. Is that right?

QV. Yes.

AV. But never the less, I think that regardless of when the election comes up and I think that we are going to see some disturbing things come up cause I think that there is a lot of dissatisfaction with the council on the basis that it is running because of individual feelings and I think that I just wonder if we are going to select the right men. I don't know how you feel about it, but we, I think that the people that.... the ones that are in there, isn't in there and the ones that will go and tell Rebecca for you, couldn't promise her a thing. Because it has to be with the group of people, in other words, myself, I couldn't promise her anything. So I wouldn't make a very good politician.

QV. Do you think that the per capita payments were a downward

trend in???

- AV. Well yes, for some and then they might attribute the housing to that. But now you see none of that housing comes out of dividends. In other words, they go all, this is government selfhelp housing. It is a mutual selfhelp deal and you can attribute that to the per capital. In other words, it is now very few individuals have benefited from directly from the per capital payment, but I think more of them took the downward trend. Do they have the cattle and the sheep, before the per capita. I think at one time, if I recall it was as high as 153 different sheep owners, in other words that they didn't have much, but there was that many. And today, very few,.....
- QV. Where did they get the sheep and the cattle?
- AV. Well the sheep was given them by the government. In 1934 there was, in 1931 and '32, it was a bad winter, I think it was in '34 that the government bought 15,000 head of sheep. And it was given out on per capita basis. In other words, 5 to you and 5 to your mother, and 5 to your sister. And that was the beginning. And we.....
- QV. I understood it as a loan?
- AV. Eventually not, we never heard anymore, but in my say, it may have been, but to my knowledge, I think it was just.....
- QV. Just the cattle?
- AV. Well they give out cattle too. But when your father got cattle, that was, they ran out of water in Texas, and they brought

cattle in here, but they did, they had repayment of cattle, and the cattle was a calf for every cow. In other words, they allowed them to keep the cow and at a given time they were asked to give a cow, a calf back for every yearling or equivalent to that for every calf that they got. And that was the year that your father, I think set up in the cattle business. But they didn't have to pay cash, they had to pay back in kind as a cow for a cow. And when they called back like we raised here. Like the payments went back and they went back to Rosebud, Montana, I guess those Indians up there got the benefit of it, and then they were the ones that probably reimbursed the people in Texas for their cattle.

QV. It was a two way deal?

AV. Right, right. In other words if I give you a cow, you will give me back a cow next year and then if I got the cow then you would then turn to your mother or..... it was a revolving fund with livestock. That is how they set up, I think 12 individuals, that got cattle under that, under that deal.

QV. When they stopped the calf show, was that, the time that they started investing in things like I guess the sawmills.....?

AV. Yes, primarily it was, they... they had a, the government themselves said we ought to have a sawmill and then it was refunded by the council. In other words, it was actually run by the government through the.... they acted as moderators or inbetween men and they..... that was how the sawmill was set up. But then we had money with the Treasury, and I said,

we ought to invest it and be getting interest on it, and I think that was where they were called into the bank meeting and they set that up and of course, the educational fund was set aside. And the interest in that was supposedly going into education, but I don't know whether that functions like that anymore, I am not that close to it now as a member. I just knew that if that was the way that we set it up at one time. And the sawmill was one of the functions of a co-operation with the BIA and in other words it was supervised by the BIA and that is true of the wood yard too. In other words, actually it is a losing proposition, the sawmill shouldn't have been, but I think that they said, that they just now broke even with the sawmill. But with the wood yard, I think that they said, that they are losing money, but I think it helps a certain personnel, I think it is perhaps based the same as welfare for the state. In other words, you keep so many people going and you are satisfied with that. I think that functions under that same deal.

QV. Well currently do you think that all the funds that are coming in, like OEO and Community Action, do you think that that is helping the people, or do you think that it is another manifestation of like it is better for them now, it is not... do they know they can get it, especially those that live at Dulce, they know they can get it, therefore they don't strive for other things?

AV. I think that all the money that is perhaps donated perhaps

by outside....

QV. The government.....?

AV. Yeah, well, the government mostly, I think is an enticement for us to match their funds. In other words, we will give you so much on per capital. In other words I think this is true of our investment in Stone Lake. I think that they have come to the point where they are going to say, well we want to make this up, and in other words we want to have matching funds. In other words, I think it is all right, as long as our people get work. I think that this industry that they are talking about, I think they kind of hold up as a shrine or whatever you want to call it. I think is doomed for some failure, on some parts. I don't think that you can demand work for somebody that doesn't have a good working habit. In other words, say, I notice that they stress that everybody be on time, well if they would copy what I just read recently, that in Germany they found out that some people are just naturally born late, and they are making it so that the person that comes late can work later in time. And that they have better production that way, and the people are better satisfied instead of pulling out their hair and messing up their lipstick and not getting to work on time, rather than them making up the time and they have increased production by following these rules. So in other words, we are a set nation, we want to be prompt, and we want this and that, and Germany is ahead of us on that

basis because of the fact that they realize that some people just can't be on time. And I am one of them. But then so, I guess that was, would still be perhaps in the future, or I think you won't agree with me, but maybe that is the something that they are trying now, to make a nice home for you. And then cut off your water and say, you have to pay for your water. That maybe you won't agree with me, but I think that is the same thing that they are basically turning off your water. And saying, well you have to pay for your water, and then the people has got an inside bathroom and no water to.... and I think it hurts our people in that way. And like I said before, if I was someplace that functions where I could demant that, I think that they should demand that everybody be given water regardless of whether they pay for it or not, because they help all the foreign nations and that is a downright donation, and so why we can't get water for our people. I mean, maybe that is wrong, because if you paid for your water and your mother didn't, you would say, well your mother doesn't pay for water, why should I have to pay for it. In other words, then we would all be in a welfare state you know what I mean. So maybe this all has a tendency for training, but I still found out, as an Indian I still found out.....

QV. Do you think that some of the other programs are benefiting them?

AV. I would say that most of, most of the functions that this

alcoholic would have to hand it to Warner for doing a terrific job. I think he has had a lot of failures, but he doesn't have failure with alcoholics, in other words, and this Child Care thing, I think it has its benefits, and I think it applies employment that maybe would otherwise be employed. I think that in itself is a blessing to the tribe or any of the community. As long as you people can be satisfied that they are doing something for their money, I think that this is what we need to stress, that we are, that certain functions benefit a group of people. I think that most of the funds that have been diverted this way, I think have been direct benefit to the welfare of the community.

QV. Do you feel that we tend to overstress the profit motive mood more than say happiness or identity....?

AV. I think that has been stressed a little too much.... particularly with the function of the shop over here, this craft shop over here that they say there is no profit. I say found out in fact that if we are going to have something for the benefit of the people, I think that we should not look at the profit margin as well as much as we do for the benefit of the people. I must say that on, I would say this I work on the BIA maybe I will get fired over this but don't stress it too much.... The funds for the government is a direct appropriation for the government employees as from the superintendent down to the lowest janitor, if that's when you want to stress it. But it's an outright gift to this agency here and we are, all our salaries are set; all the utilities and all of the welfare of the houses and everything. All that is set on cost basis.... it cost us \$300 to maintain this house. Each house is appropriated with all this money and it just not right gift but the

government has no recourse in collecting that. I once asked my father how the government expects to redeem their money if this is the way that they function. It was just outright gift.

QV. Well they collect taxes....

AV. Well, we collect taxes but then that's the way my father answered, he said, "If I could make you progressive, you in turn make somebody else progressive and that chain reaction of getting money into circulation," whatever you want to call it. That's what he feels that the benefit of the government in that function.

QV. In other words, they are tapping our potential?

AV. Yeah, right. In other words.....

QV. Bringing it out?

AV. And each one has direct benefit, I think it shows up in some of our, well your one of them, it shows that you develop a crazy urge for progress.... it that's what you want to call it and I think that it's wonderful, in other words, I feel that your mother and I belong to another generation and it's going by so let's work the rest of them on, you know what I mean. And that's the way I feel about it. I don't know whether too many people see it that way but.....

QV. Do you feel that now that they have all these programs and things, do you feel that it sort of a dehumanizing everyone. Everyone is living in the same house, everyone gets cars, it just sort of..... everybody is the same, like as before from what I understand from what my mother tells me everyone was out in the reservation, everyone was individuals and now everyone is just here.....

AV. Well I think that it has to disrupt it to great extent because like your mother said, she is right about that, because people were more or less,

you could establish them and say well Albert Velarde is out at Horse Lake or Stone Lake or wherever Hillcrest or wherever they live. Well you could establish that, today you can't. If you find them home, you are lucky, on other words.....

QV. That's true, I know....

AV. But the..... I think our standards of welfare has changed to the extent that I couldn't help but think of one of the political speeches that they were making over here when they were campaigning.... the observation was made after all the speeches were made. Somebody said on the microphone, well we need our money and the people are starving and they were hungry and one of our Apache men observed this and he said, Alfredo Elote said that, he said, "Apaches are starving but no came in on wagons." Nobody comes in the wagon see, everybody drove a car so what he was trying to say was that they are wealthy enough to drive a car but they were still hungry, you know. And so maybe it little bit a comedy but I do believe that I don't think we are going to fast, but I do believe that we have to get the conscienceness of wanting, by the same token, I suppose that this would make a very crude comparison with what I am trying to say is that if I give you a cow, you may care less for a cow and you say, I don't want a cow, I don't want it, but if we could instill in you that you wanted the cow, then we would be accomplishing our purpose because you would have to want it in order to strive. Now I can do that with my own children, I could tell my boy Edward, I will give you a cow, "What would I do with a cow?" And it's hard to instill that in a child, in the present generation. Well when will this cow begin to produce?" Well 9 months from now or a year from now you might have another cow.

"Well that's too long, I want it now, you know" and I want it now.

QV. It's like they are more wrapped up the "now," the immediate rewards.

AV. Yeah, right, and I think that may be the thing, like you were saying a while ago that you overstress that, let's get with it and let's get the money in, get it into circulation or whatever you want now, from what I could gather this morning, I just overheard Gabe talking on the phone that somebody had written that they were going to give out big dividends. Some sooner or another and Gabe made the mentions of "I wish they wouldn't start that," but I don't know where it started or what.... so I guess we live in a funny generation anyway but then I think it will either level out or go to put, one of the two.

QV. I see. What about, what do you think about the whole reservation lay vacant and no one using it? What do you think will happen to it?

AV. Well, I think that's where BIA comes in. Again they say they are not placing a limit on how many cattle she can run, that the limit is based on how much grass she produces. In other words, your grass would.... if they got a lot of grass, well she can increase her livestock. And I think that perhaps is the measure of where John Mills and I would differ on that. He said in dry years a reservation has a right time carrying the cattle that we used to have. At one time we had 48,000 head of sheep and about 2500 head of cattle and today I think there is less than 18,000 head of sheep and perhaps about the same number of cattle. But you could see that was almost cut down to 1/3 of what it used to be. So the only thing that, would probably would be problem to us would be to show some production on the reservation or that we are saving it for some future production and not let the outsiders see it because immediately there is

always a kind of reaction from the outsiders say that the Apaches got a lot of grass and that is true, one year we had, there was shortage of water and shortage of grass and I had some Navajo friends come up and say well gee whiz, you got worlds of grass up here, why not rent us some. In other words, it's they can't understand why this hay will.... be so productive when their cattle or their sheep were starving, so I think that is one of the functions of the government and I think they limit us a little bit too much at times, I feel that. I mean that.....

QV.from using the land?

AV. I don't know whether you feel that but I do... maybe you didn't observe that but now that you are on the subject maybe you notice it more than you would.... because there is a lot of vacant reservation....

QV. Yeah, as we come up, my mom and I come up from down Lindrith, we don't see anyone. And somehow it just seems to be out there. I think it would be a good case for someone from the outside saying, well they aren't using it.

AV. Yeah, lease it or something.... that's true. In other words....

QV. Eventually they could sell it or then loose it.

AV. I think that would be entirely function and anybody with common sense and including yourself, that we would fight that with everything we had. In other words, because that's what my own father stressed that as long as we use it....

AV. Right, that was the downfall of..... Rebacca point that out better than I can, your mother, because she lived out there and there were hardly any Apache down there for a long time until they made them go down there. And they made them go south and their is a lot of friction

and some of them rebelled and say we won't go. But now they are not stressing that, in fact we can't go south because we don't have no range on the south, on other words they give us a year round range up here in which so far I think, I have to say God had his arms around us, we have very light winters and we had no loss of our cattle but then we could, you know, we could have a bad winter and loose quite a bit. But I think that you are right on that, I think that it needs to be reexamined and see what limitation of the reservation the potential and I think that is what some many people are contesting now, they say well they got a lot of grass, why don't we.... let us have cattle and you could see their point, I mean....

- QV. Well since the last time that they had cattle and sheep out there, it seems to me that some of the concepts of farming and ranching and cattle production and all sorts of ways other farming has improved and you don't need as much range and..... yet the council or the BIA whoever is in charge of it seems to consider it a fact that there are new methods developed and..... they can get more production out their land....
- AV. Well when your mother was young and I was little younger, of course she is older than I am, we can see that, but we saw a lot of farming, in other words, almost everybody had a little plot of ground and I was one that used to go around and trash for them and we knock out 50 sacks of oats or ten sacks of wheat or something, but we went over the reservation. Now there is nothing that I know of. I don't think there is one place that anybody that you know, that got a plot of wheat or anything, I don't see it.
- QV. I don't think maybe more than a little garden or so.

- AV. I don't believe there is, I don't believe there is a little garden I don't see any.
- QV. I don't think so, I don't know what happened.
- AV. Well like we say that I think that but I think that your trend, even outside of the reservation I think has gotten away from that, of course there's big production on big farming scales and that, but I think the people will gradually gonna start going back, I think. I may take several years but I think eventually it's going to go back.
- QV. Okay, well do you have any final comments about anything, the way things are going..... sum it up?
- AV. Well, I would say that perhaps in summing it up that we all need to have a forward look and naturally we've made mistakes and if we profit from the mistakes, we are progressing and I hope that we have future in the welfare of our people, primarily before we put ourselves to the point where we can make a better world for our children and I think that we should, we are almost obligated to strive for that particular thing and I admire you very much for even asking me, I feel honor you ask me to talk but that still besides the point. I think that in the fact that you are working for a certain something that I failed to get while I hope you the best of everything, and hope you go ahead like you are now.
- QV. Well, okay, thank you very much for your time and I appreciate it very much.

END OF TAPE