

American Indian Oral History Collection  
Transcript Record

Tape Number: 662 Side: 1

Date of Taping: 6/11/70

Field Worker(s): Veronica Velarde

Location: Dulce, NM

Tribe(s): Jicarilla Apache, Ollero Clan

Narrator/Event: Mary Becenti, <sup>tribal judge</sup> daughter of Councilman Albert

Additional Narrator(s): Velarde, Sr. ~~John~~ Under John  
Mills Baltazar Chairmanship of Jicarilla tribe

Subject(s): ~~Jicarilla History~~  
Brief Story concerning Albert Velarde, Sr.  
Personal Family History as Related to  
History of Jicarilla Tribe

Comments: Some passages in transcript are translated  
from Apache to English

Tribal History

AMERICAN INDIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

University of New Mexico

Tape Number: # 662 - Side I

Tribe: Jicarilla Apache

Informant: Mary V. Becenti (age 45)

Informant's home address: Dulce, New Mexico

Band or Clan: Ollero

Date and location of interview: Dulce New Mexico

Field Worker:

Date of transcription: Sept. 1970

Contents: Jicarilla History: A short brief story of an early council man, Albert Velarde Sr.

Evaluation of Interview: It was bias since Albert Velarde Sr. was Mary Becenti's Father.

Future Prospects: Very good informant for future.

Jicarilla History:

A brief story of an early  
councilman, Albert Velarde Sr.

Tape #662 (side 1)  
APACHE-JICARILLA  
Mary Becenti  
June 11, 1970  
Interviewer - Veronica Velarde

Mary Becenti is currently the tribal judge of the Jicarilla Apache tribe. The discussion will concern anything she knows about the tribal history and her dad, Albert Velarde, was one of the councilmen during John Mills Baltazar administration as chairman of the Jicarilla Apache tribe.

AV. My dad he was, when he first came back from Fort Lewis, Colo., he was an interpreter for Garfield. Velarde Sr., he was our grandfather and then he was at the time teaching up at San Antonio Sanatorium which a lot of these old people remember. In those days teachers didn't have to be a graduate of college, teachers now days they had to be, and he worked there for a while and then he, later he start building some of these houses that are, some of them are condemned and some of them are torn down and he helped build some of these houses here in Dulce. And then from there he was, he was in partnership to Garfield Velarde and they had a little store in La Jara, New Mexico (located in Jicarilla Apache reservation.)

QV. You mean at that time when the school was out there.

AV. Yeah, when they had the school out there. They had this little store but Emmett Wirt didn't like him, so they were forced out of business.

QV. Was Emmett Wirt selling more things or what?

AV. Well he had this store in Dulce and for one reason he didn't want any competitors. Well after they got rid of that store he went into live-stock business.

QV. How long did they have the store?

AV. Not too long, maybe 2 or 3 years.

QV. Did it sort of go out at the same time that the school did?

AV. Yeah, I think that he did. And then, by then they got livestock and this came out at the timber sale that they had in 1911, I think that is what Albert Velarde Sr. said when he went to Oklahoma, him and a few others. And he was an interpreter for Garfield Velarde. And he drew up this plan where they sell the timber and then they bought this sheep out of the timber sale. And that is how these Apaches got started.

QV. Do you know the name of the wat ever it was, that they went to in Oklahoma?

AV. Yeah, I think they were trying to sell their timber to the highest bidder over there. And he, when he went over there, they were having some kind of doings in Anadarko, Oklahoma. There was a lot of funny stories that he told about the trip to Oklahoma. Well for one thing he said some of these, I'll tell it in Apache. (Following in Apache language.) Early in the morning (while in camp) the Oklahoma Indians were walking around the little camps singing. There were usually 2 or 3 in each little tepee. We were wondering what they were doing. They were eating peyote. They gave us some in a sack. They set it down with a bang, we didn't except it, My grandfather warned me so I didn't take any from them. They said it was bad medicine, besides only people who eat dogs and prairie dogs eat peyote. I didn't pick it up. Then he also told about this Chief Moe. When they came to Horse Lake, he came as chief. He wore an American flag as part of his attire. He

came saying he was the leader. Albert recalls going to Oklahoma and having met him there. The Oklahoma Indians were camped out at Horse Lake. Albert and his friend, Button Thomas, were wondering among them and suddenly under a small shade they came upon a little old lady sitting next to a fire. Button said, hey this looks like our friend Chief Moe sitting there and we turned around and went to him. Chief Moe was sitting next to the fire. He was rather embarrassed for us seeing him in such a situation and then he quickly told the lady to give us something to eat. The women put potatoes to frying without any lard and set it before us. Button said Chief Moe came as Chief, here is your friend. Button observed Chief Moe had a saddle which he had made. The saddle was poorly made. Albert tells of times when they were having much fun traveling. Him and Button.....

QV. Who is Button?

AV. Button is Mrs. Juan Revel's father.

QV. When the Oklahoma Indians come to visit us at Horse Lake. We used to fight but this was the last time they came but in peace.

QV. About what year was this?

AV. I don't know the exact date. Then Button went to a round dance ( in Oklahoma) and he was dancing with ladies both of whom were taller than him. The ladies were holding him up and his feet were barely touching the ground as they went around. They had fun and this was all he talked about. He was young in those days. (End of portion in Apache Language.)

QV. Meanwhile Garfield was on business as interpreter?

AV. Yeah, he was just an interpreter. And at that time he was married to Louis Velarde's mother, and he was interpreter for Garfield for all busi-

ness trips. And then after he didn't tell us much about those days but he would tell us short stories, you know, where he has been. After he married my mother he got that job down at Largo, taking care of reservation fence rider and forest ranger. We lived down there and then when they adopted the tribal constitution, they inducted those 18 men as council members. He was one of them that pushed the tribe and tried to adopt this tribal constitution. It's been amended several times but the basics were adopted then and they were rewarded for that constitution. The voting place was here at the Reform Church and he was in charge of that voting, he was explaining to the people in Apache what they were voting about and he had the majority adopt the constitution. And he's, his ideas were just about the same as John Mills'. So whatever John Mills said was alright but he usually went along with John Mills. They both agree on the same things, though what John Mills vote for, he will vote for too.

QV. Do most of the people vote for John Mills or were most of them against him? Were there a lot of debates before they accept.....?

AV. Well, during that time those old council members usually debated. Some times they would last all day. They will go in there at 10 and they probably won't be out at 5. A lot of these things that were brought up and he argued with them, what his opinion were and what were the best for his people. And of course he was always kind-hearted. He always thought of somebody else before he thought about himself. And to this day I even hear people say that he was kind-hearted, that he had stopped at their place on some occasions and he did little things that people appreciated. And to this day we say that he was one of the kindest men.

He was never quick tempered. He would probably look at you in a mean way, but he would get after you but once you get him started, if you get him mad enough he'll tell you in just a few words and I think he put all the meaning in the words. He won't lecture you but he will tell you in a few short words what he means.

QV. What were some of the things that he, some of his ideas or some of the things that he might of supported?

AV. Why he always supported, he always advise people that work wasn't gone to hurt them even if they only work and get what they wanted. They will get what the other people have and it was no crime to work. He always worked himself. And some of his advice to us kids was don't go visiting don't go visit somebody and gossip a lot. That's not my way of staying out of trouble. (Repeat of two above sentences in Apache.) Stay home and take care of your own business, that's what he used to tell us.

QV. Did you ever talk about some of his own dealings maybe like Washington or anything like that?

AV. Washington? Why he used to write to Washington and we used to have copies of the letters but when the house burned down all those burned. He disagreed with a lot of these things that the BIA do now. During that time there were only a few BIA officials. I don't think he would agree, but now, during that time he got them to see his way of thinking. At the bridge at Dulce, he was the one that, he often mentioned it, he gave these names to the Apaches. As the people went by he gave them a name. He would give them names and write them down on the information.... (Apache language) And then there was this man who would not speak up, so he named him "No tongue." He never spoke up. Do you have any more

questions?

QV. How did he get his education?

AV. Well, he didn't go to school for, until he was 12 years old. When they came back from Mescalero, nobody wanted him to go to school but 1 of his half brothers, Katherine Atole's father, on the way to school told him not to go to school. He got mad at them so they got him ready to go to school. He went to Amargo. In a mule team they took him to meet the train and then he got on the train to Chama. When he got to Chama they were fed. There was a lot of food. We were not used to so much food. By the time they got to Antonio, Colorado, they were all sick. And then by another means they took us to Santa Fe, New Mexico. This was where he started school.

QV. They started the first grade there?

AV. Yeah, he was 12 years old. And when he got there the first thing that he did was to get a haircut and him and John Mills went to school the same time. And they went through school in Santa Fe. And during vacations in the summer time, him uncle used to take horses down there and bring them back on horseback. And after in 1878, no this was 1887 he had, anyway he had a tatoo on his arm, that year he went to Fort Lewis.

QV. Did he graduate from Santa Fe?

AV. No, he was still in grade school and the highest grade they had was 8th grade but he didn't complete that. To go to school he went to this Fort Lewis Indian School, a military school. He stayed there until he, I think he said until he was about 18 years old. And he told me that he had tuberculosis and they had to release him from school. He finally came back to the reservation but he wanted to go to school. They told



him there was no cure for that TB, so he came back from there.

QV. Was he one of the few Apaches that went to school?

AV. Yes, I think he was, him and John Mills, they been together all through school. But John Mills, I think, was just a little younger than my father. A year or two.

QV. Then he stayed around here and.....

AV. Yeah. He was one of them that went down to Mescalero from here. He left a resolution, he went down with his grandmother and his father and his mother. And my real grandmother is buried somewhere around Cuba, N.M., Cuba Mountain. From there he went with his father and his grandmother and they went down to Mescalero and during that time my grandfather was head at the tribe. My father used to tell us that he had 200 head of horses. They were the only horses that Jicarilla Apache people moved on to Mescalero.

QV. He furnished all the horses?

AV. Yeah, he furnished all the horses and everybody wanted him to marry their daughters, so they could get or have a horse or something. Anyway he rode in one of those wagons that the soldiers furnished for him, you know, to haul supplies in. So he didn't have to walk to Mescalero, his father died over there. He's mentioned somewhere in the history book as Mundo's Son. It mentions it, he was sent to Washington to settle the problems of the reservation we have there now. He didn't get to complete bringing his people back up there. He died in Mescalero and he's buried there at the foot of White mountain in Mescalero.

QV. You mean Mundo is?

AV. No, my grandfather. And they call him the Little Blonde but I don't be-

lieve that was the correct name. His real name was Llarito. He's the oldest in his family. There was two other brothers, the youngest was Garfield. No, four Avelin's father, and this old man Velarde he didn't have any children and then my grandfather was the oldest. But he died in Mescalero and he received a Presidential Citation after he died.

QV. What President was this?

AV. This was when President Garfield..... and my dad wanted to get this citation back, as the years went on he never got it. He said he only saw it, at the most 5 times. He could never get his hands on it. So he wanted to get it back, it really did belong to his father. When he went to Washington, it was meant for him and nobody else, that's why I feel that now that I have it, it is my personal property.

QV. Where did you get it back from?

AV. I got it back from Juan Revel's wife. One day I ask if I could take it because she got it out of the hock shop in Gallup and then she gave it to Avelino. And then Avelino went, him and Ernest Velarde, to hock it again over at Lumberton. She got it out again and she finally told me I could have it. So I have it now.

QV. When he was down in Mescalero, did he ever talk about how it was or anything like that? How they lived?

AV. Yeah, he talks a lot. When he was down there he got the best of everything, like food and things like that. He lived good until his father died. Then he was out with the rest of the people. He talks about how these Mescalero lived. The country down there was not as good as the reservation we now have. He didn't like it down there. It was too bar-

ren. He was hoping that some day that he would come back up here. Which he..... He came back by himself and he talks about the time he took care of all the horses. They used to be his father's, bring them in, he would bring the horses in. As the horses ran he ran among them. He was a fast runner. He used to tell us that he used to mount the horses as they were running. And then coming back from Mescalero he never suffered so much in his life. He came back with his grandmother.

QV. What about the rest of the people?

AV. .... just him and his grandmother. The rest of the people also came back. They had a hard time coming back from Mescalero. Some of the people didn't want to come. And of course his relatives. They ones that banned with Garfield were first to come back. Garfield had to make an extra trip back, for the people who got left in Mescalero. They traveled back on horses. He finally got them back up here. They didn't want to come back. He must have done a lot of talking to bring them back. They never wanted to be part of the tribe. They must have liked it down there. I think my grandfather was pretty smart to come back to this reservation. And the way they worked it out was they had witnesses. We had Spanish people that lived around here that goes over there had them witnessed some papers that we had to sign. If they didn't like it down in Mescalero they would come back here. Garfield never gets the credit or my grandfather or his brother, the one after he died. The next orders were to go and then Garfield settle that on the reservation..... He always mentioned Augustine and what my father used to say about Augustine (Vigil.) He wasn't a chief. He just talked a lot

but he never had any brains to back up these things.....

QV. Big mouth?

AV. Yes, big mouth, a loud mouth and show off to the white people whoever came but he was mostly good at chasing women and things like this sort of thing. So the history books mention his name. He wasn't really the chief, he was our grandfather. And another man who was behind our coming back here was old Vicenti, he was the grandfather to Melvin Vieenti and David Vicenti. These two names that people that carry that name, are responsible for having brought us up here to this present reservation.

QV. So most of the people that are always are mentioned are not really the ones but they happen to get their names mentioned.

AV. Yes, and their ideas are always frowned upon and to this day we.... and some of the people today still don't like the idea that we don't have to put much effort to what we want. This has always been the case for that. That's one reason that we are unpopular.

QV. In other words he was a kind man and everything but yet he was unpopular. But the people profit from the ideas, because of his ideas. They always.... they never gave him credit.

AV. I have to tell you more but take more than evening.

QV. Sort of getting late so whenever we have some more time.

END OF TAPE