

AMERICAN INDIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

University of New Mexico

Tape Number: 19 # 780 Side Two

Tribe: Navajo

Informant: H1

Informant's home address: NW of Tuba City

Band or Clan: Bitter water

Date and location of interview: Feb 15, 1971

Field Worker: Martin D. Topper

Date of transcription: March 5, 1971

- Contents: Side 1.,
- A. Healing a wounded sheep.
 - B. Fixing the wagon.
 - C. Building the lamb pens.
 - D. Dyeing wool.

- Side 2.
- A. Carding wool
 - B. Spinning wool
 - C. Fixing road.
 - D. Washing clothes.
 - ~~E. Making home brew.~~
 - E. Making home brew.

Evaluation of Interview:

Future Prospects:

Carding wool
Spinning wool
Fixing roads
Washing clothes
Making home brew

Tape #780
Navajo
Informant #1
N.W. of Tuba City, Ariz.
Feb. 15, 1971
Interviewer - Martin D. Topper
Tape 19, side 2

This is Feb. 17, 1971.....we are on tape 19, side 2.....
Okay....we are going to talk today, we have a bunch of other
....topic....we talked about dyeing the wool you know
and so we are just going to continue talking about the
wool, okay, since grandma is here.....

Q. Ask him about how the wool is carded....because she
can add detail as needed.....

A. Shall I ask grandma if she wants to talk?

Q. Yeah, go ahead and ask her....

A. Navajo language.

Q. What did she say?

A. Navajo language.

Q. Well ask him then to tell me and hop that grandmother
talks up.....she can tell me what happens when they
card the wool.....

A. Navajo language.

Q. Go ahead and tell me....

A. He told me that to card wool, it has to be done after
all the chores are done..... Navajo language

Q. What did he say?

A. He said yesterday when he came over, he asked you to
drink coffee and so he will say no to you.....

- Q. Oh boy, here we go again...-
- A. He said after all the chores and the house is cleaned that is when the carding is done.....he said that you have a pair of those carders and you'll have two pairs and then he will test these ones together and see which one is better than the other one.....
- Q. Two pairs of carding tools.....alright.
- A. And she will test it and see which one is the best..... in order to do that she will get a little bit of wool and put it one pair and she will card it and then she will do the same with the other one.
- Q. She gets some wool on one pair and you card it..... okay...repeat for the other....
- A. And then from those two examples and she will say which is the best and that is the one that she thinks it is the best and of course she will pick that one and use it....
- Q. How are the two different....how do they, the two differ?
- A. The other one might have alot of wool on it and the other one might be.....
- Q. Clean....
- A. One might have alot of dirt in it...like that...
- Q. But you don't have two with different gaps between them do you?
- A. No, they are all identical.....but when you use them... and then he said that you take a little bit of the white wool and then you put it on the carder and you, take a little bit of the black one and you card them together and then you.....
- Q. Wait a minute...you are going a little bit fast.... Put them on the carder...four, do same for some black wool....okay.... now what do you do, you card them together right?

- A. Yeah, you card them together.....3 or 4 strokes and then you turn them inside out.....out and card that other side and about four or five strokes and then.....
- Q. Take three or four strokes and then you turn it inside out and then you.....you card like this huh?
- A. Yeah, you card like this four or five strokes and then you pull them off like this and then you take it back into it like that....
- Q. Okay,
- A. And then you have the bottom side on top....and then...
- Q. You turn the things over right? You take three or four strokes and then you turn the carding thing over, right?
- A. You turn the wool inside out....
- Q. You are going to have to show me that...well someday I am going to have to watch it.....
- A. That is in order to get all the dirt out of it and mix it....and...
- Q. Mix the wool and then you take three or four more strokes.....
- A. Then you take turn the wool inside out again, and then you put....when you do that...the wool on this one carder, will add up on this other one that has all the wool on the other one and then you just roll it up, it is really easy.....and then you put it aside....
- Q. Roll.....R O L L it up and what next?
- A. And that is how you make grey wool....and then you, next you will do the same again.
- Q. Just repeat the whole process.....the whole process until you get so much and then you get them all together.....and tie them in a knot in a ball and the same size.....and then when you get so much, so much would be about that big.....
- Q. And seven, eight you stretch it....?
- A. Yeah....

- Q. And nine, you tie it in a knot....I am glad I don't have a woman.....
- A. Everybody that comes here, they clean it up....
- Q. You know it took me two and one half hours for me to find everything after Yazzie cleaned the place up....she lost everything on me...oh, well that is a woman... I'm glad I don't have one.....anyway... tie it in a knot...then what do you do next....?
- A. Then you do that process the carding, tying it up in knots, you will have quite a few of them....about five or six...like that...and that is during the night, until you get sleepy.
- Q. You do it until you go to bed right?
- A. Yeah, until you get really sleepy and then you put them up and put them in a sack...and put your carders up and pass out...pass away for the night.
- Q. Eleven, you put wool in the sack....?
- A. Then in the morning...then you get up and cook...see what....do whatever needs to be done around...or what needs to be done around the house and herds sheep mostly, if you have a sheep herder...and then of course he will take the sheep out and then she will come back and wash dishes and dry and do the cleaning and the chores and then you take the materials out again, the carder and the wool....and if you have got it all carded up....then you take the spindle and you make yarn out of it.....
- Q. Did he tell you about making yarn on the spindle too?
- A. He said that you undo the knot....you undo the knot and you kind of smash it a little in a long thin line... wool, and then you separate them, you separate the one strand of wool....and you put it on the spindle....
- Q. Separate the strands of wool and three, you put it on...how do you put it on the spindle?
- A. He said you put it on, and that ended the conversation there.

- Q. Okay, just ask him to go ahead and tell me a little bit about the spindle, how they rub it against their legs..... Oh tell him it is an eraser....it erases ink.....
- A. Navajo language.
- Q. It is not working too good but it erases the ink out... takes the ink out....
- A. Navajo language.
- Q. Well are you ready?
- A. Yeah, he said that you get the spindle out and then he said that one of the strands from the wool and you twist it on the bottom spindle.
- Q. Do you use anything to make it stick to the spindle?
- A. I don't think so and you get a cloth out and put it across you lap, and then you are suppose to put a cloth across your lap on the carding too....which I forgot to tell you and then....
- Q. Why do they do that?
- A. Oh, to catch all the dirt and all the dirt collects on the cloth.....and then after that, then they start spinning it and rolling it up and then they will roll it back, roll it back like this and catch it and push it back and roll it.
- Q. So you roll the spindle....
- A. Down your side.....
- Q. Down or up?
- A. Down and then you push it up.....
- Q. Yeah, but the whitemen do exactly the reverse.....you go up and then you go down...so what does down and up mean? Nothing...you roll the spindle along the thigh towards the body, do you see what I mean, because up and down means absolutely nothing.....

- A. What does down and up mean?
- Q. Down and up means backwards...you see what I mean....? Relative terms...up is relative to anything that is down and whatever down is up has to be the opposite of it.
- A. Alright.
- Q. And then you push it away right? Push it away from you.....what do you do with the other hand?
- A. Navajo language.... He said this one is up and this one is down.....
- Q. Okay...anyway... I don't care which way up is, it doesn't matter to me.
- A. Run it up along the legs....
- Q. Okay, you push the spindle onto your leg?
- A. Yeah,,and you roll it that way.....
- Q. With your thumbs...and then you push it that way..... and then what do you do with the other hand?
- A. Navajo language.... Just because I can't use my right hand, they are putting up a fuss about using my left....
- Q. Okay, she uses her right hand?
- A. Yeah, she only uses her right hand.....
- Q. That is a special thing huh?
- A. I guess.... Navajo language....
- Q. Okay.....go ahead...now...
- A. When you get to the end of the yarn then you pull out another one....and you attach it like that and stretch it....stretch...
- Q. Spin it and you kind of stretch it out...
- A. Put it in and kind of stretch it like that.....

- Q. Well what are you doing with the other hand, the left hand you are holding the yarn right?
- A. Yeah...
- Q. When you are spinning....
- A. He said when you stretch it, I mean when you spin it, you kind of stretch it out....it gets longer when you spin it and get your arms clear out there....
- Q. Okay...and six would be when you have spun a piece, add a new one right?
- A. Yeah....
- Q. And then it comes out, one, what do you do? Does, he doesn't attach it to the end of the other?
- A. Huh?
- Q. He doesn't attach it to the end of the unfinished piece?
- A. He does.
- Q. And how does he do that, does he twist them together? Stretches them?
- A. He gets, the....by the time that he gets done with the first one, there will be another one like that sticking out...and then he will get another carded one and pull it out of the bunch there and you know, attach it to the end of the first one and then he will stretch it out like that, and he never said anything about twisting it together...stretch it like that and then spin it together.....
- Q. Okay, so you attach the unspun....
- A. The unspun yarn.....the unspun wool.....
- Q. The unspun yarn...is one that is never told, attach the unspun strand and stretch it.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. And four, begin spinning..... that is it for spinning or, is that all he told you?

- A. Well he said after you get through with that, he said that the wheel at the base of the spindle and after you have done all that, you will fold this yarn and then roll it up into a ball and it would be about that thick, and you don't do it fine the first time and then you will do it all over again and then you will start unrolling the ball.....
- Q. After you finish you have a big ball on the spindle right?
- A. And then you will take that big ball and roll it up, you take the yarn on the spindle and roll it up in a ball.....
- Q. Okay on step seven, you take the yarn off the spindle, right?
- A. Yeah....
- Q. And you roll it into a big ball right?
- A. Yeah...
- Q. And then at some other time, some later time you respin it to make it tighter, right?
- A. Yeah, you spin it the way that you did the first time...
- Q. Okay, that is what he told you?
- A. Yeah and then he said this is two different kind of wool.....one is a sort of straight, it is more bristle....a.....
- Q. Like goats hair?
- A. Yeah, like goats hair...some of that mohair and then goat hair you use it to make that real thin yarn...
- Q. So.....I will make out your pay record....what day did I put on there...anyway...so mohair is used to make the warp huh?
- A. He said that it is spun just the way that he does the other one but he makes it a little finer...when you have got those little tiny bumps and balls, then you stretch that out and.....

Q. Are you getting tired?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you want to stop work?

A. No, go on.....

Q. Well, spun even finer than sheep wool, stretch to eliminate bumps and bulges.....in other words it has got to be really tight...because it stretches on the loom?

A. Yeah, really tight....and then after spinning it, then he goes right back into dyeing it, after you do that then you loop it on your foot and then you hand..... then you tie it here and then you loop it around....

Q. Okay....

A. And then you get about that thick.....and then you tie it and then you wash it really good and dye it whatever kind of color you want....you have a good description on washing and dyeing....

Q. And then the next step is wash dye....so we already know to put the wool...

A. Yeah.

Q. We already talked about setting up the loom a long time ago didn't we?

A. That was the first one that we talked....

Q. Okay, so now that we have set up, we don't have that much on spinning....we talked about that.... we talked about this.....okay.....and we said that you butcher a mule like you butcher a horse, right?

A. Yeah.....

Q. Ask him how they bottle....tell him that we want to talk a little bit about other things....ask him about how they bottle fruit, how they preserve fruit..... canned fruit?

A. No, they just dry them out.....

- Q. Mary said something about preserving, putting them up.....?
- A. The only way they preserve fruit is drying them out in the sun...
- Q. Yeah, and we talked about that didn't we?
- A. Yeah...
- Q. Yeah, right.....I am going to have to start thinking of more topics pretty soon...you know? How about asking him to tell me how he fixes the roads....we tried to talk about this once before....tell me how he would fix out the ruts in the roads.....
- A. Building a road?
- Q. Yeah, yeah, yeah....that would be even a better topic, about building a new road.....
- A. Remember we asked him about it and he said, you just drive back and forth....
- Q. Oh hell.....he would do more than that....ask him about how he would fix a road, where the bumps are... to repair a road really....
- A. Navajo language.... He said that he can not tell much holes in the roads, he puts a brush in the road.
- Q. When is he going to talk at the boarding school again?
- A. This Friday...
- Q. Why don't you ask him if it would be permissible for me to tape or if he is going to say something that can't be taped....ask him?
- A. I don't know if I can.....
- Q. No, ask him if I can.....
- A. Navajo language.... This Friday....
- Q. Ask him if it would be alright for me to tape?

- A. He said that it is alright.....
- Q. He is not going to say anything special?
- A. Tape it anyway.... How about if Sykes says no!
To hell with him!
- Q. Yeah, that is them and not me.....
- A. Navajo language.... He said if you want you can pick
up Shirley's pickup and then you can meet him over
there and take him over there.....
- Q. Okay.....
- A. Navajo language..... He said on Friday, drive to here
and then leave your chiddi here and then take grandpa's
chiddi over there.....
- Q. Okay, whatever he wants to do....that is fine.....
okay, that will be good, because you know he will
probably talk for a couple of hours....
- A. Yeah, he usually does...
- Q. We can get plenty of tape...we will just flood those
people with tapes...
- A. They ask him all kinds of questions, old time stories
you know.....
- Q. Well whatever he wants to tell, we'll tape, and that will
be it.....
- A. Navajo language.... He said that you should have
taped the first one.....
- Q. Yeah, but I was gone... I went to California....
- A. Navajo language.... He told some good ones then...
- Q. That's okay.....
- A. Anyway he said that all you have to do is get some
bushes...cut those little scrap wood up there, what
you chop off, then you put those in the hole.....
and fill them back up with dirt and then the bump

too, you can just dig away, if there is a rock sticking out like that in the road...take a pick and a shovel and sledge hammer and get it out of there....anything that is in your way or that is bugging you, bothering you..... There is only one road, only one main road anyway....but it is like hell driving through it, alot of guys drive up there through it but they depend on each other, who is going to do it, and they say, well I am not the only one who drives up here... they can do it, they drive more than I do, that is what they think....until they make around it and once it....in awhile me and grandpa go up there ourselves and fix up the road and then we get some weights, some logs, some big ones, and some of those old wagons wheels, you tie them up and drag them up and down the road...does alot of good too, drag them up and down.....

- Q. I never have seen that.....I would never have thought that they did that.....
- A. Yeah, you get weights and you drive them up and down the road...takes the high center away and makes it a whole lot easier for cars.....
- Q. This eliminates the high center...alright...so that is it huh?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay....do you think that he wants to go on for a while longer...you want to go on for a while longer?
- A. Yeah....
- Q. Well ask them if they want to do their business, tell them that we have been working one hour now....and ask them if his business, if he wants to go and do his business or if he wants to work a while longer.
- A. Navajo language....
- Q. So, yes, no maybe.....?
- A. She said go ahead....

- Q. Well tell them that the one last thing that I have got left on my list, except for what children do and I am going to ask you about that....about the games that you played when you were a little kid....
- A. Really?
- Q. Yeah, about you....
- A. Oh, no....
- Q. We will get you and all the kids together....but anyway I want to ask them how they wash their clothes, because i know that they don't go to the laundry..... and I want to know how they do that and how often.....
- A. Shall I ask them what a kid does?
- Q. No remember....He said.....oh it has almost been 65 years since I was a kid.....
- A. Navajo language....Shall I ask them how their marriage has been made.....?
- Q. Yeah, that would be interesting....we haven't ask them that.....we will not ask them about washing clothes, we will ask them about the marriage ceremony...can you tell her?
- A. That is what they are talking about, he said....that maybe that you are going to ask that question soon.....
- Q. Oh....alright go ahead....tell them that I will ask it right away.....
- A. Navajo language.
- Q. And I don't mean it in the way that they think I mean it either....
- A. Navajo language.... Well I guess they don't want...
- Q. They don't want to....
- A. Grandma doesn't.....
- Q. Okay....ask them about washing clothes and if they don't

want to then we will hold it off and then you and I can work or something like that.....

- A. They said that you are going to have to experience marriage.....
- Q. Tell them that I have already had ti twice and I didn't like it.....
- A. Ah-h-h-h
- Q. Go ahead and tell them....
- A. It would sound crazy!
- Q. He knows that I am not normal....
- A. Washing clothes.....?
- Q. Yeah.
- A. Navajo language..... Boy I am sleepy....
- Q. Are you?
- A. I think that I took too much medicine today....
- Q. Oh.....
- A. This morning I took my medicine, and I wanted two hours after that and then I got a little headache and I took two more aspirin and then before we left, I took my medicine and took two more aspirin.....
- Q. Do you know what you did?
- A. What?
- Q. You OD'd.....
- A. Overdosed?
- Q. Yeah, alot of people....I sail on Darvon, I have a whole bunch of it here that the doctor prescribed for pain.
- A. Damn my head is getting heavier.....

- Q. Yep....you are going to fly for awhile...you can trip on it...if you are drug sensitive.....I am so drug sensitive I have halusinations, big colored pictures, it is amazing....stuff.....even time perception slows down....
- A. Makes you feel like you want to vomit huh?
- Q. No.
- A. Well I do.
- Q. Just makes you feel pleasant....okay, so you don't feel well, you want to quit?
- A. No....
- Q. Do they want to talk about washing clothes? Because this is the only other thing on my list other than that we can talk about kids and what they do in the day....and things like that, that is what we can talk about.....
- A. Navajo language....
- Q. Okay, what did he say? You know you have got to be careful with that stuff, because there is no antedote for it....
- A. I know.
- Q. No antedote for it.....okay, go ahead, just finish this up and then we will cut it out.....
- A. He said that there are lot of ways to clean your clothes....
- Q. You are going to have to speak a little louder.....
- A. And then, he said that long time ago before they had launderies and all that stuff, laundries around here... he said that they used to take his clothes and take them down to a well or wash them down here or there.... bring the water home here, in the wagon....
- Q. Did they use soap a long time ago or yucca?
- A. I guess so....he said that they just used to use soap.

- Q. He would bring the water home in the wagon, huh?
- A. Yeah.....
- Q. Alright, three....
- A. He would get a large can....
- Q. Like a lard can....it would have to be bigger....like one of those huh? 55 gallon kind....
- A. That is big enough for you to put your clothes in and then you pour hot water around it and get it warm, and just scrub it.....like that, or you might take it down there to the well and use cold water.....don't waste your time building a fire down there....and then there was, after that they put some poles in and put a rope in between there....and hang it up there or wire..... if they didn't have that they would really be poor and they would after the clothes are washed....put them over the bushes....they will put them over the bushes....so that they will dry, have the bushes covered up over the place, a long time ago.....
- Q. Did they used to use clothes pins?
- A. No....
- Q. They would just lay them over.....if the wind comes along, you are in trouble....
- A. Yeah, it would be a nice warm day.....they wouldn't be washing on a windy day....
- Q. Pick a warm windless day...alright and also the second requirement would be you have to have dirty clothes.... alright....no I mean that....I know people that wash clean clothes...no, I serious, my wife used to be like something that would sit....
- A. Get your clothes dirty.....
- Q. In the linen closet for over two weeks, she would wash it.
- A. You see long time ago, if you were out on the sheep camp, just her and grandpa alone, see the sand was really good, we would wash out dishes with sand.....

- Q. Sand scours....
- A. Yeah, sand worked really good on it....and clothes too, we would....
- Q. Playing a joke on you huh?
- A. Yeah, we would get the water all muddy, wash it with mud....
- Q. And you come out and your clothes were like a board just full of mud?
- A. Yeah and then we will rinse it again....and then our clean white shorts and t-shirts, they would be red.
- Q. Oh beautiful.....
- A. Kind of a reddish color...and then we would go down there, down to the well and pump water on each other and go down and wash off the mud....
- Q. That is cute...
- A. Wash that mud off.... Navajo language.....
- Q. That is good, that is really good.....
- A. Navajo language.....that was really good stuff, we would put mud all over our heads.....when we dry out, our head would just be mud....we used to make home made brew for us.....
- Q. For washing?
- A. No, he made his own brew of whiskey.
- Q. We can talk about that.....
- A. About the whiskey?
- Q. Is that it for the washing.....?
- A. Yeah...
- Q. So they would just lay their clothes on the bushes....?

- A. Use that for clothesline.....
- Q. Okay, you want to ask him how to make home brew.....
tell him I am thirsty....
- A. Navajo language.....Everytime it rains you know,
all the water stays in one place you know and it
stays in one big mud puddle....he used to tell us that
that is really good, you wash yourself with that mud
and you are really clean....we'd stand there, get all
muddy and he would just laugh at us....
- Q. You know, actually that mud like that, is good for
your skin.....
- A. Yeah.....?
- Q. Not only that, but when you get old you know, you get w
wrinkled....you put the mud on your face and mud
just draws your skin tight.....they call it a mud
pack.....old women when they start to sag in the
face they put this mud on their face and they will
leave it on for hours. And they get good and dry
and then they break it off.....and they will wash
their face in cold water and it makes their skin
good and tight, they look much younger, and so any-
way.....
- A. Navajo language....he said that you might turn him in....
- Q. No, not me.....
- A. He told you that you might turn him in....
- Q. Oh, he knows that I wouldn't turn him in....
- A.
- Q. Oh, okay...tell him that it is against the law out here,
he can make up to 200 gallons tax free.....
- A. He never sold it.....
- Q. Yeah, yeah, I know but for your own use....it is illegal
except for your own use, out here.....

- A. Okay...
- Q. Something that I could have used.....actually to tell you the truth...he told me how to wash the clothesand the women, talking about the women...you know...
- A. What about women....?
- Q. What do women do during the day....remember we started that once....? Long time ago.
- A. Yeah, but we covered all the steps that a woman does in a day.....
- Q. Yeah, but I want to get the woman to tell me too..... but that is going to take a while.... I don't knowthat is about it... I haven't thought we have talked, there is something that he does....that we we haven't talked anything about as far as making things...you know what I mean, ask him if he has something that he wants to talk about....specifically.... okay....cause tell him that I am going to have to go too and make up another list.... I haven't thought too much, I am going to use this one first...
- A. Navajo language....
- Q. Remember we talked about making arrows and we talked about making bows.....
- A. Navajo language.... He said about the only thing that we haven't talked about is home made brew....he said that if he told us that we might make the formula and come here and we will be bombed.
- Q. Drunk as hell.....
- A. Drunk out of our head.... Navajo language....
- Q. He wouldn't like that very much would he? It would be cheaper than going to the bootlegger anyway.... that is for sure...
- A. Navajo language....
- Q. I don't know...
- A. Navajo language.....
- Q. I don't know.....

A. Navajo language..... he doesn't make it anymore.....
he gave it up.....

Q. He won't give it to you?

A. He won't give it to me.....

Q. He doesn't trust you?

A. No, he doesn't trust me.....

Q. Besides I don't drink.....

A. Ha.

Q. Was it that good.....?

A. Navajo language.....

Q. What did he say?

A. Navajo language.....

END OF TAPE