

ORAL
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TRANSCRIPT

THE
AMERICAN INDIAN
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

Vol I

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Dan Akee
Window Rock, Arizona

An Interview by
Ernest Bulow

Doris Duke Number 1159

The American Indian Oral History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke
Western History Center, University of Utah

Duke Indian Oral History Project

University of Utah
Salt Lake City 84112

INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 10, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Informant's Name Dan Akee

Birth Date April 27, 1912 Birthplace

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships

Informant's Occupation

Extended Comments

Tape Recording Made? Yes X No

Language of Recording English Translator

Interviewer's Name Ernest Bulow

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The following is an interview with Dan Akee, conducted by Ernest Bulow at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 10, 1971.

DA: "My name's Dan Akee from Tuba City. I was born there and raised around there. Full-blooded Navajo. My clan is Kiiyaa'aanii, and my father's side's clan is Ashiihi. And when I was a little under, underage to serve in the Armed Forces, that's when I heard about this Marine Code Talker. And Mr. John Benally was there with some people there, trying to organize the Navajos to join the Marines. So I did fill my application there. But on account of my age I was been turned down by my mother. So the, I was left off with the first bunch there. So I went back to school later on. And _____ come down, bother me, you know, that most of the boys my age were leaving, but I was only one that was left there. So I volunteered again. This time I lied to my mother that I had been drafted. So she finally did okay my release to go, you know. So as far as I went was to Fort Wingate. I was turned down again on account of my eyes. Again I was disable. So I went back to school again. But I still continue that I want to go. So right after it was, it was between, it was, it already happens in 196-, in 1942. It all happens this time, in one year. So I had, I had a chance again. To volunteer again somehow, and Mr. Benally was back and so, so, not, not-- the only reason I want to go in was because I was kind of

ashamed of myself that I was the only big boy around Tuba City area there, among the students, you know. Only boy that was left there. And not that I want to be in the combat or any kind of organization or the Marine Corps. But I just want to wear the uniform. Because I heard they were pretty tough, and because I did participate with lots of athletics and I was built. So I join again. This was my third one. This time I went as far as to Phoenix. And I was turned down over there again by, being I'm flat footed, and they were pretty strict about that time. To be, to join the Armed Forces you had to be perfectly fixed physical. So, so I went back to school again. So in 1943, right after school let out, I went to Flagstaff to look for a job. And there was a sign there, right where induction was and where they sign up for that. So it happened that one of my buddies was passing that had been drafted, you know. Drafted. So I speak to him. He invited me to come in, you know. Just to follow him, just going in there. So he was turning his paper in. Must have been signing up when he had to go to a physical. I was standing right behind him. And the man told me, 'How about you.' 'No they don't want me. I volunteer three times and they turn me down all three times. So I no good.' So from there on he talked to me, you know, 'Why don't you try again? Join the Navy or

Army. They might take you.' 'Okay.' I had no idea of joining. So okay. I filled the papers out, and this time I don't have to get consent from my mother. Because I was able to join this time, because... So in a few days I was over there in San..., I mean Phoenix, taking my physical. They almost turned me down again on account, on account of my flat foot there. So finally they said me, they told me, 'If it bothers you..., ' or certain question was... But I say, 'I can outrun anybody with the track shoes. Because I was raised around the Navajo Reservation, was barefooted, and I can outrun anybody,' I said. 'Won't hurt me.' 'Okay. You're in,' By this time I was planning to go to join the Navy this time. So we're in line, or somehow I made a mistake there. They asked me, 'What outfit you wanted to join?' And I made a mistake there, I was supposed to say Navy, but somehow in my, that Marine was still in my, my mind. Probably I said Marine. They checked me off, see. And I hear some words coming from the side. They said, 'You be sorry.' Well, I didn't know what that meant. I found out later on that when I was in San Diego, you know. I was the saddest guy in that bunch there. But by then we didn't know they had a Code Talker, you know. But I was, well, the way they told us, if you volunteer you can, you can select any branch, you know, to join, if you volunteer. Well, most of

them, all of the Marines, all are volunteers. None of them had been drafted. So, so I finished my boot camp training, came out of boot camp with PFC, you know. I made it. 'Cause it was nothing to me, you know, all that physical fitness. I was fit to stand anything, you know. Like hiking or... It don't bother me. Running don't bother me. So after I came out, you know, they told me that I wanted to join the paratroopers with the infantry. Then one of the officers that was talking to me told me that, he said, 'There is a thing that is more important that you can join. So he talked to me about this Code Talker, Code Talker. And he talked to me for a long time, you know. He, it was just because I said I want to join the paratroopers there. And he told me that, 'You can save lots of lives there with your words, you know.' And finally I accepted, you know. Joined the Code Talkers there for that reason, you know. That they told me that was more important, would be to the Marine Corps, than being in infantry. At the same time we were with the infantry over there. We were just among the infantry, all the field combat, you know. But the words we learn was really something, was really amazing, you know. So I took my training at Camp Pendleton, you know, and I passed. And the words we used was something. We was amazed, you know. Even now today they think it was

unbroken, but I don't think so. Because there's some words really funny the way we been using them. It was just like a puzzle. And if a Navajo don't take his training, he will never learn the code. It's just like puzzle work we use, you know. Well, after that, you know, the Fourth Marine Division was organized. So happened that Samuel Holiday was my school buddy, you know. I know him then. We were trying to get together, you know. So we were put together by accidentally, you know. And from there we were right into combat, right from, from the states. We were, the Fourth Marine Division was the first one to enter the main Japanese territory.

EB: Now. Just a minute. They tried to put guys together that came from the same area, didn't they, so that they could understand each-other better?

DA: No. No, not that. But we were just lucky, you know. They just assigned to, to happened. They just, somehow we wanted it like that, but we never did have our choice, you know. But it so happened that we were lucky. I got Sam Holiday with me, you know. So some other guys there were, they were--like William Kien and Roy Becenti, they don't know each other. But they were together, they were just put together. So from there we left and then my story is really more about Samuel and when I was there in the combat there. And from there we went right

into combat, you know. And one of the most fearful things that I was, to the Navajo was a dead body. But we went right directly to Marshall Island first. And we was in the line, line, I mean landing party there. And the shooting was going on, but we landed there. And I saw some dead Japanese. And the Navajo usually fear of that, you know. And I tried to glance at it, you know, but I just can't help it, you know. I just have to be among all those deads, you know, dead people. So that was one of the hardest things to get over. And finally I did, you know. Later on it don't bother me anymore. I find so many dead people around me, you know. So it happened. And I, and we was put as, as, well, we stay about 25 days on Marshall Island until our relief from the Army came or some other bunch of organization, you know, from Division, to go over, you know, and back. They just put more, more of, communication, learning more things. One mistake we make there in combat, you know, but we learn more and put into practice. I was in Maui, you know.

EB: They kept adding to the code, then?

DA: Not the code, but the way we should handle and the way we should operate a radio, you know. Some were, we've got _____, we'd have to set our own frequency and transmitter and receiver there. We had two radios that we had to work, you know. We were trained in them, but we were all excited when we were in

combat there. So, uh, we took our training again. From there we went right into Saipan there. And during the invasion of Saipan, there, most of the time we were really trying to get close to each other, you know, Sam and I. But during Saipan there, he was turned over before he was even land, you know. He was tied down with his pack and the rifle. And he was turned over, oh, I'd say 300 yard from the beach there. He was trapped there under the amphibious, the landing. So I didn't know. I looked for him, but I didn't see him. I thought he, he was been drowned. But most of the people that were with him there, somehow he did help some boys to get out of under the amphibious, you know. But he was tied down because the pack was right against his arm and was tied to him, you know. And so he, finally, he got himself loose and lose all his pack and all his rifle and his equipment. And he had to swim out of there some way. And they say he did help some boys, the way I heard it from the other boys. Well most of the boys were _____ but they were all about the same. Didn't have no reward on that. Most of them got their bronze stars, bronze stars, yeah. But he never did get one. He didn't care anyway. So, so I saw him go on the beach. There was, it were really heavy--anyway, the fire was really happy, you know, I mean, heavy. Around the beach,

you know, where the shells were coming through, the mortar and everything was--gunfire. Well, I saw Sam, you know, out on the beach there. He was all wet and nothing. So I called him over. And we stay and fix some foxholes and _____ dead Japanese and told him to grab one of the, our own men was dead. He had his outfit there. So he did and he had one of those long rifles, one of those M-1 there. They almost were dragged down on the ground when he walks. So finally we continue going there and, uh, so many things that happened between there and there. And one time we, somehow we got into a mistake with our platoon there and we went too far beyond the enemy line there. And we were getting shelled from our own artillery, and from the other side we're, we're being machine gunned by the enemy. Right there they told me to send this message, you know, and quick. And I did. And I think it was worth the lives to choose this, Code Talker instead of being a paratrooper. Because there are so many people are saved because of this, very secret message would have easily been intercepted by the Japanese. Now, afterward, I think about this, how important it was the Navajo used communication at same time. It saved so many people, you know, because otherwise they were intercepted by the Japanese. Look how, just how many people would have been dead, you know. This

was because the Japanese don't understand, they were all confused and we, they can't locate us, and our own men can be located what's going on, you know. Afterward everybody really realized that how important the Navajo was, you know. So, we was very, we were protected very good by them. Because we always had, did have to have a body guard because we did make a mistake before. And Samuel Holiday put Japanese shoes on him and wants to visit George Chavez who was with another outfit. You know, they was good buddies. So, he end up, he was walking when they caught him on the way, that there's a Japanese going through our lines. So they capture him. And he tried to tell that he was one of the Code Talkers, but nobody believed him, you know, because he had some of the equipment he was wearing. So they finally got him. I don't know how many men was around him, you know. He was all, all ready to be killed. So he was brought back to the outfit there and we identify him and then they turned him loose. And so many things, later on, after what we did, what Samuel did, we always been watched, you know, that nobody have to make the mistake on us as Japanese. But it was really something, you know, that, uh, what happened was that, life were different between a Indian and a white man, the way I find out over there, you know. And C-ration was not very good. We hardly have good, warm meal, you know, from landing till 2 or 3 weeks later, till we nearly

secured the island is the only time we have a good meal. So it happened that we were on Saipan there, and Samuel Holiday made a sling-shot. And there was lots of chickens that belonged to these natives who was living on the island there. So these white men, they don't know how to make a stew, a chicken stew. So we kill one and got a, oh, kind of a big can there. Put some water in and start it boiling and cut and, of course, everybody was watching us, saying, 'What are you doing, Chief?' 'Well, we're gonna make a chicken stew.' And we did, you know. We cook it, and everyone wants a taste of warm soup there. And from there everybody wants to, uh, wants to be, take part in killing the chickens around there. Even the colonel, he say, 'Grab me one, Samuel.' Well, he was a good shot, you know. He sling-shot and he kill chickens. Everybody was boiling chicken soup right around there all day, you know. Everybody liked it. Well, that's the time another K-ration came out, you know. Well, this had cookies in there that was so hard that sometimes you just get tired of eating. So this new ration came out with some bacon in. And I was sitting there and I wondered, how can I make this cracker soft. So I was watching, I was just warming some bacon, you know, in the morning. So I just tossed this hard cookies right into, right into that pan there. And I thought about frying bread, you know. 'Will you show me how to

fry bread?' One of my buddies always with me, and his name was Robert Holmes. He was a white man. So I turned the thing over and then I took it up and it was really soft. And he started doing that too, afterward. And everybody say, 'How did you make it soft?' 'Oh, very simple.' You don't know what fry bread means. And so I got the idea to softer these cookies. So we start doing that, you know, and everybody was doing that too. And so a lot of time they ask me a very silly question about we can survive and how we, most of the time when some of our own men was to be with us, you know, because we was in and had something, something on us that we are protected, protected, by being hurt and all. And they wanted me as a partner. But, always first man gets their choice to be our partner in the foxhole, you know. Know that we are more like, uh, well, I'll say what I'll say. We got something that we won't get hurt too much, or, I think or...oh, I can't say, I couldn't describe. But, anyway, there was these herbs we used to carry around when we left the reservation as our protection. Medicine man told us that you can be protected by that, you know. Maybe that was the reason why they want to be our partner. The things all came out pretty clear now. And it was a hard life, you know. And I think all the Navajos of the Code Talkers really deserve what they did for their country. They were not only Code Talkers,

but they were among, right with the front line, you know, in the combat, shooting, everything was taking place just like any other front line combat man. So do you have any other questions you want to ask me?

EB: Yeah. Sam told some stories that you haven't mentioned. Do you remember when the frog jumped on your head?

DA: Oh, yes. Uh huh. Well I saw, during the time I was on Pacific there, I saw with my own eyes eight plane was shot down right when I was looking, you know. One time we have, when I was on Saipan, you know. And we were very close to the front line there. And here we was. I was with Robert Holmes there in the foxhole there. And he, we were just scared. The shell, the bomb was coming pretty close, you know. And one of them came very close, you know. And somehow it shakes everything and here comes, I thought one of the, part of the bomb came right on us, and it was a frog. Came right on our helmet. And I said, 'Robert, look, I've been hit!' And there was a frog there. Jump right on my helmet there and I was laying there. That's what happened, though. But then we heard some noise from the bombs. Pretty close, you know.

EB: How was, Sam told about a mortar that landed really close to him. Were you there when that happened? The one that kind of made him hurt his head.

DA: Well, this was all happened on Iwo Jima. Well, we were laying there, while we were all jammed up on that beach there the first night, and all. And somehow there was a shell was under the ground there. And we didn't know it. We made our foxhole very close to there. And the Japanese, it was a Japanese mortar or something that was under the ground there. And they directly hit that place there, where the mine was, you know. And here comes that noise. And it was just a big bomb came out. It was just a big hole there. I don't know how deep we came out, but that's when this happened, all this happened. We were more hurt by concussion, you know. From there I start running, you know, I just can't control myself there when it happened. So I end up over there on the beach, you know. Almost got shot from that. Probably Sam did too. Some other people, some other buddies are with us, you know. And they were holding me, you know, I just can't control myself. I was just all, my mind was all upset, you know. I just can't stand it, I just can't control myself. I was just shaking. Then from there they finally calm me down and said, 'Where's your outfit?' And without knowing it I ran so far, so far back, you know, back where, to the beach there. I guess I must have really got scared. That's how, how he lose his hearing, right there, by the concussion there.

EB: Did you have the ceremony when you came back?

DA: Yes, I did. As I came there out of the service, I went back to school. I went back to school on the G.I. Bill. But I was sick at night. I was getting nightmares at night all the time, you know. Every time when I shut my eyes, you know, I would see or hear enemy coming or I find myself yelling. And this continued on for about over a year, until I went completely deaf, deaf and it was in the noontime in summer and all. I was laying in the hogan there, very sick. And I heard somebody walking into the door, you know, and there was this door right in the middle there and I was laying in bed. The only time I usually sleep was during the daytime. I can't sleep at night. And at night, before I shut my eyes, you know, there would be, there would be Japanese would be coming up against me, you know. So that's the reason why I usually took my day sleep, you know. Then I walk around at night, usually do lots of smoking. Been walking outside or sit up, and so I was fear to go to sleep because of these nightmares I was getting. Finally, my father came around and he put up a Gourd Dance for me. So they did perform this ceremony on me which they call a Gourd Dance and Bow, _____ they call it. And when I heard, I don't know, it was just unbelievable what happened to me. The first night I heard this

drum, you know, and my ear popped out and I could hear again. And when it was over, you know, it's, I don't know how they... see, most of the time I was raised around the school. I don't know too much about the ceremony. But on account of being sick, you know, sometimes you just have to look around the way, the way you gonna get well. So I accept this Gourd Dance to be held on me that they did. And from there at this Gourd Dance I gain my, you know, weight back and all this nightmare was not bad, you know. I got my hearing back as this Gourd Dance was taking place on me. And I was really a sick man out there. Even the Red Cross came to me to, to try and put me in the hospital. But there was nothing wrong with me that they find out from the doctor. Which, I don't know how...so nobody find out, from the doctor in there, he never did find out what was really wrong with me. And so it was all in my mind, you know, what I been through there. Nearly four invasions. 'Cause in my mind, I think too much about it. And that might be the reason that I was getting these nightmares. So that's the reason why I never did finish my high school. So after I got well, you know, I just got married. So there ends my _____ in school. I was planning to go through college, but I never stayed. But I made a mistake. Because of a sickness after that, I came out of the service.

INTERVIEW: Dan Akee

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EB: Well, thank you very much for telling us about your experiences.

DA: Yes."

Sidney Bedoni

Window Rock, Arizona

University of Utah
Salt Lake City 84112

DATE 7-10-71

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Informant's Name Sidney Bedoni, Flagstaff, Arizona

Birth Date March 14, 1913 Birthplace Black Mountain, Arizona

Religion, Race, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships

Informant's Occupation Security Police

A Recorded Interview by

Ernest L. Bulow

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1st Marine Parachute Regiment

5th and 2nd Marine Division

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The following is an interview with Sidney Bedoni, conducted by Ernie Bulow, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 10, 1971; Hoskie Boyd also participated.

SB: "You're not going to ask me any questions, or anything like that?"

EB: No, just whatever you want to remember, you know. What--

SB: Well, I don't know. It's kind of hard to--to remember all of what I did and everything else.

EB: Start off by telling a little about, you know, where you're from, and where you went to school.

SB: I was originally from Navajo Mountain. And the funny thing about, about my situation is that, oh, first I went to school in, I started to school in Tuba City. Well, they were, they want these people to enroll their kids in school in those days. I forget what, what year it was. And pretty soon these Navajo people, they, they don't want their children to go to school. They'd rather have them herding sheep and stuff like that. So I was about five years old, I guess, and they say, 'Pretty soon'. There were, well, a bunch of people that they're going to load them up in the truck and haul them to school without the consent from their father and mother. So that's how I got into school. They have, I was surprised. I didn't know anything about it, you know. I was herding a bunch of rams and stuff like that--me and my cousin, Ned Yazzie.

He's working for the welfare now. And so we was herding sheep. They told us that, 'You take those sheep way out in, where there is, was a hiding place. You herd it over there, and these people are going to be riding horses. There'll be a bunch of them riding horses to pick up these kids that are school age, young Indian kids.' So we took off. We herd the rams just right around the house there and pretty soon--there was a big mesa over there, that's where they--you could see it, as far as you could see. So they seen us and they put us in back of their horse and, and the sheep and the water we took them back to the hogan. And they took us back over there, and they--my mother died while I was 12 years old, I guess, and she was really crying. She was really crying, and, and then they took us. They took us over there and they feed us and took it, took us in a truck into Tuba City

EB: What year was that?

SB: I don't, I don't remember. Well, I'd say around in the thirties. So they took us to Tuba City, and they didn't have enough beds or anything like that, so that winter, I only went to school about three or four months. And then, and then they, and then they send me back, back to the reservation when it was winter, and the snow must be about, over knee-high deep. And my

father was over at, they have a Yei-bi-chai Dance over at Inscription House. My father was there, and lucky that he was there. So my father took me home to Navajo Mountain on a mule. Boy, we couldn't--you couldn't even hardly drive a vehicle through there. The snow was too deep. So, and as, as I grow up, and then these recruiting sergeant came over here. There was, I remember John Benally. He's a code-talker instructor. He's here now. He was there and told me that you had to have consent from your folks first.

EB: How old were you then?

SB: About seventeen. I lie about my age, and then I got in, I enlisted. I told them I was eighteen. At that time you, you had to be eighteen to enlist, to join the Marines. So I got no way of going back to tell my folks that I want to re--I want to enlist in the Marines. So, so I just start walking. I run as far as to Inscription House, I think, in one day. And from there, I think I run all the way to Navajo Mountain, I'm not sure. I don't remember, or I think I caught a ride or something. Then I came back a couple days. He said they going to wait for me. They waited for me and then I re-enlist. I, I mean I enlist in the Marines, and I went to boot camp. Lucky that they have kind of military training there at Tuba City. We know all about military drills and stuff like that. So I was

ahead on that when I got into boot camp, so I didn't have very much trouble drilling and stuff like that at boot training. So after we finished boot training, say all the Navajos that know English and their own language to fall out separate from these, uh, Gringos. So I took about three or four weeks' training. And the first bunch that was there and took the training, they left for overseas just about a week ahead of me. So then we started training there. And then...

HB: Will it be troublesome if we take a photograph? We want a photograph of the informants.

SB: Uh huh.

HB: O.K.

XX: Just don't pay any attention to me. Go ahead and you do your thing while we're shooting this.

SB: And I took about three weeks' training.

EB: Did you know about the code talkers before you enlisted in the Marines?

SB: No, I didn't know anything about it. They gave us some code tests, and stuff like that. Just an ordinary exam. I only went up to the ninth-grade, and so, I took code talk training and stuff like that, radio. And then they start to ship us overseas. We been on the sea for, our destination was New Caledonia. We've been on the sea for one month until we got

to our destination. There they put us in the First Raider Battalion. Say, I want eight, eight or seven men, you know. Code Talkers. They put us in the First Raider Battalion. The First--I forget the names of the boys that I was with, the Navajo boys. So and then pretty soon the guy from the paratrooper outfit, the officer from the paratrooper outfit came over and told us that, 'We want volunteers.' Volunteers for paratrooper training. We want code talkers in that parachute outfit. There was a First Marine Parachute, Paratrooper Regiment over there at that time at New Caledonia. So I remember one guy failed, and I, I remember his name, Francis somebody. What's his name. So he, he was the only one that failed on physical exam. And then they took us down to the base. That's where we took our parachute training. Let's see, we didn't have any tire or anything out there. We just jump on top, the table's about yay high, and then we do our tumbles on it.

HB: Excuse me, Mr. Bedoni, where are you from?

SB: Uh, Navajo Mountain. Do you mean right now?

HB: Yeah, where do you call home?

SB: Oh, home? Navajo Mountain.

HB: O.K., fine. Thanks a lot.

SB: Uh huh. And then we took training. That was a really hard training, too. Hot, and everything, rain, muddy, and everything. It rained mostly every day.

EB: Jump in the mud.

SB: Yeah. And I remember one guy that I went through with was, uh, this...his father used to be vice-chairman.

HB: Scott Preston?

SB: I remember that guy, that...His son is Jimmy Preston. He's the one that I went through parachute training with. He died over in Cameron someplace, about three or four years ago. And that's the one, that's the one that I went through training with him. He's the only one that I remember. He used to be a good buddy of mine. And he's the only one that I remember his name. Anyway, we took, we finished our jumps and we got our wings and completed our course, and then we went to Guadalcanal. They still have scattered fighting over there, so we stayed there, I don't know, about a week, I think. And then we went on to _____. There wasn't much fighting over there, and we did a little over there in _____ which is an island. And then, after we secured that, then we went on to Bougainville. We stayed there about two months, I think. I don't know how long there.

EB: Up until then you hadn't been in any actual landings, huh?

SB: Yeah, we did landing there.

EB: At Bougainville?

SB: Yeah, uh huh.

EB: What was--can you remember much about that?

SB: No. No. Uh, well, it really, I could tell lot of stories about that, but I just don't, don't have time to talk about it and...

EB: That's what everybody's going to want to remember, you know. What happened. How did they use you code talkers? I mean, were you using the code at this time?

SB: Yeah, back and forth.

EB: Well, tell a little about that. You know, how that worked.

SB: Well, we just only used from the headquarter on to the front line. We had some men over in the front line tell us what to do and tell us where to drop the bomb and how many feet, and all that. And at the front, they spot the enemy, the bivovac, and tell us where to throw these mortar and stuff like that. These 155's. Then we sent the message in the Navajo language back and forth. And sometimes they were really trying to throw us off or something like that. They try, but you can easily hear the Navajo language and the Japs will be jabbering in there and trying to interrupt our code.

But they just can't--no way they can, they can understand our language, so they just holler or jabber in there and stuff like that. Let's see, and then they told us that, 'Any of you guys, code talkers, if you, if you get captured, you're not going to tell a thing. Even if they, even if they really making you suffer.' Just don't break that code, they said. I guess a lot of them did like that when they got captured, and that's what they told us, so all right. See, we were the, I guess they think we were, they hardly think of us, that we were the important men over there. Say as soon as the Japanese catch you, well, just don't say anything. Just don't say anything about the code, or anything like that.

EB: In other words, the Japanese were looking for you Navajos?

SB: Yeah. Well, I guess they're not actually looking for us, but-- They don't know what our race is or either we're white, or I don't know. I guess they, they can't very well look for us. So, well, over there you could, if you see anybody, if you don't recognize, you just have to shoot them, shoot at them. You can't just look for a certain guy like that over there.

EB: Was there ever any problem with Navajos looking Oriental?
Some Navajos look, you know, quite Oriental.

SB: Yeah. They got--

EB: Was there ever a problem with that?

SB: They got a special band that you could recognize, but they always had to be with a white. And that way they could, I forgot some. I think maybe some of these guys remember on that, how to distinguish the code talkers.

EB: Did the Anglo guys make a special effort to protect you guys, since they knew you were important?

SB: Uh huh. Uh huh. They were protecting us. Uh huh. There was one guy that was supposed to be protecting me at night. He got bumped off. He got killed just right beside me in the foxhole at the front line. He used to be a good buddy of mine. He was a white guy. So we was there, I don't know how long, and then they told us that we're going to form the Fifth Marine Division. So they called us there from the front line to the rear echelon. It was close to Christmas, I think. We had good hot turkey, and stuff like that, in the rear echelon. And then they sent us back to form the Fifth Marine Division. And then I went back. And then I went on furlough for thirty days. Within less than a month, I guess, they shipped me out again--overseas. This--I came back, I think it was in '44. And then they sent me back for a replacement. And then they shipped me off to, first we landed in Hawaii. And then we went on to Saipan. There, the fighting was almost over when we got over there. They were on, halfway on the island

when we got there. Oh, you could hear a lot of things like 'American, you're going to die,' and stuff like that. At night, we could hear them talking in English. 'Come on out and fight, Americans.' Oh, they, they could imitate a bird. Boy, just like a bird, tropical birds, and stuff like that. They really can fool you. When they're up in the trees, why they have these, they dress up in leaves that you can't even tell that they're up in the trees. When you're going on a trail, they can really bump you off. It's easy. You couldn't hardly see them, because we were the advancing troops, and they were defenders. So, so I went back to Saipan, and we was going to hit Iwo Jima, but they changed their mind. But I was with, I think I was with the Second Marine Division over there at Saipan. And then they told us that we're going to hit Okinawa. Instead, we faded from the east, and they landed from the west. So there we fade them, and then we are on, on the sea. So then, we stayed there on the sea for about a week and then we came back to Saipan. And then they dropped this atomic bomb Hiroshima. But a week later they said that the Japanese were surrendering. And then we got back to Saipan and then we went in as the Occupation Troop at Kyushu, Kiunshiu, Japan. Seaport, I think they called it Sasebo. We landed there, and I stayed there about nine months.

EB: Did you make any jumps after your jump training? Any parachute jumps?

SB: No, we didn't. We didn't. We was going to jump, but they, they changed their mind.

EB: So all of your landings were on the ground?

SB: Yeah. We was just ready for it in case they want us to jump. You have to make six jumps in order to qualify to be a paratrooper. So I came back after nine months, I think. They go by the points, point system over there. So I got enough points so they sent me back, and they discharged me January 16, 1946. Went back to the states. As soon as I got back, why I saw the newspaper saying that they need a checker in, a Navajo, in the depot. I put an application in. I waited only two months, and then they sent me a letter that they've got the job for me. So that's where I am still.

EB: Where's that?

SB: At Flagstaff.

EB: Flagstaff.

SB: Outside of Flagstaff.

HB: What's that? Bellemont?

SB: Yeah, Bellemont. It's still over there, so I've got to go back to work at twelve-thirty tonight, so I got to make a fast drive. And my wife's working at Torrey. She's going to

school. That's why she didn't come with me, you know. Kids--

EB: What do you remember of the landing at Bougainville? That was your main landing, wasn't it?

SB: Yes. Uh huh.

EB: How did, what did the code talkers do in that landing?

SB: Oh, they send messages when they're going to land, and stuff like that, what time, and stuff like that. You could hear Japanese on the radio trying to bust up the landings, and stuff like that. Trying to break up the landing.

EB: You mostly carried a radio, then, all the time?

SB: Yeah. _____.

HB: What term did you use, like if you spotted an enemy tanker or a submarine?

SB: Oh, I done forgot about it. They got some in the Navajo Times that I look over and I forgot all the alphabets and stuff like that. Their meanings.

EB: Did any funny things happen. I mean misunderstandings occur?

SB: None that I know of. None that I know of.

EB: Most of the time the code got across O.K.?

SB: Yeah, yeah. Most of, most of the time it, it came through O.K. even with a lot of jabber that's going on in our radio.

EB: I know nowadays some of the young Navajos from different parts of the reservation have a hard time understanding each other.

How did they get around that? I mean, did they put you together with one, guys from the same area, or did you just manage all right?

SB: They paired us in two.

EB: Because sometimes a guy, say from Wide Ruins, couldn't understand a guy from Black Mountain very well. You know, they--

SB: Oh, they have a--that's right, uh huh. Yeah, I could understand both of them. I could, not like, oh, there's a few words that kind of don't jive.

EB: Of course, I guess they took care of a lot of that, of that in the training, didn't they?

SB: Yeah. See, the training you get all the same, the same code.

EB: The same words, huh?

SB: Same words that you used.

HB: None, none, all are general Navajo now. They have code. It's just a system.

SB: Yeah, yeah. That's right, just one code. If you want to send a message, you have to use, you have to go by the code.

HB: I think Philip Johnston one time said that when they spot a submarine they called it Lo-tsoh (big fish, whale). It was something like that.

SB: Yeah.

HB: Yeah. That's big fish. I think it was in Navajo Times.

SB: Yeah. They got some of those words in Navajo Times. I think Johnston's got all that, all that code with him.

EB: You guys knew how important you were, then even at the time, right?

SB: Well, we didn't know that we were, we were that important. We were just doing our, doing something for our country. That's all we thought about it. We never thought that, oh, we never thought it's going to come up something big or anything like that.

EB: You know now that that's the only code they never broke?

SB: Uh huh.

EB: It was pretty good.

SB: Yeah. Uh huh. So one guy from, this doctor from, he's got some of his aides with him. He, he interviewed me and said, 'You're the guy that I want, really want to see. You've been in the paratrooper, and I want to see you first,' he said. 'You're an important man I want to see.'

EB: Yeah. Well that was unusual in those days. They didn't have any paratroopers before then. That's why I asked you if you ever made any jumps.

SB: Yeah, we went through training jumps.

EB: But never in combat?

SB: No. Training. Or maybe some of the guys did. But I don't,

I don't recall. Not in my mine. We was going to jump, but they, they turned it down. And I never did make a jump.

EB: How did you feel about all of this at the time? I mean, was it pretty exciting, or just--

SB: Oh, yeah. It's exciting when you're in combat. Every minute of it.

EB: Did it bother you to have to carry a radio instead of a gun?

SB: Yeah. It's heavy.

HB: Yeah.

SB: And you got to be, I mean, you got to be like a mule, or donkey, or something to carry it.

EB: Didn't it bother you that you couldn't shoot back? I mean, you had to carry the radio, you couldn't carry a gun. When the guys were shooting at you.

SB: Yeah, we carried a gun and everything, radio, and everything.

EB: You carried a gun, too?

SB: Yeah.

EB: So part of the time you were shooting, and part of the time you were talking?

SB: Yeah. But we mostly, I don't think they really protect us at that time, too. You could ask some of these guys if they were been protected or anything. And none, I would say, I don't think they ever even protect me. I just have to look out for

myself.

EB: Did you know of any of the Navajos being captured?

SB: None that I know of.

HB: What other code did you know, did they have?

EB: Did you use any of the regular military codes besides Navajo?

SB: Uh, no.

EB: Just Navajo?

SB: Just Navajo. That's the only code we use. If we use English code, they can break it right away.

EB: Of course, in Europe they had to use the other codes.

SB: Yeah, that's why they mostly got slaughtered. That's the way I look at it. They should have started this program right from the start. Get together on this, and then, that way they wouldn't have any trouble in Europe. Like we did, over there. We mostly slaughtered them. Landing on landing, and everything.

HB: Were there some other code talkers that you know, that didn't have, that didn't speak a word of English?

SB: Oh, there's some Navajos that were in Marines, but they never became a code talker.

EB: To become a code talker, you had to speak good English, too, right?

SB: Well, in a way. I didn't speak very good English when I went

in. Mostly I got my English from outside, among the white people.

EB: After you got out of the service?

SB: After and now. I'm still outside. So that's where, I didn't really know much, much English or anything like that. What little schooling I had.

EB: Was the war the first time you were ever away from the reservation?

SB: Yeah, uh huh. That was the first time, being away from the reservation.

EB: Some people think that the war changed the Navajos quite a bit. Do you think that's true? Did, that was sort of the dividing point. Before the war, they were very traditional, and it's been since the war that, that they've gone the white man's way. Do you think it was the war that changed that?

SB: That, I know what you mean. At first, when I was going in the service, they didn't have this ceremony for me. This is just for one night, this ceremony. But after I came back, while I was on furlough, then they make these, they make this, some kind of a feather that, for me. Even if I'm way overseas or something like that, over here they

they still can pray to that feather that I'll be all right, stuff like that. Just before I went in the hogan to have the ceremony on me when I came back from overseas, I took all my clothes off and then went in the hogan. Leave my clothes out there, my uniform. And then they have that sing for me. Get all washed up and everything. See, all that stuff that's on you, they think it's evil or something like that. They trying to chase them away. So that was when I was on furlough, and then when I came back after I got discharged, they, they want me to have a Squaw Dance for me, that ceremony. That all my mind won't be way overseas or anything like that. All my mind will come back to me when they have that Squaw Dance for me. So I won't be--well, well, you heard some white people that they, after they come back from the service they go crazy and stuff like that. But that's the way they, they figure so, these Navajos. That's why they put that Squaw Dance on me, for that occasion. And I still got that feather still at home. They told me that you're supposed to keep it, but I never. I always forgot to take it with me.

EB: Was there anything that, that the Navajos could carry to war, like a pollen bag, that would be like good luck?

HB: Well, this particular feather would be that.

EB: But that was just home, though. What could you carry with you?

SB: Nothing.

EB: Nothing?

SB: Yeah. They never heard, they never told me to carry anything, but just this feather. Of course, they keep it in a safe place for me, while I was out there all this time.

EB: That's like from the story of the Hero Twins when the one brother stayed home and watched the cigarette?

SB: Uh huh.

EB: You know, and the other one was away fighting.

SB: Yeah. That's the way it was on my part. I don't know about these other guys.

EB: Well, yeah. But you came from a pretty traditional family.

SB: Uh huh.

EB: From up there.

SB: Well, my father didn't go to school and my mother, my folks didn't go went to school.

EB: Can you remember any particular things that happened that seemed,

you know, serious when, while you were over there? I mean close calls you had, or anything like that.

SB: Well, I, I seen a lot of close calls. One was when I walking down the jungle thing like that. I always think of that, that feather that was back home. You, you couldn't tell if there's enemy up in the tree or not. A lot of, a lot of, I did have a lot of close calls while I was over there. And they had these little bottles. I guess, can you tell about that?

EB: I guess so. Sure. You can tell about anything.

SB: We break out the box, the quartermaster, and they say, 'You guys, take these ammunition to the front line. One of our outfits is really getting beat.' I really in, in the thick of the firing. So they are running out of ammunition, so me and this Preston, a buddy of mine. 'Hey, you guys.' One guy was calling us. 'Hey, you guys, take some of this. It's alcohol.' When you get wounded, why they give it to you, so you won't feel anything very much. So we took some, three or four bottles, took the ammunition all on our back, fifty calibers, went up to front line. Well, there was bullets flying all over, so we went through, right through there, and we didn't, we wasn't afraid then. We stole this bunch of alcohol bottles from the quartermaster. So we came back all right. And we could see our buddies wounded, raining and stuff like that, no ammo. They were really fighting it out there, so

there's a little ridge behind there, little draw here. They're fighting it out up on top of the hill. We got relieved already. We came back from the front line. They told us to take these ammunition up there. They're running out of ammunition, so we didn't carry any radio with us.

EB: Some code-talkers were in the front lines all the time, though, right?

SB: Uh huh. Yeah.

EB: So you just sort of took turns up there?

SB: Yeah. See, we got relieved already.

EB: Yeah.

SB: And then they told us that we didn't since we're not doing anything and we're going back to the rear echelon, then we might as well, they told us that, 'take this ammunition up there before you guys go back to the rear echelon.'

EB: Did the, under those conditions, I mean combat, did the Navajos and the Anglos get pretty close friends? I mean--

SB: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, sure.

EB: There was no feeling of, you know, I'm white and you're Indian, or--

SB: No, no. They call us chief all the time over there, so--

EB: I think they still, they still do that.

HB: Well hell, you were chief then.

SB: Yeah.

EB: Any Indian's chief, automatically.

SB: Yeah. Well, at first, I don't know, I kind of didn't like it, you know. And they always call me chief. I kind of didn't like it, you know. I think chief, they thought chief means Indian, or, and then later I find out that the chief means, means, oh, something big, or big shot, or something like that. Big man. And then I got--

EB: Na-ta-nee.

SB: I got used to it. And then I, from there I like it. Think I'll be called chief. So I kind of like it when they call me chief. Well, any white man that comes to you, don't know you or he don't know your name, he'll call you chief over there, when you're in the service. Oh, you meet a lot of white people over there. They just call you chief. If they don't know what your name was, they just call you chief.

EB: Did you know any other Indians from other tribes, besides Navajos, that were in the service?

SB: No.

EB: Only Navajos were in your division?

SB: Yeah, yeah. No, I don't run into any other tribe. We just had, just had the Navajos.

EB: Can you remember any other things like your alcohol story? Those

are the--

SB: Yeah.

EB: Those are the good stories, you know. Those are the things that, that make it seem human, you know, like it really happened.

SB: Well, there was this one that, in Kyushu, Japan, that we're having a beerbust, mostly code talkers, Navajos. And this guy, he was, I think he was Italian. He don't drink, you know. He kind of hate us, you know. He he's kind of prejudiced to the, to the Indians. They were going to have a beerbust, and this guy, boy, he was wising off, you know, to the Indians, and to the--Say, 'I don't want you guys to drink in here.' In the barracks, you know. 'Yeah, we, we're going to drink, I don't care what you said,' and these guys were saying. And then pretty soon he got mad at me, and they said, 'Go ahead, go ahead, fight him cheif,' they said. These Navajo guys. 'We'll help you. We'll help you out.' So I, I just had about a couple of beers and that's all. And I start to fight him, right in the barracks. And there was a row of rifles between the beds--two rows of bunk beds. And we started fighting. Pretty soon I let him have it right in the jaw. And then, I guess he tripped over. He, at the same time he tripped, land right flat on his head on the cement floor--cement floor. He was out. And all the, there was some white guys on his side, and there were all these code talkers were on my side. Say, 'Well,

O.K. Let's start fighting.' Everybody have their rifles ready on each other. I was just standing there. Pretty soon the M.P. came in, and they took me. Say, 'I think you killed that guy.' That's what they told me. 'I think you killed that guy.' So, so the M.P. took me to the First Sergeant. 'O.K. Bedoni, who started the fight?' I don't I told him, 'I didn't start the fight. He did.' He didn't like the Indian. He's prejudiced to the Indian, so--and he don't drink, he don't want you to drink in the barracks. We like to drink in the barracks, and we can't go out or anything, so we always--they don't allow us to go out. This was the first occupation, restrictions on it. So we can't drink beer in the barracks. They have to get the beer. We didn't even start drinking. And then, they took me to the, they took me to the stockade. So they kept me. These guys said they going to help me testify, too, over there, but they didn't even show up. Except this other guy's friend, he showed up and testified against me. I was the only one. Nobody testified for me, or nobody helped me. All my buddies. So I stayed in there, I don't know how long--about three or four weeks. And then the next day they say, 'I think you killed this guy. He hasn't come to yet.' Say, 'You're in for it.' So, I don't say anything. I just stay in the stockade. And then this M.P. told

me that he hadn't come to yet. They took this guy to the hospital. And then about the third day, they told me that he came to. So I thought I was really in for it. And then after that they--from there, from the stockade, they sent me back over to the, they bus me back to where the others are. I was PFC. Nobody didn't have any higher rank than that. I guess we were forgotten. Most all the code-talkers were PFC--private. So that was the only thing that happened to me. And then they--Oh, my charge when I went over there, they dismissed the whole thing. They, they thought it wasn't me fault. It was his fault.

EB: He finally got better, though, huh?

SB: Yeah. Uh huh. He was all right. So I never went back to that outfit. And they shipped me out, back to the states.

EB: Generally, though, there wasn't much fighting between the Anglos and the Navajos was there?

SB: He was the only one.

EB: Only one.

SB: Italian boy. Well, most people, they were really nice. Yeah, there's some people like that.

EB: Is this the first time since the war that anybody's ever been interested in the code talkers, that you know of? Does anybody ever ask you about it before?

SB: No. No. I see some guys that, they say they're code talkers and they invited me to Chicago, and stuff like that, but I never went.

EB: Yeah. That was the Fourth Division. Only, just the Fourth Division.

SB: Uh huh. I never paid attention to it very much, you know, until they, they have this started. I decided to put my name in and see what happened.

EB: Does it feel pretty good that they're finally recognizing you?

SB: In a way, yeah. In a way, yeah. Yeah, it's strange. In a way, I feel good, and stuff like that, but--to be known. Before that I wasn't paying much attention to it. Since they started that, then I said to myself, I might as well give it a try, and my kids, they want me to sign up for it, so they're the ones that pushed me.

EB: It's a good thing.

SB: I wasn't really going to, but I say, 'All right. They'll come to me if they want to know something about it.' I just told my kids, 'Well, you better sign your name. Sign up for it, Daddy. O.K. So I--

EB: How many months were you overseas then?

SB: Oh, about four years, I guess. Mostly all my time was overseas, all during the war. When I was on furlough, that's a month

there, and, about two months. I been only in the states two months, I guess, all during the whole war. So that's about it.

EB: Well, thank you very much.

SB: Have you got any more questions to ask?

HB: How did your family feel when you came home? Did they--
Naturally, they were glad to see you. Is there any other feelings there?

SB: Well, those uneducated people, they don't, they don't think much of it. My folks and my dad, they--they just--they just glad that I'm back, and stuff like that. So they're, they're glad that I serve my country, and that's all they said.

EB: Did they know that, did they know about your code-talking, that it was, that you used Navajo?

SB: No. No. I never told them. They never did know. I was the first student that came back from combat at Tuba City. I went on thirty days furlough. And when I got to Tuba City, I know most all the students. They were really surprised, and they think I was really somebody. I was the first one that came back from combat, and they have, in the auditorium they have a, they have all the stars for the, for the ones in the service, and there was about two or three that had been already got killed. They got yellow stars on their mark. And then first, when I came over there at Tuba City, why, everybody was,

well, I think they think I was really somebody, you know, the first--the first student that came back from overseas, from combat, and went through combat, and all that. And then, well, I went through every class, from beginner on to high school. They have high school there, and they want me to tell the student where I've been overseas. They want to know where I've been and all that, and they, they roll down the map, world map, and then I'd show them where I went, and everything like that. And told them where I've been, and where I went through combat, and all that. And they were, they were really, and they have, they were really, think highly of me, you know. That I'm the first student that came back from overseas. And at the same time, my brother who was in the army, he was on furlough. I met him there just accidentally. He was in the army. He was just going overseas, too, as soon as he got off from furlough. And this boys' advisor was going around with me, introduce me, and all that. And when they have that show start in the auditorium, I went up on the stage and they, they want me to to speak to them about where I been, just here and there, and all that. Before the show start, and then they have a dance for us over there. They put up a dance for us and everything. We, every, each people invite us to their home, and we eat with them, and stuff like that. That was the only thing I skipped there. Oh, they were really nice to us.

INTERVIEW: Sidney Bedoni

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EB: Thank you very much for talking."

Thomas H. Begay

Chinle, Arizona

DATE July 14, 1971

PLACE Chinle, Arizona

INTERVIEWER'S NAME Thomas H. Begay

INTERVIEW DATE February 3, 1977

INTERVIEWER'S ADDRESS 200 S. 1st St., Phoenix, Arizona

INTERVIEWER'S AFFILIATION Black-Streak-of-Heart-People, and Black

NAME

INTERVIEWER'S ADDRESS

An Interview by

John Sylvester

and

Benjamin Lee

MARINE CORPS

AGE 2 1/2

REMARKS

INTERVIEWER

INTERVIEWER'S ADDRESS 200 S. 1st St., Phoenix, Arizona

Doris Duke Number 1166

The American Indian History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke

INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 14, 1971

PLACE Chinle, Arizona

Informant's Name Thomas H. Begay

Birth Date February 5, 1927

Birthplace Two Wells, Mexico

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Black-Streak-of-Forest-People, and Black Sheep

Family Relationships _____

Informant's Occupation Head of Employment Assistance at Chinle

Extended Comments _____

Tape Recording Made? Yes X No _____

Language of Recording English Translator _____

Interviewer's Name John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee

(PLEASE USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS FOR EXTENDED INFORMATION)

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The following is an interview with Thomas H. Begay, conducted by John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee, at Chinle, Arizona on July 14, 1971. The translator is Benjamin Lee.

JS: "This is July 14, 1971. We're in Chinle, Arizona, in the office of Mr. Thomas H. Begay. The interviewers are John Sylvester and Benjamin Lee. Mr. Begay, where were you born?"

TB: I was born in a hogan in Two Wells, New Mexico, below what is presently known as the Jones Ranch. What they call, since then they have, they start calling Jones Ranch, but I was born in hogan out there. And it's a remote area where there's no lights, no nothing. Just a hogan.

JS: You call it Jones Ranch now?

TB: Now. Yeah. My parents are traditional and they are long hairs -- I guess that's what you'd call it. And I think my grandmother was the lady that...I guess she was there too, to receive me.

JS: When were you born?

TB: I was born on February 5th, 1927. Of course this was, you know, they only go by the year. My parents didn't know the month of the year, but they say it's about two months...second month after Christmas. This is the only information I got. There's no record. But I just got the day -- February 5th, 1927, this is what I....

JS: You use yourself, uh huh.

TB: I had to come up with something.

SS: To keep your records straight.

TB: Yeah. Yeah.

JS: Into which clan were you born?

TB: I was...my clan is Tsi-naajinii.

JS: And what was your father's clan?

TB: My father is Ashiihi -- or Dibelizhin -- those two are the same.

Dibelizhin....Black Sheep. Everything seems to be black. [laughter]

JS: Where did you go to school?

TB: I went to Fort Defiance Indian school. I was put in school when I was twelve.

JS: Were you forced to go to school?

TB: No. I had no contact with outside of any kind, with Anglo society of any kind except the Zunis. And I was taken to school. My father said to go -- that's it. My grandmother didn't want me to because we had quite a bit of sheep then, you know, ranching. So I used to...I think one of the reasons I was put in school was because my father had lost a big ranching area that was taken away by some, what they call Indian agents.

JS: It was taken away from him.

TB: Yeah, the whole land, the...in the lease. So he said it was wise for us to go to school, because that's the only thing that would ever ... in other words, that's the only way we would ever survive. This is what he said.

JS: Uh huh.

TB: So I went to school[inaudible]...I went up to the sixth grade. And then it was right in the middle of the Second World War and

everybody was going. And so I said, well, let me join and see what happens to me. I sort of didn't tell my right age. I told them I was seventeen, but I was sixteen. I went in August of 1943. They gave me all kinds of tests in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And I really hadn't been out, you know, like sleeping in hotels or motels. I was, you know, one of those who had never been in hotels or motels. And so I had never rode a train. That was my first experience, rided on, ride on a bus to go to Santa Fe for physical examination. They have us all strip and we were lined up and check us. And a few days later I got my ticket, say report to San Diego, in about first of September. So I got on the train, on the freight. I didn't know where to sit or what to do so I was trying to find my way around. I didn't know they have reservations, they make reservations for us, you know. We have these, what they call a...you know, these....

JS: Sleeping cars?

TB: Sleeping cars. Yeah. So I sat there all night, here my bed was empty. And they gave me meal ticket and everything and here I was the first priority....these guys that volunteered get in the first of the line of everybody, even those servicemen that are traveling. Supposed to be treated first class. But I didn't know about it until I got to Los Angeles. And there I waited, you know, that was a big, so big. I never been in the city. I just, you know, ask around a little bit. So I got there and spent about half way

there, and finally I met a young man -- white boy -- he sort of say, 'Well, this is how you go. I'm going to my room now.' So we got on a train that night. One of these cattle-box...what do you call, a cattle train. You don't sit. You just stand there or lie or sit. We got on that and went down to San Diego and got there and the bus was waiting outside the station, there and right away there was some sergeant and some Marines. They receive us ... got on the bus and went down to the barracks, I guess what you call barracks. They gave us sheets and told us to make it up. By gosh, about four o'clock in the morning before the sun was, you know, before daylight. The bugler blow and 'Everybody out! Outside,' they call it that. So we got up and went to eat. And there was another thing I didn't know about, where we went to eat, you know. I didn't eat butter, see. I never used to that kind of stuff, you know. Just the Navajo food, you know. I didn't like butter. I didn't like the taste of it, even when I was in boarding school. I went through the line you know, they just slap it down here. After I ate, you know, I just ate what I usually eat. There was some butter I couldn't eat and some things I didn't like to eat. As I got to the end....before you have to put it away there was somebody standing there, say 'You eat it right now.' I just swallowed it just like that without chewing.

JS: You had to eat the butter and everything else.

TB: Yeah...and everything else. I'm telling you, I learned a lesson there.

And then after that when they start treating us like, you know, they were pretty rough. They treat us pretty rough. And I was only Navajo in this one platoon. I believe it was 789...Platoon 789. And most of them were boys that were from New York State. Most of them were Greeks, or you know, other nationalities, because they had a funny name. Appenosa, Aspenosa, and all that stuff. There were some tall guys and some short guys...I'll always remember this. One Saturday, you know, they line up. So we got our uniforms and we went through and they were baggy. We got a bucket, got a helmet -- they call it jungle helmet -- and they told us that we box our clothes, civilian clothes, they didn't want any civilian clothes there. So we put it in a box and sent it home and we start wearing the uniform. I tell you, there was some discipline...I mean, they teach you discipline. And you had to say, 'Yes, sir, no sir.' Of course I was being in boarding school, I sort of used to that, you know. And we used to have what we call company 'A', 'B', 'C', and we line up. These big boys who used to come with these big white belt and they whack us. We were treated pretty rough in boarding school. So I was used to it. So it didn't matter to me. And I had to get used to a lot of it and fight with it....with all different nationalities. And I just followed the crows, you know, wherever they go. So we went through about eight weeks, I guess. We learn from, everything

from shooting a rifle and so. I made expert on the pre-trials. So I guess everybody bet on me, but I goof on the final shootout. I just made a 'sharpshooter.' I sort of messed up there. I missed some targets, you know. First day, boy, I put 'em right in there -- even five hundred yards. I couldn't miss 'em being right on that bullseye.

JS: Had you shot a gun a number of times before you went into the Marine Corps?

TB: I used to...my father had a .22. Well, he had a different gun but he won't let me shoot but .22. I shot a lot of birds with that.

JS: I see.

TB: So it was....adjusting, I would say, was pretty rough on us. You come off from a hogan into this, you know, all this. Where you never been, you know. It's a hard adjustment.

JS: Sure.

TB: And then, one thing I didn't know was I didn't know how to swim. I never been in the water. But that's one of the things...that's one of the qualifications. They threw me in the waterI hit the bottom...they pulled me out. You know, they cuss you out and they say 'ready!' They threw me in and went and hit the bottom. Finally they say, 'Well, you go over there and paddle.' I learned how to swim in less than three days. I tell you, they give us... if you didn't know, they give you a bad time. In other words, they

after you all the time. That was the only way you leave the Marine Corps base, San Diego.

JS: Know how to swim.

TB: You got to learn how to swim, period. You cannot leave unless you learn. They can keep you there for months, or whatever they want to keep you. 'Cause you have to try. So after that I began to like water. Swim....it's easier to swim in ocean than clear water. The ocean will keep you afloat. Then, of course, after I left there I went to Camp Pendleton. That's where I was told that I was going to be going into classes for Code-Talkers.

JS: Had you known about the Code Talkers before you joined the Marine Corps?

TB: Well, I heard something about it, but I didn't know whether they were, see, I didn't realize. I didn't volunteer for Code Talkers.

JS: Uh huh. What did you volunteer for?

TB: I was volunteered to be, you know, something to do with shooting. I mean, you know, machine gun or something. But when I got there they just told me that I had to go over to Code Talker school. At first, you know, it was pretty rough course, you know. The word that they use. But I was familiar with a lot of vocabulary...Navajo. Such as, names of the birds, sea, you know, fish and land animals. The birds, you know, and all that. So I didn't have too much trouble memorizing those code. In other words, it's coded...all you have to

do is memorize it -- you can't write it. They don't let you write it. They got code, they got books -- you put it away at five o'clock, you get it out at eight. You study it and you got to memorize it. About twenty-five words per day, at first, I think that's what they gave us. And they gave you tests at the end of the day to see if you know. It was hard, because I didn't understand what they were talking about. Even I was a Navajo who were, who were talking code, you know, so ordinary Navajo, see right here, the gentlemen here you're with, if I talk about something...he wouldn't know what I'm talking about. He'd think I'm crazy because we use some of the words like -- you might know it, you might write it -- it wouldn't do you any good. Because there's words such as ... what do they call them....bazooka, I think was one of them. What the heck did they call them. Shoot, I forgot it. Oh, like dive-bomber, you know...

JS: Which means chicken hawk.

TB: Chicken hawk. I got a book at home. Somehow I end up with it in my locker.

JS: You've got the Code at home?

TB: Yeah. I got a copy of it at home. It's a book, you know. It's confidential. I don't know where the heck I got it from, but I got it in my...over there at the house.

JS: Yeah.

TB: So it was sort of rough and Mr. Johnston was there.

JS: Mr. Philip Johnston.

TB: Yeah. He was there. And Rex Kontz and John Benally. Those were our instructors. And then there was some white boys, at least two... they were teaching us how to crank these radios, you know, generators. You go like this grinding. They call it....I forgot what they call it. And then another one, a smaller one, they call it TBY or something like that.

JS: Yes. A portable. More or less like a walkie-talkie-type thing.

TB: Yes. It's big, though.

JS: Is it like the ones they used the other day at the reunion?

TB: I think so, yeah. About that trash can size.

JS: Yeah.

TB: And then the other one is a big, you know, that can make all kinds of.....It's a hand generator.

JS: Uh huh.

TB: And you can use continuous wave -- CW-- on that. But you can also use voice.

JS: Oh, I see.

TB: So you use it both ways. So we use it voice mostly. So I went through and I passed it for some reason. But there was other guys that changed...that flunked. A lot of them were flunk out.

JS: Really a lot of them?

TB: Yeah. A lot of Navajos came, but they flunk out. They either drinking

or some kind of bad habits, you know. Because I knew some of the boys, they had a better education than I did, but they flunked a lot of them. For what reason I don't know. I guess they just couldn't catch on. They usually put them in a kitchen or carry guns.

JS: Put 'em on the front lines.

TB: Or something...something else. You know, like maybe an ammunition man or stretcher bearer. We had some boys that all they do is bring out the dead ones or the wounded ones from the front lines. That's all they did. They carried, you know, we had some of the boys in that. I remember, I still remember some of the boys that belong in that outfit.

JS: Do you remember their names?

TB: One of them's name was Benally. He was one of those that got captured, I heard, on Iwo Jima. They had to identify him. One of our boys had to identify him. And he was a Navajo. I guess he was there and I guess they thought he was a Jap.

JS: Oh, uh huh.

TB: Brought him to the prison...back line. So anyway, I went through there and then some of the boys left with Fourth Marine Division. They went to Saipan. All these islands. I was assigned to the Fifth Marine Division.

JS: You were assigned to the Fifth Marine Division.

TB: Yeah. Signal Company, Fifth Marine Division. And then we got on the

boat from San Diego...went to Hawaii. We were stationed there, I don't know how many months. And we used to use, you know, all this time we used Navajo to transmit. You know, practice all the time. We had quite a few boys already. We were assigned with the radio section in Marine, with the company. And we were always something to do with the radios. And some of the boys took code and they also operated regular CW. And, you know, sometimes voice. So either way, you know. I know Merril Sandoval, from Tuba City, I think, was one of them that used to operate both Navajo and CW. 'Course we had to learn other things, such as signal corps, flag hoist, blinkers...we all had to learn that. In fact we used to have a contest. See who was the fastest in Signal Corps. We used to have, you know, put us in a contest...put out on a hill. We had to learn all that besides our own code. Like how to, you know, set up radios to frequencies, repairs, minor repairs, decoding, encoding messages and all these operations -- all different kinds. So we had to be all jack-of-all-trades. Like message center here or something.

JS: Yeah.

TB: So from there, I guess, somehow I had a feeling that we were going to hit Iwo Jima. 'Cause I cut out a clipping out of Honolulu Bulletin, or something...I don't know, something told me...I cut out a picture of that island. They were bombarding that. Sure enough, I think it was right after my seventeenth birthday, or sixteenth birthday I

was on Iwo Jima right afterwards. We hit the beach there. And I was assigned to communications ship, most of the time out of Pearl Harbor all the way to Iwo Jima. Sergeant Manuelito and myself, we were assigned to major general. He was Commander of Fifth Marine Division. Plus we, you know, we contacted the Corps.....like General Smith's ship, you know, we communicate in Navajo. And also we contact, in other words, we're sort of the nerve center. We contact with every regiment that was out, like, I think we had three regiments -- 27th, 26th, and 28th Marines. Plus the engineers.

JS: Yeah. And you were with command ship.

TB: I was with the command ship.

JS: Which ship was that, do you remember?

TB: Oh gee, I don't know.

JS: Do you remember the general you were assigned to?

TB: Oh. General...Keller. I got a book at home.

JS: General Keller was with the...

TB: I think so. I think he was the commander of the whole division.

Major General, it was Major General Keller I think. Rocky something,

Rocky Keller or General Rocky or something. I got a book at home.

I got some of the stuff in there in suitcases. His name is on there.

I was looking at it the other day. My kids, you know, every once

in a while they open it. So I was, you know, assigned to this

headquarters command ship. In other words, everything comes into

the general. And boy, we used to shoot the breeze....some guys would

go ashore and say, 'Hey, almost got hit,' in Navajo. And they wouldn't tell the difference. Nobody would know it except us. Said I'm so and so, almost got knocked off, or something like that. So we hit the beach. It's, west portion of Iwo Jima. 28th Marine was on Suribachi. They hit, they went over and took Suribachi. 27th Marine went over the middle on the north side. And the 26th was right in front of, right close to, I think it was in the middle of one of those airfields. And when I hit the beach, some of the boys got killed there. Navajo boys. A boy by the name of Paul _____, I think. So right away they need a Code Talker. So I went...they assign me to front line with 27th Marine, north side of the island. Right away they reassign me to take his place. He got hit with a mortar right on the beach as he was getting off the boat. So I replace him and I took his position with Milton _____. I think he's from _____, somewhere. So I was with him and operate, you know, Code Talker. I seen a lot of guys get knocked off. And I was scared, but I had no choice but to be there, I guess. I felt sort of funny, you know, why in the heck did I join.

JS: These thoughts were coming through.

TB: Yeah. These thoughts were coming through and I don't know what the, there was nothing I could do about it, and then of course, as a Code Talker, I was on duty and then also stand guard for everybody else. At night, you know. At night you be in foxhole all the time.

If you ever stick your head up, boy, you're out. They shoot you. So we even took a crap in there and everything else. One be laying this way and the other be laying this way. Just take a pee, you know. Just roll over and dig a hole and take a pee and cover it and lay there all night. We even been stretcher bearers. These are the guys that go and get the wounded ones or the dead ones... throw them on the truck and....you know, you were busy, I was busy all the time, most of the time.

JS: Almost 24 hours a day.

TB: Yeah. So all through that. And finally we pull out. And went back to Hawaii for a rest.

JS: Were you ever wounded?

TB: No. I never got hit. But the other guys did. They got hit...knocked off.

JS: What type of weapon were you assigned when you had your radio?

TB: I was carrying a .45. [telephone interruption]. Well, anyway, it's, you know, we go out. Sometimes we hunt down the Japs. Sometimes we find them. 'Course we had to turn 'em in. We can't shoot 'em. We have to strip them down naked.

JS: Otherwise they'd hide weapons.

TB: Yeah, like one day, about this time of the day, oh, a little after noon, I was looking out and there was a whole, some boats going out to the...towards the ocean. And I guess somehow they got, they got big holes, they hide themselves from you. And I didn't know

there was a bunch of Japs on them and I said, 'What the heck's that?'

And there was some guys that went over there with, you know, with guns. But brother, they were Japs, they captured three of them.

Little bitty boats. So no matter where you go there's always somebody popping up from the middle of nowhere. They have these big holes. They sneak up, especially at night. Oh, then there's a couple of air raids on there. Everybody shoot up -- it was like daylight, especially when all those bullets are going up at night....

tracers...everybody shooting at two or three planes all over the island. So anyway, that was the story. And then I happened to be way in the back one day, you know. We went toward, we went back to get some supplies back...sometimes we had to steal, you know....

take things. If you get hungry, you don't care what you take from the dump...supply dump. We went back there and they were rehearsing the raising of the flag. I didn't know, you know, that was gonna make history. But it was the Fifth Marine Division, 28th Marines that raised the flag on Mt. Suribach.. I don't know what day it was, but I happened to be there. So I tell you, one of the boys, local boys, he's a councilman now from _____. He was there about five minutes before they raised....he was there. His name is George James.

JS: George James.

TB: He's.....he used to be stationed in Farmington -- placement officer here. He was up there at Mt. Suribachi. 'Course we didn't know that

was going to make a history for the Marine Corps of WW II, until we got back to Hawaii and saw those pictures. It was a famous flag raising. 'Course I knew Ira Hayes.

JS: You knew Ira Hayes?

TB: Yeah, everybody, all the boys knew, he was in 28th Marines. I don't know what batallion it was or company. He was a very quiet man. He never got in trouble, didn't drink -- until I guess he got back after, he said he was going back to the States for something. And when he got back over here I guess he started drinking. He didn't drink over there 'cause I knew him pretty well. We knew all the Indian boys that were over there.

JS: Sure.

TB: Sort of get together once in awhile and have a beer. And we were allowed to drink, too, didn't matter. Didn't matter the age, you know.

JS: Yeah.

TB: In fact, I used to bring some boys home. We'd be pull into maybe Pearl Harbor two or three days. We used to buy our beer. Our boys used to go and get all tanked up and we used to take them back and we'd put them on a stretcher and put them on a boat.

JS: Put them on the boat, yeah.

TB: I remember when we got back from Iwo Jima, and pull into Hawaii for refueling. Boy, I was with.....we did it a couple of times. 27th Marine Corps, I was in Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 27th Marine, Radio Section. I got that reassignment on Iwo Jima. And so, and then after

we got back from Iwo Jima, there were a number of boys selected to look over all the messages that was sent on the whole operation of Iwo Jima. And sort of retrain and so we can train other Navajos. I was one of those selected. And so we flew over from Hawaii, big island, to Oahu. You know, Honolulu. So I went there to Navajo Fleet School -- communications school -- we went over there. We reviewed all the messages that was sent -- whole operation on Iwo Jima.

JS: Lot of messages, wasn't it?

TB: Yeah, well, lot of it. Division, regimental, between Corps, I think it was Third Fleet. We had contact. And they bring Navajos from all over. First Marine Division, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth. And they sent clear from Guam and Saipan and all those boys came. So I got a chance to see some of the Navajos. So we review them and make some correction and when we go back to these outfit, divisions, we are to train other Navajos the way we need to improve.

JS: I see.

TB: So this is the reason why we went there. But I was fortunate. I was able to get in on some of these. So, of course, after that we loaded again, you know, troops. And I guess we head for Japan. And I think on our way somewhere, where they have a big surrender, you know, in Europe. And then, I don't know, we were about half way, I guess, between Hawaii and Japan when they surrendered.

JS: When they surrendered in Europe.

TB: Yeah...no. In Japan or something. In Japan -- they surrendered. We just hear it on the radio. And me being in the radio section we used to listen to Tokyo Rose on Iwo Jima...lots of times. We used to listen to her. She used to make some, you know, she used to always get on the radio. We turned on the radio and listened after awhile to see what was...so anyway, we got to Japan and we hit Sasabo. And there wasn't a soul around when we arrived there. About a week later it was so packed. I guess the Japs got scared and they run for the hills. And we camped there for occupation. And then I was assigned as a carrier. You know what a carrier is?

JS: And you carry messages back and forth?

TB: Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

TB: You....they handcuff me to the bag and you travel by plane first class all the time. So I did that, travel all over Japan. Some colonel why he lock, take the keys, 'Okay, you go over there on the plane or on the train. Deliver this to so and so general or colonel. So I did that. We didn't use any more code after that. But I was assigned to the Message Center....cryptographic, you know. I guess somehow, they clear us. We do a lot of coding and decoding and cryptographic, allowed us. But I was a carrier. Somehow they trusted me. They not supposed to trust an Indian [laughter]. But

anyway I did this and then of course, Fifth Marine Division was sent home. I was assigned to Second Marine Division. I stayed there for awhile in Japan and then we were sent back. I stayed there and I was discharged on July 23rd, I believe...I think that's what it was. I think it was 23rd of July. So it was about over two, two and a half years or more behind be when I got back.

JS: July of 1946 then....

TB: Yeah, '40, uh yeah, 23rd, first separation signed Marine Corps, San Diego. 23rd of July was when I got my discharge. And then, some of the medals: I got a corporal I guess. Promoted to a corporal. I got classification as radio operator, message sending man, Code Talker, I was in Island of Iwo Jima, occupation of Japan. Some of the medals I got are just 'good conduct', Presidential unit citation and area of the Pacific, I got 4 or 5 of those. So I got back and then discharged just like being out there, you know, I wasn't too used to it. I didn't like the locality because I wanted to leave. So I went back to California on a one way ticket. I went to school at Sherman Institute.

JS: Oh, you came back here, huh? And didn't like it here and then went back to California.

TB: Yeah. I went back to California. I went to work out there. I mean, went to school out there. I like it out there. So they start me off in ninth grade. I think I had two grades in one year...ninth and tenth...at Sherman Institute. I went to Indian school there

And your eyes just water, you know. And you almost feel like frozen, you know, all over. I was mostly in radio.

JS: Yes.

TB: I had a radio crew.

JS: Did you have to carry side amms?

TB: Yeah. I had sub-machine guns.

JS: I see.

TB: In other words, these communication equipment you had to put an grenade in there or something or blow it up with a sub-machine gun...one of these grease guns they call it.

JS: Yea, uh huh.

TB: And I was a qualified jumper, I was a glider man. And anyway I qualify radar radio, high speed radar radio. I could read it like talking to you, like code. I memorized that code. He'd be sending code like this (raps on table) is like talking to me. After awhile I got so used to it I could just read it.

JS: Sure, uh huh.

TB: You know, it just comes natural. We didn't use no Navajo though.

JS: No. There were quite a few Navajos that were in the Marines in Korea, weren't there.

TB: Yeah, there were. But I didn't see them. I did see some in the Army, like I know one guy was a radio operator. And then another guy that I know was a BAR man. So I knew several. In fact, I think I saw Mr. Henry _____, school superintendent, he was with

the airborne.

JS: Uh huh.

TB: He was a supply man. Issue supplies and he was a superintendent of my school. And when I got back, I went back to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, because that was the closest to parachute outfit in this area. That's the closest to Chinle or Gallup. The other one is North Carolina. So I was assigned to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I had a pretty good job and I thought I could stay in, you know, retire. But because of Korea, boy, as soon as my time was up, I was out. I said "goodbye". Course I had to work. Start working with the Navajo Police. I only work about three months.

JS: You came back here after you got out of the paratroopers and joined the Navajo police force?

TB: Yeah. For about three and a half months. And I stayed with them until I got stabbed up here in a round-up. Some of my own clansmen -- Navajo. I never got hurt in the war -- the two of them I been in. I been shot at. But everything else...then one of my own people stab me up here in my leg. So I figure that my time was coming so I just bugged out and went to work for the BIA. I was a dormitory...I was working with a high school kids in a dormitory...sort of like guide them...help them play ball and things like that. Sort of...they call it an instructional aide I started with GS-2, lowest grade there is. So I stayed with it

two years and I got discouraged because some of those guys I was working with been in, they said, twenty years or thirty years and they were GS-3's and 4's. I said this isn't for me. I said 'I'm an ambitious man'. I said, 'I'm not sticking with this.' So, of course, most of my education was in the service. There's a lot of courses that I took. I took Russian, I took Japanese. In fact, I was classified as an interpreter in Japanese. In fact I got my discharge papers 'interpreter -- Japanese.' I was interpreter for the company.

JS: Is there any similarity between Japanese and oriental languages and Navajo language?

TB: Well, some of it like T'do-go-ya -- that means 'barber shop' in Navajo that means 'go down the spring...down the wash....down the water.' But it's very simple to learn Japanese -- for me. It was easy. I could write it, read it, you know, interpret. So I took Russian, but I couldn't get anywhere so I quit. All I know is like how to ask for a beer or eat, essentials. So this is how I learn different languages. I know a little Zuni...I guess....I can get along with it. So it's sort of a linguist, I guess. You know, learn different language. So anyway, I was at Wingate for awhile and then I went and joined the Employment Assistance, Relocation. I guess they have a relocation for the Japs one time. I read about it. But I started as GS-3, clerk. I didn't have any problem because I like to work. I worked more than eight hours,

more than five days. And I didn't have any trouble moving up in grades to the top position. I'm in the top position in the agency level....GS-12 I guess.

JS: GS-12.

TB: Let's see, I made mine about six years ago. So that education helped me. Of course as you know my program deals with people moving from...

JS: From the reservation to the cities.

TB: From the reservation or within their own reservation.

JS: Oh, you work in the reservation also.

TB: On the reservation and off the reservation, both. We call it western area or urban area. In other words, opportunities here and there. Wherever the Indian wish to go, this is up to them.

JS: I see. Now, do you usually have a job for them already for them to go to when they leave here?

TB: No. We sort of have an open minded type of thing. And this is up to the individual. He chooses. Though of course young people, they choose to go where they want. They're not satisfied, just like when I was when I first came back because sheepherding's hard, reservation work is hard. Unless, maybe you get welfare. That's the easiest. But if you want to work, if you want to get ahead, you have to go where the opportunities are.

JS: Yeah.

TB: This is where you go. And this is the way I feel. And I have no problems because I dealt with many Indian peoples in the services and going to school. I spent about over ten years away from home. And during one of those years I didn't come home for four straight years. No Navajo language -- strictly English. But I picked up Navajo just like that. I didn't forget nothing. In fact I interpret for a lot of these officials. I even interpret for Senator Fannin sometimes. For interview. No problems. You got it, you know you have it. You can't forget it. All of those that are college level Navajo and those high school level Navajo and elementary. Mine was mostly college level Navajo that I use. Interpretation, traditional, a lot of these words that are, you know, pretty hard. And I use a lot of that. And sometimes...I had a book here this morning, I don't know what happened. I have a regular Latin -- Navajo book here that I use. I call it Latin because I think Franciscan fathers were the first ones. And they used Latin and then they translated this to Navajo and English. And there's the BIA Navajo and there's Latin Navajo. That helps me quite a bit with a lot of these. Traditional dealings with Navajos. They're hard. They're not easy. Navajo language.

JS: No....I...

TB: Pretty doggone hard. Even a college can't communicate with those, with ordinary Navajos. They can with maybe simple ones. Like this

community. Half English and half Navajo, we can communicate.

But if you get out here about, maybe two miles away from Chinle,

strictly 100 percent Navajo. You almost have to use some words

that you never hear here locally. You just have to be on the

ball. The jobs are anything from stockman, warehouse man,

JS: This is quite a dictionary. They easily adapt into something.

TB: Yes. That's the oldest...first one. graphy, or something...

JS: You think it's probably the best, do you? Just, I will some of the

TB: Yeah. If you really went down to the Navajo, that's what you'd

get. and they were work in a carpenter shop. They became journeymen.

JS: This was put out by the fathers of St. Michaels. as 222, because

TB: Yeah, they cost about two dollars. So I deal a lot of...I do a lot

of interpretation for council...agency council. I do interpreting.

This is about 54 members. Between the superintendent or area

director or whoever it is, they like me to join the tribal legis-

lation. But I told them, they probably won't pay me nothing so I

stay with the government. I had some fringe benefits that accumu-

lated. I want to stay with it. work with. Compare with other

JS: Well, sure. It won't be long until you'll be able to retire after
twenty years and...

TB: Yeah, I got twenty-seven years. work things a certain way. Now for

JS: You've got twenty-seven years built up now. problem. Maybe the

TB: With the service and the... pretty hard... sometimes they remember

JS: And the Employment Assistance. What type of jobs do you try to find

for these young people or for the older people who leave the Reservation for the urban areas such as Chicago and Los Angeles.

TB: Well, we have all kinds of opportunities. Especially in the cities, you know, they never stop. They're twenty-four hours operations -- big cities. The jobs are anything from storekeeper, warehouse man, if they younger people then, they easily adapt into something, you know, with their hands, or photography, or something...any field, you know, any trade there is. In fact, I sent some of the guys out that had only five years of education. They went out there and they were work in a carpenter shop. They became journeymen. They now holding a doggone good job here with the BIA, because they journeymen carpenters. And they are guys that we sent out two or three times. It's, you know, you can't do too much for people don't want to do anything. But there are people...if you want to do something they can learn, they can have the best pay there is anywhere in the world. They're easy to adapt. In other words, if I can code, be Code Talker any Navajo can go out and be anything. And they easy to work with. Compare with other tribes like Sioux or others, because I did have experience working in field office. They're some too particular, maybe they too educated. I don't know. They want things a certain way. Navajos, he's a good guy...always in the running...no problem. Maybe the younger group, maybe. It's pretty hard...sometimes they resent...you can't tell them, they know. So that's the difference. But

there is jobs; any kind of jobs you can give, he can learn. Especially with his hands. He can easily do it. Like carpentry, machine shop, maybe work in post office, work from maybe, mail carrier down to the rating GS-5. I have records to show that they are capable people.

JS: Oh, yes.

TB: And some go to school, and get their degrees and they come home and get good jobs. Give one example. Frankie _____. I don't know whether you know him. He's the head of adult education in underdeveloped Navajo areas. I sent him out there when I was, when he was a young man. He went to Los Angeles. He went to school at night, got his degree, came home. He's about GS-14 or 13 now. That's pretty darn good. So we are successful. And then there's...we have guys that can't do anything -- even here.

JS: Well, there's that type of man in every society.

TB: Yeah.

JS: Do you send people to vocational school through your office?

BB: Yes, yes you do.

JS: Do you help pay for their training?

TB: One hundred percent grant. They don't even lift up one penny or one finger. All they have to do is use their head.

JS: And so you pay for their transportation to that school.

TB: Everything. One hundred per cent.

JS: Uh huh. I was talking to a young man the other day who went, I

think he said on Employment Assistance to auto mechanics school, and came back and couldn't find a job.

TB: That's right. That's true.

JS: Too many auto mechanics, is there?

TB: There isn't enough auto shops. Automobile repair shops out there.

Unless the tribe or somebody gets busy, puts up more shops, they'll hire more people to work. But there are jobs in these towns like Farmington, Gallup, Phoenix, or you know, wherever they want but...

JS: Not on the reservation.

TB: Not on the reservation. It's pretty limited.

JS: He wanted to come back to the reservation.

TB: Sure. Yeah. I don't blame him. This is his home. But again, what can he do? He's got a certificate in his pocket and he's herding sheep.

JS: That's true.

TB: Like me. You know, if I said I wanted to remain on the reservation, this is my home. But I knew that I wasn't gonna get anything after World War II. If I didn't go back out there I be one of them today. But I went back out there and I fish around myself and there was no such thing as relocation program then. I had to scrounge around and save every penny. Go to school....go to school and go to work. That's the only way I'm in this position, this position here. If I didn't, nobody's going to hand it to me. The same way with livestock. If you're lazy, sleep until eight o'clock

or go to bed before, you know, sundown, it's no use you going in the sheep business because you got to get up before sunrise. And he comes back home at sundown, after sundown. Because that's what my father did. He was a successful sheepman. Several thousand head of sheep, you know. A lot of people work for him. So it's in anything. You know, work, job. This is how, what I use in Navajo. I'm bilingual, see. I talk to them in English and Navajo, both.

JS: Sure.

TB: I know, a lot of them I translate. If it's a councilor I use traditional if it's necessary, then I use white man's tongue. I can turn and twist any way you want. So it's real easy.

JS: So in other words, your office has both the relocation portion of it, plus the vocational and other training. And when a man is relocated up to, for example, Chicago, you mentioned that previously the time we turned on the tape. And he gets up there and he has a job for a short time and wants to return to the reservation. Does he have to pay his own way?

TB: Yes. This is an agreement what they make. Unless, in case of physical illness or anything that has to do with, maybe he's flipped, you know, something's happened to him, they'll make every effort to get him back at government expenses. But if he's capable and able he can work, that's his business. In other words, he has to work and earn money and he can come home if he wants to. This is voluntary

program. We cannot force no one to leave the reservation.

JS: Oh, surely, I understand that. I was just wondering on this, what relocation, the word itself really meant.

TB: Yeah.

JS: And that is, you...

TB: It's just like moving across the street to here.

JS: Sure. You're just helping a family move, because the opportunity is much better there.

TB: Yeah, if they wish.

JS: Yes, I understand that.

TB: Of course we explain this to the people...a city, they have bars, maybe one block have thirty of them, all kinds of bad things, bad streets, slums. We talk about this. We say, 'Do you want to get into this?' They say, 'Sure, I been out there. I know what it is. You don't have to tell me.' This is what they say. So, 'O.k.' I say, 'We not going to turn you down. Because this is for Indians. And there is no way we can stop you from going. It's a free country.' You know. So...

JS: Go ahead. I started to ask...

TB: This is what we tell 'em, see. Of course, in other programs like apprenticeship, manpower training development, we have referrals. We refer to every areas. Even local now. Local, I'm the chairman of the planning board, here in Chinle. Develop the land, land use, industry, or whatever it is. Come to Chinle. So we involved almost

100 per cent besides what we do, you know, carry out the program. In other words, we're not, we're not doing just one job. We're doing, like we have baseball league here of which I'm one of the officer, coach. And then some other things, you know, after five. This is my outside activities. I like to teach the kids baseball, because I knew how it is, because I never did have a change to learn anything. In my days I was busy with the sheep. Now there's no sheep. What are the kids going to do? They're going to be delinquent if you don't do something. If you don't teach 'em any good sports, good things, they're going to be breaking windows, they're going to be doing this and that. But this is the way I feel. So I figure that I helped the young people. This is what I like to do. So there's a lot of territory we cover. Not only in relocation, besides, some other things.

JS: Oh yes, I understand. Where have you sent most of the people from this area? Where, what town do most of them pick? Is it the Los Angeles area?

TB: Los Angeles and Dallas.

JS: And Dallas.

TB: Yeah.

JS: What opportunities are in Dallas? Just everything?

TB: Everything there is. But the only problem is that the limit of the wage are lower. The wage are lower than California. Of course, this is brought out to them, that they are going to have to pay rent,

they can't live off these, like you do here. The laws are changed and different. You get picked up for drunk or something, 90 days or 100 dollar fine. Here is ten bucks. No relative gonna bail you out. So this is the difference. These are some of the things that we talk about. Bay area -- Oakland is second.

SS: Is second for this area, uh huh.

TB: But they sort of change, you know. Depends on the young people. Mostly we deal with young people. But 50 years old, 40 years old....

JS: No, they're here to stay.

TB: They're done for. Like me. Over the hill. So this is how I work.
[end of side one]

JS: On your Employment Assistance Relocation, the whole program, and the urban areas, have you heard many complaints about racial discrimination against Indians that you have relocated?

TB: I think being in the Navajo people, not much. Because Navajo people, they sort of like they are here today. They don't concentrate in one community, they spread out, different, you know, their homes are over here and one over there. They don't congregate like other tribes do. But sometimes they very, well, like Indian clubs for example, they say the other Indians usually discriminate against the Navajos. Like in school, some of these Oklahoma school, or out you know, other than regular Navajo school. This is what I've heard. This is the only things that I've heard. Otherwise, never heard, well, we hear about it, but we usually check it out, but usually don't.

Because I'll tell you why we are pretty much on our toes, because we have labor - manpower committee -- they used to call it relocation and placement committee -- they go out to these cities and check out with the Navajo people. Without the BIA being there, they check, see. They talk among the Navajos themselves. If there's any complaints it will be presented to the BIA. We gonna correct this deficiency, problems, anything. So this is the way we have spoiled discrimination. So they, in other words, they fact finding. Those are the guys that tell us what to do or how to operate these, uh, employment assistance. We're pretty much, because majority of our officers are Navajo...three out of five. Agency...five agency...three of us are known by the Navajos, are bilingual. In fact, one of them's a Code Talker...down at Tuba City.

JS: Oh?

TB: Wilsie Bitsie.

JS: Wilsie Bitsie.

TB: Yeah, he's a Code Talker. And then of course George James, he's a former state employment man -- he's familiar with our program, so he checks us out. Mr. Harold Drake is the chairman of the labor - manpower team. If you want to talk about that, maybe you know, check with him and see if there is any discrimination. But I think it's more like, other Indians than the white man or the Negroes. I think Navajos get along with anybody, no matter who.

Whether he's black, white, green, yellow...he's pretty adaptable.

JS: Yes, I've felt that way. How large a family do you have, sir?

TB: I have a wife, my wife's name is Nonibah Begay. She's got a Navajo Name. The name means, I guess, 'she came back from the war.' Nonibah, nad-boh means 'war' in Navajo.

JS: That was your mother's name, wasn't it?

BL: Yeah.

TB: Nonibah Begay. And I have three boys and one little girl. My boy just turned sixteen recently. He's taller than I am, and he's working at the Park Service now. Got himself a job. He's a hustler if I do say so.

JS: Yeah. Uh huh. He's your oldest boy.

B: Yeah, Ronald Begay.

JS: Ronald.

TB: And second oldest is Gerald Begay. And the youngest boy is Reginald Begay. My little baby girl is Regina Carole Begay.

JS: Regina Carole?

TB: Yeah.

JS: And how old is she?

TB: She's about seven.

JS: Seven, uh huh.

TB: They all ball, ball player, ball fan. They all play baseball, except the little girl. She said she's gonna play with the Pee Wee next year, in little league maybe. And they like baseball.

They played in all the leagues. In fact, my little, oldest son is coaching the Pee Wees. They took second place in Window Rock tournament. He liked to work with these little guys.

JS: Yeah.

TB: He's a ballplayer himself.

JS: He play with the high school, here?

TB: Oh, yeah. He's a quarterback for the high school ball team. He started freshman and I guess he throws pretty good, that's why varsity picked him. He's small, about five feet seven, one hundred twenty-five pounds.

SS: He's probably pretty fast though.

TB: Yeah, he throws that ball, I guess. He's the quarterback. The other one is just a right field for the baseball. He's, you know, plays every day -- Babe Ruth. The other one plays in Pee Wee. Yeah, so we busy all the time.

JS: Sounds like it. Sounds like a full life. Are your parents still alive?

TB: Yes.

JS: They still live down near Jones Ranch?

TB: Yeah, below Jones Ranch. My father's 85 years old....he's still out with his sheep. You know he won't, he can't quit. Even if he's half blind. And my mother stays home. She's been sick for some time, but she's okay now. And my grandfather's still living on my mother's side. He's about 104 years old. Down at Pine Spring.

JS: Down at Pine Spring?

TB: Yeah. He took centennial. He's one of the few Navajos that lived through their one hundred years' celebration.

JS: Uh huh. What's his name?

TB: Adikai.

JS: Adikai.

TB: Yeah. He's, you ask for him at Pine Spring Trading Post. He lives west, I say, about northwest of there, somewhere. I heard that he can't get around any more.

JS: He can't get around any more.

TB: Well, he does, but not much.

JS: Yes. Uh huh. I'm sure he had some stories to tell his grandchildren for a long time.

TB: Yeah, that's right. He keeps talking, all of a sudden he changes. He's just that age now.

JS: Yes, he talks for awhile on one subject and then switches subjects.

TB: Well, one of the things my mother, my parents tell me is that they have some kind of prayer for me before...when I was overseas. They said that's why I wasn't...

JS: That's why you weren't hurt.

TB: Weren't hurt both times. Even when I was in the worst spot on this last one, even by the time of it. Give you one example. I was with the...I had my crew assigned to this regiment. And that morning, about four o'clock in the morning, the new team came.

They went with this outfit we were assigned. We pulled back to rest. They went. I never saw them again. They wiped out completely. Radio and all.

JS: You would have been doing that if they hadn't just replaced you?

TB: Yeah. They woke up up at four o'clock in the morning and the chief say, 'Okay, Tom. We gonna take your place. You go back. Pull back, you rest. You gonna go with this outfit.' Never saw that group. They have two radio crews, they have eight men.

JS: Rather close call.

TB: That's what you call a close call. Another time I was cut off for three days. No food. All we had was jam and peanut butter. We'd been shelled as we going across the valley. This, I don't know, I still believe in their doings, of my parents. Even though I'm making my living the white man's way, I guess.

JS: Still believe in Navajo tradition.

TB: I believe in Navajo tradition, whatever they do. Because my parents are...the only problem I have is that I never did teach my kids too to speak Navajo.

JS: Do they speak any Navajo?

TB: Well, maybe a cuss word or something, but they don't. You can go to the house and talk to one of the guys. Maybe you can come up?

JS: We've got to get back inwe have an appointment in Window Rock a little later this afternoon. So I don't know. Maybe we

have to get back in today. But maybe another day?

TB: Yeah.

JS: Very nice.

TB: I have some...a lot of pictures and I turned some pictures over to Martin Link from Chicago. You seen it?

JS: Of Chicago?

TB: About that much.

JS: Yeah, I did. He's gonna get them copied, isn't he?

TB: Well, that's up to him. I got some negatives.

JS: Uh huh.

TB: And I do a lot of picture taking. All kinds. I did some work for Look magazine one time, but I....Boy, this doesn't have any....

[break in tape].

JS: For what?

TB: Show Low Town. Woman. These are girls that are without husbands. High school graduates. They can take their kids down there.

JS: It looks like a real nice complex.

TB: It is. Here's some of the big snow. I was a guide in helicopter, because I know every inch of this Chinle. All the way from west to east, you know. And some of the people.....uh, conference room at Holiday Inn in Gallup, because I like that kind of work, you know. They put a big monument over here in the entrance to Canyon De Chelly, because people from all over the world come here and you know, take a tour on Navajo Reservation. And I like to see the monument here

for the Navajos, you know, and maybe the names of the boys that didn't make it back.

JS: Surely. I think that would be a great idea.

TB: This is what my interests are, but nobody wants to come. I gave up.

JS: Well, you know that the...were you there Saturday? When they formed the association?

TB: I went to a wedding Saturday. One of my wife's nephews up and got married, so I couldn't.

JS: Well, Saturday they formed an association and named John Benally president.

TB: Oh, John?

JS: And William McCabe is secretary-treasurer. And they're trying to get everybody together on the Sunday of the Tribal Fair, there at the museum on Sunday morning after the parade. And they're going to try to pass some by-laws. They're trying to get an association started, like that. They said that there'd been two or three attempts before that to do it. But nobody's taken interest. But they think they'll get something going this time.

TB: Uh huh. Because I had contact with Fourth Marine Division Association.... nationwide. And they said they'd help me with finances. I have some contact down at California chapter, West Coast Chapter. They had a reunion in San Diego in June. The others are in Chicago. And they got all over the place. Those guys, you know. They helpful and they sort of recognize us. They're kind of helpful.

JS: You bet.

TB: And so one of them I know, that Lee Cannon, and some of those guys, they have a special recognition in Chicago and this is one of them. I took a lot of that pictures, too. Most of those were in Chicago Times or Chicago Tribune. Of course I went to Chicago. I took what he take and I took mine too.

JS: Yeah. Boy, that sounds great. Ben, do you have any questions you'd like to ask Mr. Begay?

BL: Well, I think he answered my questions. I was going to ask him about traditional ceremonies and things like that.

TB: Yeah, they did. My mother and my father said that they have.

BL: Which ceremony was that, the Hozhonzhi?

TB: Hozhonzhi, Naa-ghes.

BL: That was before you went in?

TB: No, after. I guess they learned that I was going over. They say sometimes it's dangerous, because...it's good, but in the future you might mean one of your own relatives or your...the ones you love in your family that something might happen, so you have to be very, you have to be very careful about this.

BLL Did you have one after you returned?

TB: No, they tried. My mother tried so hard, but I told her, no. Well, there's nothing wrong with me. I'm okay.

JS: And then they, you had another one when you went to Korea. They

had another one for you.

TB: That's the only one that....

JS: Oh, that's the one you had.

TB: I mean, that's effective, see. I guess they have. Yeah. I think my mother said they have. This is what they did. So they say, you know, nothing would happen. However, it's a dangerous thing to have. You have to have some things done to you after you get back to this state. In fact, they, you know, the Ndaa (Squaw Dance)...they were going to have one for me. But the day that we were going to take off, my uncle got killed in a car wreck. From then on, this is why I'm afraid of it, see. I don't want to...

JS: If you had it for you, in other words, something might happen to someone else...even though it helps you.

TB: Yeah. And so this is what I'm afraid of. So I don't want this. I mean ever since then, this is what they told me...medicine men. My uncle's a medicine man...from around Hunter's Point -- Francis Nez Yazzie. My mother and her parents told me. So I'm between them. I'm a border line. I have it and I have not, I don't know. But we plan on it and we going to have it. My uncle got killed the day I took off.

JS: You haven't had any yet?

TB: So I'm afraid. You know, I don't want to put anybody into hardship or problems or or...

BL: To get a little bit of it straight, I was wondering what you meant.

Do you mean that if you had had the ceremony already then your uncle would be all right?

TB: Yeah. I didn't plan on it. He would have been living.

BL: If you had planned on it and then done it, then you would have been all right.

TB: But still. Still, see, I'll explain in Navajo. (Navajo) Well, well, you know sometimes they'll hold a ceremonial for you after you -- the Naaghee (Dangerway.) It can be dangerous. Some day in the future if you should decide to hold something like that a Ndaa (Squaw Dance.) It falls back or seems to affect one of your relatives. And so there's two.....I'm right in between. (English) In other words, it's good to have it. Then nothing happens to me. But it's not good to have it because one of my relatives might, you know, might go. So I'm in between. So I don't want to have it because, because what the traditionals say. Unless without knowing or all of a sudden have it. Without any body knowing, just have it...get it over with. But then again you never know what...So I don't know.

JS: Yeah.

TB: (Navajo) They say it's dangerous. I don't know how it can be fixed. I don't know. (English) Nobody knows..medicine men are all gone. (Navajo) Well, when they hold the Dangerway Ceremony after you, in the Blessingway, but then over there you suffer from

it at some future time should you have a Squaw Dance Ceremony the effect falls back on relatives. I don't know why it is like that. It's a two way street, in other words. (English) Can't take it. Like I took this other one. Fine, I'm good. I'm in good, you know. But this other way, my uncle, they told me that before. It's dangerous. Better watch it. Watch what you're doing. But they went ahead and said plan on it. That same day, that day we going to go on horses, the word came it said 'Your uncle just got killed in a car wreck between Gallup and Lupton.'

JS: Do you think that because you were planning on the Hozhonzhi that's why he got killed?

TB: Ndaa (Squaw Dance).

JS: Or the Ndaa.

TB: That's what some people, the way they analyzed it. That could be the reason. In other words, something that...

JS: Yeah. They can see...

TB: I got a car too and kids. I don't want anything to happen to us. As long as I'm healthy. In other words...there is nothing wrong with me. If I was sick it might be different. But there's nothing wrong with me, then there's no use having it.

JS: Then the memories of the war have not bothered you that much?

TB: So they think this is it.

JS: Uh huh. I see.

TB: So, I'm just holding on.

BL: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

TB: Let's see, I have, I'm the oldest and I got a sister, and two brothers, three brothers and two sisters.

JS: Are they all down near Jones Ranch?

TB: Yeah, uh huh. They're all there. Let's see, three sisters, three brothers.

BL: Your wife from that same area?

TB: Yeah. Uh huh. She's from right down there.

BL: And one other question, I guess. Another said in the Marine files, or whatever it was, they were saying that for Code Talker school they had to have a minimum of eighth grade. I was wondering how you made it in and maybe you could explain.

TB: I think that's a bunch of baloney, they say that. I think people better off saying that they have no confidence in Navajo people. I think any Navajo can make it in anything. No matter how tough it is, no matter how hard it is. This has been the problem with the BIA. They tell us we not capable of running things. You know but any, you know, there is exception of.... I can tell you many Navajos, they went to find this special program, they have only five years of education...fifth grade, equivalent, third or fifth grade. They made better, were in better position and better business. So it doesn't make any difference. It's what

you have up here...if you want to...no problem of learning. In other words, except...exceptionally good intelligence, that's all that counts. That's the way I feel. So I don't, I always have confidence in Navajos, no matter what kind of education they have. Like medicine man. They have no...no college education, no nothing. By gosh, they memorize all these nine night sings, ceremonies. They got a doggone good memory. If the medicine man be, anybody can be a Code Talker. They might memorize it and read it in a book but they might not write it, but they'll know it.

JS: You bet.

TB: Yeah. They got a good memory...Navajo people.

BL: In your high speed CW, how, what you know, they say so many words a minute. What speed did you achieve?

TB: Thirty-five. That's a good speed.

JS: You bet.

TB: I can copy through static...static. He can give me fresh student out of Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, the best student in the world for radio. You put him out there in combat, that guy won't even read five words a minute because of static and noise and all that. It just appears it, you feel it, you know. You sort of memorize the sound of your beat and you can read it through all that jamming or whatever it is. I use the high speed keys and milli-machines. You know, copy. So don't, don't let these guys throw you about

education. That's a bunch of baloney, they say. Any Navajos a third grade, a fifth grade, they can pick up anything. Because I know. I work with these people. Hundreds and hundreds of people every day. They're good with their hands, memory. Real good. They can catch on.

JS: Very quick.

TB: Just like weaving a rug, you know.

JS: Well, I think that takes some special Navajos. Not all Navajo women can weave a rug as well as others.

TB: Yeah. Maybe.

JS: Mr. Begay, we'd sure like to thank you for this opportunity to sit here and talk to you. Now do you want a copy of the transcription of this? We're gonna take it back and type it out. And we'll be glad to send you a copy of this transcription if you'd like one.

TB: Okay.

JS: You want a copy to the museum with all the rest of the Code Talkers and one here. Now we have one of your cards. Just send it here to you here?

TB: Yeah. Box 457.

JS: Box 457.

TB: Yeah. Chinle, Arizona, 86503."

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WILFRED BILLEY

Window Rock, Arizona

ARCHIVES

An Interview by

John D. Sylvester

and

Benjamin Lee

July 9, 1971

Doris Duke Number 1161

The American Indian History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke

Western History Center, University of Utah

INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 9, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

INFORMANT'S NAME Wilfred Billey

BIRTH DATE _____ BIRTHPLACE _____

TRIBAL, BAND, OR OTHER AFFILIATION NAVAJO - Red Goat Clan

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS _____

INFORMANT'S OCCUPATION _____

EXTENDED COMMENTS _____

LEADS SUGGESTED BY INFORMANT _____

TAPE RECORDING MADE? YES _____ x _____ No _____

LANGUAGE OF RECORDING English TRANSLATOR _____

INTERVIEWER'S NAME John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee

PROJECT SUPPORTED BY Doris Duke Project

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DATE RECEIVED July 8, 1971

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The following is an interview with Wilfred Billey, conducted by John D. Sylvester and Benjamin Lee, at Window Rock, Arizona, on July 9, 1971.

BL: "We're interviewing Mr. Wilfred Billey from Farmington, New Mexico, and we're in the, or in Window Rock at the Museum.

JS: Mr. Billey, when were you born?

WB: December 20, 1923.

JS: And where were you born?

WB: I wss born at, uh, I guess it would be west of Tse-a/-nos-t'i School.

JS: West of Tse-a/-nos-ti'i School.

WB: Yeah. It would be out in the canyon around there, I don't know if you've ever been, are you familiar with that place or not?

JS: I've heard of it but I'm not that familiar with the area, at all.

WB: Yeah.

JS: O.k. Into which clan were you born?

WB: Red Goat.

JS: And what's the Navajo name for that?

WB: Tlizi-dal-chi'i or Tachii'nii. That's another name, but they're the same.

JS: I see. And what was your mother's clan...that is your mother's clan?

WB: This is my mother's clan.

JS: Yes. And your father's clan?

WB: My mother's clan was Tl'aashchi'i. What would that be?

BL: That's your father's clan?

WB: Yeah. I mean my father.

BL: Tl'aashchi'i. We'll just leave at that.

JS: Tl'aashchi'i.

[Interruption by photographer]

X: Ben, could I get you to move up a couple of paces?

BL: Paces? I don't know how you....

X: Not too....a little more....a little more....there. Now hold the microphone out so it looks like you're really starting to record. Yeah, that's good.

JS: O.k. And what do you do at the present?

WB: At the present -- I was connected with Shiprock High School as a guidance counselor and I will not be there this coming year. I'm going to be...I'm going to have the same position at Farmington High School.

JS: And this is in New Mexico? Farmington, New Mexico, High School.

WB: Uh huh.

JS: As a guidance counselor.

WB: Uh huh.

JS: Prior to your joining the Marine Corps, what were you doing?

WB: I was in school.

JS: And this was Navajo Methodist Mission?

WB: This Navajo Methodist Mission there in Farmington.

JS: Uh huh. How far did you go in school before going into the Marine Corps?

WB: I was a freshman in March, 1943.

JS: In March, 1943.

WB: Right.

JS: You were twenty years old when you went into the Marine Corps.

WB: Right. I guess so. Is that what?

JS: Yes. You were born, not quite 20, you were 19. It would be 20 that following fall.

WB: Yeah.

JS: Uh huh. How did you find out about the Marine Corps?

WB: It was through our superintendent, I think it was. He came over one time...I don't know where he got the information, but he learned of some of the fellows that were going in, you know. And he just suggested then the Navajos, several, volunteer to join.

JS: And you volunteered?

WB: Right.

JS: Where did you go to boot camp?

WB: San Diego.

JS: San Diego. And where did you attend school for the Code Talkers?

WB: Camp Elliot and Camp Pendleton.

JS: Both?

WB: Yeah.

JS: How long was your training for Code Talking? Do you remember?

WB: You got me. I don't remember. I think the boot training was 13 weeks. And then, it must be at least eight or possibly ten weeks.

JS: How did you find your experience coming off of the reservation area and then...can you describe your experience in boot camp and schooling for us?

WB: Well really, as far as the regimentation was concerned, of course being in a boarding school something, some of these things weren't really new. Like for example, I know that some of the fellows that went in...I'm speaking of the Anglo kids that went in some of them didn't know how to iron -- didn't know how to wash clothes. And these kids that came in from the reservation that were in boarding school were already familiar with this. So really, this wasn't...a real change for some of us.

JS: I see. There were quite a few of the Navajo men who were not from boarding school backgrounds, though, weren't there?

WB: Right, right.

JS: Was it quite a change for them?

WB: Yeah, I think so. I'm pretty sure it was. But I know there was a bunch from Fort Wingate, so that boarding school situation wasn't really...

JS: The regimentation wasn't that new for them. I see. How were you accepted by the white recruits?

WB: I didn't have any problem.

JS: And do you...there was no...was there any problem for any of the Navajos that you knew about?

WB: Not that....not that I know of. I know I didn't. In fact, I was the only Navajo in my section after I joined the 2nd Marine Regiment...in my particular battalion.

JS: Yes. From school, then, you joined the 2nd Marine Division? Is that correct?

WB: Yes. After Camp Pendleton and Camp Elliott. See, I went to New Caledonia and the 2nd Division was at New Zealand. And eight of us were assigned to 2nd Division. I was assigned to 2nd Regiment. There was another one assigned to the regimental headquarters of that same regiment, and one or two to 6th Regiment. And another one to, maybe it was to 8th Regiment. And I think there was some at Division Headquarters.

JS: Headquarters, also? What were your duties as, when you were assigned to 2nd Regiment?

WB: Well, really, what I did there was primarily using the CR-300. That's the radio that I carried. And then a lot of times I operate the Jeep radio. And then, what was this Navy set that they used to crank? With the generator?

JS: Oh yes. I'm not exactly...I know what you mean. The old...

WB: Yeah. You had to crank, yeah. Sometimes we had to use that. And I was involved in both the Navajo and in English.

JS: Also in English as a communicator.

WB: Yeah.

JS: You were mainly a radio man?

WB: Mainly a radio man.

JS: Were you...from New Caledonia and New Zealand where did you go in the Pacific?

WB: We stayed in New Zealand about...in fact, Division was about ready to go into combat when I got there. And I must have stayed about a month, maybe even less than a month before we took off. We went to New Hebrides for practice landings. I don't remember some of the islands in that group. But from there, of course, we went to Tarawa and we went through that. And then I think 6th Marine were in reserve on that operation. They went in after we took the island. And they stayed there...the other two regiment pull out and we went to the big island, Hawaii.

JS: Hawaii...for rest and recuperation.

WB: Yeah. And regrouping and so forth. We must have stayed there, oh, about six months, I could say. We got there in December.... pretty close to Christmas time. And regroup and retrain. And we left there, I believe it was in June, the latter part of June. And we went all the way to Saipan as was mentioned in that film. I think we land there in July some time, I don't remember. We took that Saipan. I went through the whole operation and after that we took Tinian immediately south of Saipan.

JS: You were involved in the Tinian operation also?

WB: Yeah, yeah, we took that island 'cause they mentioned that 4th was the main landing force. But we were involved in it too.

JS: You were involved also.

WB: Yeah. And then we stayed there and the 4th pulled out. I don't know where they went to...I think they went, they must have transferred back to state or maybe they went to....

JS: Some of them went to Japan.

WB: I don't remember.

JS: And some to North China. And some came back.

WB: Well, this was during the war.

JS: Oh, during the war? Uh huh. They may have come back to Hawaii, I think.

WB: Yeah, yeah. And then, I guess we stayed there about a year and that's when they took Iwo Jima...in fact, some of the main forces went through Saipan...they stopped on their way over. But of course we just, we, the 2nd Division just stayed there.

JS: You were the occupying forces on Okinawa.

WB: Right. Yeah. Right. And after they took Iwo Jima, of course, they start working on Okinawa. And we were called -- not to land, but just to go up there in case if they needed us. In fact, what we did -- that 2nd Marine Division did, was make the fake landing, on one side.

JS: I see, uh huh.

WB: And we actually went out there and ran the war and then came back.

We didn't have to land. We went back to Saipan and of course the war was over about that time. Stay about two more weeks and we went up to Japan. To the Japan. And we landed there at Nagasaki... stayed there about, oh, three or four weeks. And then we went down the southern part of Kyushu...I don't remember the name of the town. We stayed there. And that's when they start processing. You know, bringing fellows back.

JS: Did you come back within a few weeks?

WB: Yeah. A few weeks. We went up to...what was the name of that?

Sup...Sup...

JS: Sappora?

WB: Sappo...Sasebo.

JS: Sasebo, uh huh.

WB: Yes, the Naval base up there.

JS: Yes.

WB: We got on ship and then came back.

JS: I see.

WB: Right to San Diego.

JS: You mentioned you landed at Nagasaki, what was your impression of the devastation of the atomic bomb? Or were you allowed to look at it?

WB: Yeah. We were allowed to look at it. In fact, we camped in old naval, old military academy about three or four miles from Nagasaki. There, practically all the windows had to be replaced...because how

destructive it was. And we visited where they drop the bomb, and all the railroad rails were all twisted up and of course, the buildings were just flat, burnt.

JS: After being in combat before and probably seeing quite a few bombs, could you believe, really believe that only one bomb had done all that damage?

WB: I just couldn't believe it. It was far more destructive than the other ones we'd been familiar with.

JS: Yes. Oh, during your island hopping, if I can say it that way,... that's the way they describe it...were you in actual combat quite often?

WB: Right. Right. We were...in fact, on Saipan -- not on Saipan, but Tarawa I was right on the line. We had to have communication with our front line, and the same with Saipan and Tinian. I was with 'A' Company most of the time on Saipan and Tinian.

JS: What...do you have any vivid memories of your experiences you'd like to relate? Either fears or happy moments or...

WB: Well, the only thing I remember, it was, kind of amusing in a way, but on the other hand I guess it was not too amusing. Because one of the gunnery sergeants, right on the line on Saipan, and one morning we were, we had our foxholes, you know my radio was in there, my commanding officer, lieutenant was right there, company commander. And we had a barbed wire strung not too far from where we were. And we were fighting all that night, and the next morning it was

so quiet and one of the gunnery sergeants decided to go over to the wire to investigate. You know, when the ocean comes in and hits these rocks and there's great big holes underneath these rocks, and there are a lot of Japs in there, see. And he wanted to find out how that thing look over there, so he went over there. And he got shot right through the seat. Just as clean as could be. And you can imagine some of these fellows making fun of it, you know, they were laughing. In fact, that evening they were laughing. They were saying, 'Oh, I wonder how so and so's doing over there at the Division Hospital,' you know, I remember that. And then, and that same morning, probably that was the only time that I had to shoot my .45. Really, not to shoot the person, but aim it at his direction. One lonely Japanese walked up, out in the water...he was about to here in the water, out in the ocean the water was kinda low, the tide was down. And he had a gun. And these fellows had, you know, these great big speakers in Japanese telling him to surrender. But he kept on walking. In fact, he fired at us. So the company commander, of course, gave a command, that we had to shoot. So everybody fired.

JS: Nobody knows who got him?

WB: Nobody knows who got him.

JS: I see.

WB: That was about the only time I had, I mean, actually had to shoot.

I didn't have to carry ammo on these big rifles, I just carried a .45.

JS: Your job as radio operator....

WB: Yeah, primarily. And I was pretty well protected and I remember some of the kids, some of the fellows asked me how the war was going. And they asked me, you know, how's everything, you know, what's the news, you know.

JS: Uh huh. On the radio.

WB: On the radio.

JS: Yeah.

WB: Yeah. And then some, some of the fellows that are right on the front of the line, they got to know me so well, you know, and they want to know what was going on, you know. What's the next move, you know?

JS: Sure. Well, as a radio operator you knew most of it.

WB: Yeah, yeah.

JS: Yes, I understand.

WB: This was very interesting.

JS: The first time you hit the beach and where you were under fire, were there many casualties among the troops with you?

WB: Yes. Not on Saipan, but in and on Tarawa. We supposed to land... I don't remember what time it was, but we couldn't land. In fact, we had to stay out there in a boat. Part of Division, part of Headquarters Company were in, but part of it didn't go in. In fact, the executive officer stayed with us on one of the boats. And one of the radio operators, he was a white fellow, got shot right

in our boat. I don't remember his name, but he got shot one of these boat guns, that they had stationed out there, you know, right on the beach. But we finally did land, and I remember going through the sand and then across to the airfield, the airstrip there at Tarawa. We move on the other side and I think we stay, oh, a couple of days before we were, you know, pull out.

JS: Pulled out.

WB: Yeah.

JS: But there were a number of casualties in this?

WB: Oh yeah, oh yeah. There were a lot of casualties.

JS: Do you know of any of your Navajo platoon members that were killed in the war?

WB: No. Not in that, not in that operation. I know, I know one that was wounded pretty, pretty badly wounded. In fact, he's still living, by shrapnel, on Saipan. And his name is David Socce.

JS: David Socce.

WB: Yeah. Yeah. He's from Shiprock area.

JS: Did he come down for the reunion?

WB: No. No. He's not there. I didn't see him. His brother's there, George Socce.

JS: Uh huh.

WB: Yeah, I saw him this morning. He was the one that was badly shot up.

JS: I see.

BL Did you know any of the Navajos that might have been captured by the Japanese?

WB: No, not to my knowledge. I don't have any...

JS: Do you happen to know Joe Kieyoomia, there in Shiprock?

WB: No. Joe Kieyoomia.

JS: Kieyoomia.

WB: No.

JS: He was with the New Mexico National Guard prior to, and I just wondered, you lived there in Shiprock with BIA. He's out in Fairchild.

WB: No, I don't know him.

JS: Uh huh. What did you do after you were discharged, Mr. Billey?

WB: I was discharged January, from what is this Naval base right outside San Francisco?

JS: Mare Island?

WB: Yeah. Mare Island. I was discharged there. I don't know why they had to send me all the way up there. Looks like it would have been possible to get discharged in San Diego, you know, and come right home. But they had to send me to San Francisco, discharge over there. And stayed in L.A. maybe a day or two and then came out. And then immediately I went, I decided that I gonna go to school. Take advantage of G.I. Bill and what was available to me, the benefits, you know. And this was all explained to me, you know. And so I did this. So I went to Navajo Mission where I was before.

And I told them that I need to get in school and I like to get in as soon as possible. Of course the superintendent wouldn't let me in because the semester had already started and it would be foolish just to hang around you know. So he suggested that maybe I go to summer school. One of the academies. So that summer I went to Wheaton College Academy. Right outside Chicago.

JS: Wheaton College?

WB: Yeah.

JS: Yes.

WB: I went there that summer and then came back that fall. And I didn't use my G.I. I wanted to save that for college. So I went back to Navajo Mission that year, and the following summer I went back to Wheaton -- pick up some more credits. And then came back and the following year and graduate ... that's when I have enough credits to graduate.

JS: Uh huh.

WB: And after that, I wanted to use my G.I. for college, so I started applying. So I went to New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas and I started there in '49 I guess. And went through a whole year, summer, until I got done in '50, in August '52. And then, right after that, summer until I got done in '50, got a job in Navajo Mission. I was a teacher there, counselor, and resigned from there in '60, '64, right after I got my Master's.

JS: Where did you get your Master's?

WB: At Highlands.

JS: At Highlands also.

WB: Yeah. At Highlands. And I went and joined Shiprock High School.

JS: And then you just resigned from there this year.

WB: I just resigned from there, this last month. And I will be in the same position at Farmington High School.

JS: Farmington High School. What were you teaching at Navajo Mission?

WB: I was teaching arts and crafts, industrial arts, and some science courses.

JS: I see. Are you married, Mr. Billey?

WB: Yes.

JS: Is your wife Navajo?

WB: Yes. She graduated from Navajo Mission too.

JS: How many children do you have?

WB: I have six. One in college, oh, I'll have two in college this year.

JS: Where are they going to college?

WB: The boy will be a junior at Taylor University up in Indiana. And the girl will be a freshman at the University of Wyoming.

JS: The University of Wyoming in Laramie?

WB: Laramie, yes. I went there too. And I also went to the University of New Mexico and also New Mexico State. I did those three places, graduate work.

JS: Uh huh. What is your son studying?

WB: He's majoring in P.E.

JS: In P.E. Did he graduate from Shiprock High School?

WB: He graduated from Shiprock High School.

JS: And did your daughter also?

WB: No, she graduated from Navajo Mission.

JS: Navajo Mission, uh huh.

WB: Yeah.

JS: And you have four other children at home still?

WB: Right. And one that will, one that will be a junior. And the other ones are little ones.

JS: The other ones are little ones.

WB: Uh huh.

JS: Are your parents still alive?

WB: Yes.

JS: What did your parents think about your joining the Marine Corps?

WB: Well, I don't think they really know what was going on. They really didn't know too much about it. They know that I, that it was something to do with, you know, fighting some country and they knew that it was for the benefit of the American people and for the Navajo people...I suppose. I can't really speak for them.

JS: Surely, I understand.

WB: But of course, I only had one furlough. It was right after boot camp -- ten days. And that's all I got in three years I was in.

JS: Not much.

WB: But that sounds like the Marine Corps.

JS: Yes. I'll have to agree with you there. Did you have a ceremony before you went into the Marine Corps?

WB: No, I didn't.

JS: Or on furlough or anything?

WB: No.

JS: Ben, do you have some questions you'd like to...

WB: But really, I'm not against or anything. I have a great respect for their beliefs and so forth and I didn't push one way or another.

JS: I understand. Ben, do you have some questions that you'd like to ask Mr. Billey?

BL: Going to a Methodist Mission School, I was wondering if you were affiliated with that church before entering the...

WB: No, not really. But of course later I did, after I graduated from high school. I was more or less affiliated with Reformed. You know, they had a mission there at Shiprock.

BL: Christian Reformed?

WB: Yeah. Christian Reformed.

BL: You preferred that over the Navajo religion, maybe?

WB: No, not really. I mean, of course, that's...I'm a member of the Methodist Church. And like I said before, I have a great respect for Navajo Religion. I have nothing against it.

BL: Well, just wondering if sometime during...

WB: It didn't bother me psychologically or any other way. It didn't bother me.

BL: A lot of the boys, boys that went over there, they had some ceremony performed before, during, and after.

WB: Yesh. Yeah. I'm sure they have.

BL: And this only the line of question that we had.

WB: No, it didn't, it didn't bother me.

BL: I guess your parents were glad to have you back after...?

WB: Oh, yeah. Sure. They....yeah.

BL: Did you get married after?

WB: Yeah. I got married, in '49, the summer of '49. This was after I graduated from high school.

JS: Uh huh. Before you went to college?

WB: Right. Yeah. My wife and I both went to Highlands. And there again, we have a very good relationship with what you might say, dominant society. We didn't have any problems.

JS: No problems whatsoever.

WB: No.

JS: Does your wife teach also?

WB: Yeah. She's a teacher's aide. She's not a regular teacher. In fact, she'll be on the staff at Farmington too.

JS: At Farmington also.

WB: Right. She was on the staff with me down at Shiprock.

BL: What clan is she?

WB: She's a Bit'ahnii.

BL: Bit'ahnii. Is she right from around that same area?

WB: Yeah. She's originally from Virdens area, I don't know. That's south of Farmington, about thirty miles. She graduated from Navajo Mission, too.

JS: As a counselor and as a teacher, I suspect you've been counseling mainly Navajo youngsters there in Shiprock.

WB: Right. We...I counseled...in fact, the students there at Shiprock High School, I would say 90, maybe 95 per cent are Navajo. And of course I took care of both the Anglos and Navajo kids.

JS: Are there many Navajos now going on to college after they graduate?

WB: Not too many. But we're going a lot better than before.

JS: Before.

WB: Yeah. In fact, we graduated...last year, about 108...about 20, no about 29 maybe were enrolled in college.

JS: Very good.

WB: And we graduated about 130 this year. And about 40 will be in a school of a higher learning. And also in addition to this, there are a lot of kids going into vocational training, under adult vocational training -- BIA. In fact, this year's graduating class we have about 50 some kids.

JS: Going into vocational training.

WB: Going into vocational training...becoming an auto mechanic or working in an electrical setup and this type of thing...these type of things.

JS: Do you think that vocational training is the answer for some of these

people?

WB: Oh, I think for some, maybe not all. We'd like to see as many go to college...but here again, it's just impossible. You can't have everybody go to college. And of course the decision is up to them. We don't try to tell them that you got to...we try to encourage them, but this is all we can do. We can't manipulate them and say, 'You go to college,' or 'You go to vocational school.'

JS: Do most of your students, or have most of them gone to college in the general area of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico? Utah...I should add that.

WB: Right. Right. I sent some...I sent a boy to Stanford. One was admitted at Dartmouth, but he didn't go...he went to the University of New Mexico down at Las Cruces, Highlands, Eastern New Mexico University, uh, Silver City down at Western and quite a few go to Fort Lewis in Durango. And of course quite a few go to, like this year's graduating class, quite a few to to...were accepted over here at NAU, Flagstaff.

JS: In Flagstaff.

WB: Yeah. And quite a few go to BYU.

JS: Uh huh. Ben went to BYU for a couple of years.

BB: Yeah. That's a good school. Yeah, they have their representative come down here and talk to the kids, you know.

BL: You know, your line of counselling, other than furthering your

education, what do you counsel, mainly? What is your line of counsel other than furthering education?

WB: Well, there are many, kids have...kids have a lot of problems. There may be social problems and a relationship among the kids, you know, like maybe a boy and a girl or a girl-girl, or a boy-boy, or maybe there may be some problems between the teacher and the kids, you know. These type of things. Or in many cases there may be a problem between the faculty and a lot of times these kids that go to our school come back from these boarding schools like Intermountain. And really, geographically speaking some of these kids live away from Shiprock area and they move in with relatives, maybe a brother that's working at Fairchild, you know. And a lot of times, this type of situation doesn't work out for them.

JS: Yes. I see.

WB: And it causes some problems and you have to deal with these and these type of things. And this is my job. And a lot of times too, there may be problems with grades, you know, taking the right type of courses. And maybe here a kid really wants to go to college and you know darn well he can do it. And then he's fooling around with Mickey Mouse courses, basket weaving courses and he needs to get into something he can really chew on. And you know that the kid has the ability to do it and sometimes the kid needs advice on some of these things. So this is what I do.

JS: Very interesting.

WB: And they come in. And a lot of times, of course a lot of times I go get them.

JS: Uh huh. I suspect it keeps you very busy.

WB: Yeah. It keeps me busy. And I was in charge of, more or less oversee, see if their records are done right, see if the transcripts are sent out to just whatever school they want you to go to, you know. See if everything's okay. See if the kid has taken the right kinds of tests, you know. These are some important things that I have to, that I was concerned with. I'm sure that's what I'll be doing again.

JS: The same thing you'll be doing again.

WB: Yeah. Right.

JS: You mentioned earlier in conversation that you may be going on to graduate school for a Ph.D.

WB: Well, I'm not so sure, but there is a possibility. I have been contacted by ASU. In fact I've got two letters from them saying that if I'm interested I should apply. And really, even twelve months ahead is not enough time; when you have a family you've got to plan at least a year -- now I've just been contacted just recently. They want me to enroll in September. This is a real short notice. And you've got to make some, you know, lot of changes.

JS: Lot of adjustments with the family.

WB: Lot of adjustments, yeah, for a family. And I got two kids in school, you know. And this isn't easy.

JS: No, it's not easy at all.

WB: And I probably won't be getting as much as what I've been getting, see.

JS: Yes.

WB: And I own some property there in Farmington. And I got to, you know, there are a lot of things you have to consider before you make any commitments. But I'm writing a letter right now....just in rough draft...explaining this to them. That possibly, maybe next academic year, I might be interested in it.

JS: There's quite a bit of money for counseling...Ph.D's.

WB: Yesh. Yeah, there is. Most likely, if I do go, most likely I'll concentrate on administration and moral guidance.

JA: Moral guidance and administration, I see.

WB: Yeah. Yeah.

JS: You mentioned your parents are still alive, have they lived in the area all the time?

WB: Yeah. They live, in fact, my mom is up on the mountains right now. In fact, we might see her on the way back. I'm not sure. I have to talk to my wife -- see if we have time to go back.

JS: Yes, uh huh. Well, we've been trying to collect local history, for the last two and a half years on the reservation area. And we're trying to find some of the older people in the areas that

we haven't collected and I was wondering if you think they might talk to us?

WB: I imagine my mom...I wish I had time to record some of the things that she has. You know, like the clan system. And you know, I'm interested in like the way they used to bury people, and you know, these type of things. They're kind of interesting, I like to... what was, what was some of the things they used to do, you know. Some of the old stories...these, coyote stories and all these. You know what I mean.

BL: This is sort of the idea in mind that we have in coming down to the people and try to talk to them.

WB: And I know my mom is...she knows. It's just a matter of you know, recording that stuff. You say you gonna do it, but you never...

JS: Yeah. That's always the problem.

BL: Getting back to the schools. I want to get your opinion now on residential schools as opposed to public schools. Now which do you...?

WB: What do you mean by residential? Do you mean boarding schools?

BL: Boarding schools.

WB: Well there...I'm sure that there are many able people working on this Indian education...and I know...and they have some real good answers for some of these things. And I think your question... boarding school opposed to public school...my belief is that more will be going to public school, eventually. It may not be in the

immediate future...it will be quite a few years before this happens, I believe, mostly from geographical reasons. Because, like over in the Red Rock area -- that's about 40 miles from Shiprock and the road isn't paved out there. And some of these kids still need to be in boarding school. And then, see, if they have a road out there they can bus them in to public schools...or they could even bus them to boarding schools -- the BIA schools. But they just don't have the roads yet. I think this is one of the big factors, it seems to me. And then on the other hand, too, some of the home situations, it would be real hard for some of these kids to be in public school. In fact, this is one of the problems that they have in Shiprock...is that for example, a kid comes at eight o'clock on the bus, and suppose he's a junior, maybe even a senior, and he lives out Mosquero area, about 55 miles from Shiprock. It's right by the highway, yes. Maybe he lives three or four miles and they don't have a car, they don't have a pick-up, and the kid walks two or three miles before he gets to the bus. And in winter time.....this is hard. And then a lot of times, this is part of my counselling too, even with teachers. I try to communicate to them that this, that you got to find out the kid's background before you make any assignment like that. Suppose you give a kid a research assignment of some kind...some writing that he has to do for the next day, or maybe a week, two or three days, you know, something like this. And the teacher needs to be

aware of this. A lot of times they don't know and they just dish out an assignment and expect the kid to produce, without finding out the background of the kid. And when a kid gets home he doesn't have any reference books, he doesn't have any electricity, he has no running water. How can he do a just or a good paper? Get a good grade on, you know? So these are some of the problems that a school like Shiprock face and I'm sure that Window Rock faces the same situation and some of these other public schools on reservations. So I still think there is a need for a boarding school. But eventually I think it will change.

BL: But overall, preferably, you'd like to see them in cases where they can ably go to public school, and boarding school is better than no school.

WB: Right, right, right.

JS: Very interesting. Do you have anything you'd like to add to the tape, Mr. Billey?

WB: I don't think so. I don't know what else I...

JS: Well, we'd sure like to thank you for sitting down and talking to us. And we'll be glad to send you a copy of the transcript of this tape.

WB: Yeah, I'd sure like that.

JS: Could you give us your address?

WB: Yeah. 207 La Platte Drive.

JS: That's right. I remember it now. I took it down this morning.

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INTERVIEW: Wilfred Billey

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WB: Farmington, New Mexico.

JS: And what's the zip? Do you know?

WB: 87401.

JS: 87401.

WB: Right.

BL: Have you done any work with the tribe either on the community level or other?

WB: Not really. I've been involved in some of the conferences, you know, all that. But not really as an official or anything like that. In fact I was contacted by the new administration, you know, come in with the....work with the tribe, but I declined it because I really like my kids and all the kids.

BL: It gives a good feeling.

WB: Yeah.

BL: Well, thank you very much. I appreciated talking to you, and we'll be sure and send you the transcript.

WB: I appreciate that."

ARCHIVES

Paul Blatchford

Fort Wingate, New Mexico

August 16, 1971

Interviewed by

Ernest and Nanette Bulow

August 16, 1971

Doris Duke Number 1223

The American Indian History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke

Western History Center, University of Utah

DATE August 16, 1971

PLACE Fort Wingate, New Mexico

INFORMANT'S NAME Paul Blatchford

BIRTH DATE _____ BIRTHPLACE _____

TRIBAL, BAND, OR OTHER AFFILIATION Navajo

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS _____

INFORMANT'S OCCUPATION_____

EXTENDED COMMENTS _____

LEADS SUGGESTED BY INFORMANT _____

TAPE RECORDING MADE? YES X No

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INTERVIEWER'S NAME Ernest and Nanette Bulow

PROJECT SUPPORTED BY Doris Duke Foundation

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The following is an interview with Paul Blatchford, conducted by Ernest and Nanette Bulow, at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, on August 16, 1971.

PB: My name is Paul Blatchford. I was born in Fort Defiance, Arizona, and I went to different schools on the reservation and graduated from high school from Ganado Mission. After that the war broke out five years later after I graduated. I was inducted May of '43 and I went to Phoenix, Arizona. After I passed my physical exam, there was Navajos' recruiters at the doorway, and they told me since I was a Navajo to go there and talk to them. The Marines wanted some Navajos for Code Talkers. So I went over there, I was interviewed and they told me...I accepted to join the Marine Corps. So they told me to take another physical exam, by the Marine doctors and if you qualify we'll take you. So I was qualified. And on May 22, we left for San Diego, and that's where I had my boot camp training in San Diego. After boot camp, then I went home for awhile -- furlough -- then I came back. And then we were put into this...when you're not assigned to an outfit, they put you in what they call the casualty area. That's where you have to wait for your assignment. So I was there for about ten days, and finally there was twelve of us, our names was called out. And I was the only Indian in this bunch. And I was surprised that my I.Q. was high on electrical theory. And I was surprised, they said we were going to take advanced electrical engineering course. And where that was toing to take me I didn't know but...

EB: At this time you still hadn't heard of the Code Talkers, had you?

PB: No, yeah. I knew I was going there, but I couldn't figure out why they were sending me to this university. I didn't know why. I thought I was going right straight to Camp Pendleton where all these Code Talkers were going. And I guess there was a mistake. After they told us to get our seabags ready and they'll pick us up and take us down to the train depot. And they did. They took us down there before eleven. I think it was about 10:30 and we were supposed to leave somewhere, maybe eleven-twenty, something like that, by train. And just before the train arrive, why there was a sergeant came in and he says, 'Private Paul Blatchford.' And so I said, 'Here.' And he came over and said 'Well, they just found out about it.' And he said, 'They want to know if you want to accept this job as instructor. Now you have a good chance for advancement right now. If you sign this paper right now, you gonna be a PFC and you just work your way up.' And so all the fellows I was going with, they said, 'Hey Chief, there's your chance. You'd better take it.' So I went ahead and took it, see.

EB: Were you ever sorry that you didn't go for that other training?

PB: Well, I was kind of a little sorry about it. Because after about a year staying over there at Camp Pendleton as an instructor I never advanced any more. I just stayed PFC. So I went up to.... at that time I think he was Staff Sergeant Johnston, he was our

immediate supervisor. So I went up to him and I told him my situation that I was supposed to be advanced. And I said I'd been doing a lot of work, teaching these Navajos how to...what I was doing was teaching them how to repair their radios and I also helped them on communicating back and forth. And I didn't teach them the Code Talking, 'cause that was done under John Benally and Rex Kontz, when I was there. So I wasn't getting no advancement so next time I went over there to him and I said I want a transfer. If I can't advance, I want a transfer. And he says, 'No, we need you.' So the boys said, 'Well, if you want to really get transferred, best way is go over the hill.' So that's what I did, I went over the hill. I didn't have too much money. I went as far as hitchhike up to Flagstaff. And then I thought, aw, I didn't have any money, so I turned around and went back. And I guess I was gone about five days and I went back and got back to Oceanside and it was the Woman Marines Liberty Day. And I happened to be walking down the streets, why, four of them come up, approach me and ask me if I one of the Indian Code Talkers. And I start talking to them. And so they asked me if I had a ride. And I said, 'Not right now.' And they said, well, their bus was leaving pretty soon, just before four o'clock. And they invited me to come with them in the bus and go back. And so I got in the bus with them and when we come to this Port of Entrance

I just showed my old card, it's not good, but you know, but the M.P.'s, they didn't look it it too good. So the next day when I was court-martialed, the colonel, I forget what his name was, he asked me how I got in. He didn't believe me. He says, 'No, those M.P.'s, they check every card. I know you didn't, you didn't come in that way. I want you to tell the truth.' So I said, 'Well, O.k.,' I said. 'I came in through the fence.' So he believed that, 'That's o.k.....I thought so '

EB: You said that the girls mentioned the Code Talkers, I thought many people were not supposed to know about...

PB: No. All the...all the Marines...see, they were Marine womens, they were right there in that same area.

EB: But they weren't really keeping it very secret then...right?
The Code Talkers?

PB: No. So he says, 'Well, he says, 'Here's a paper. We're now forming the 5th Division.' And he said, 'This reconnaissance, we don't put anybody in there. We don't draft anybody in there. They have to volunteer.' Now he says, 'If you volunteer, we won't have to put you in jail.' So I said, 'Well, I'll volunteer.' And I didn't know what reconnaissance was. I was gonna check with the boys, but they didn't give me a chance. They were in class when the M.P.'s took me out and took me back to my barracks and told me to pack all my things and they were gonna take me to another area where you have to wait for your assignment.

EB: So really, your punishment was exactly what you wanted in the first place.

PB: Yeah. And so they took me over there and it was that night. There was about eight of us in this big old barracks. And I was just sleeping on a bunk and those guys were talking, you know, where they were going, you know, and all that. And they kept looking at me and I wasn't talking, you know. I wasn't getting acquainted with them right away. Finally they came over and then they looked over, 'Oh, hello Chief,' they say, where are you going?' 'Reconnaissance.' 'Reconnaissance! You mean to say you volunteered for that?' I said, 'Yeah.' But I didn't tell them what I did, I just tell them I volunteered. 'By God, you're crazy,' they said. I said, 'What is reconnaissance anyway?' They said, 'Oh, none of those fellows ever come back.' Boy, they got me scared, you know. That night I couldn't sleep. They told me about what they do, you know. They told, 'They'll either take you in a boat or in a helicopter or a plane. You got to go over enemy territory and scout out all those places. And usually they don't even come back,' they says. That night I kept thinking about it. Every time I start to go to sleep then it comes to my mind again...I wake up, you know, and I kept thinking about it. Boy, I sure made a mistake, didn't I.

EB: Were there any other Navajos with you right then?

PB: No. There was no Navajos. But then the next day when I was taken to San Clemente, they told me that the 5th Division was forming at that old prison farm, California Prison Farm, at San Clemente. So when I went over there and then here was about five Navajos. There was Sam Billeson, Samuel Tso, Ambrose Howard, Raymond Smith, and there was Rex Malone and myself. That's six of us and we were in this reconnaissance.

EB: Did they know what they were volunteering for?

PB: Oh yes.

EB: They knew.

PB: They knew. Yeah. They knew about it. I guess they were already there, but I guess Mr. Johnston, 'cause they said Mr. Johnston told them about it and explained it to them....what this reconnaissance was. So they knew about it. But I didn't have a chance, because they just took me after the court martial, everybody was in class and then Mr. Johnston was at the class and so I didn't get to see nobody. And so I didn't know anything about it. And so after we stayed around there about two months and then on August 12, on August 12th we left, this was in '44....August 12th we left for Hawaiian Islands. That's where we did our training. And then we went down Marshall Islands, down around there and Guam. Every place we went why we did our little training. And when they took Saipan and Tinian....after it was taken, why we went over there. And we stayed and then all at once, why they call us in and said,

'Well, here's our turn. We got to scout out Iwo Jima. They gonna take Iwo Jima. They need it real bad for, cause a lot of the airplanes were being crippled up when they fly over Japan, so they need that airstrip real bad. So we got to go over there.' So it was three days before they attacked Iwo Jima, we went over there. But we had, well, they asked for boys that want to actually go to the island. And they just had a limit. Not all could go...they only need a limit. And it seemed like a bunch of the boys, they were buddies that were going over there. And then, then they need somebody half-way. And I think, well, I know Rex Malone was one of them, but I don't know who the other boy was. They were supposed to be half-way between the boat and the island of Iwo. And then I was on board ship. And they sort of watched out for these guys. It was done at night...this was all done at night. And then they'll call back in Navajo. And I noticed that at that time the Japanese would catch our frequency and they come back. And I guess they were asking us, they tried to talk to us. And then they got all confused, you know, they start talking, they were talking normal and then when we start talking, I guess every once in a while. And pretty soon, boy, they start talking fast. They didn't know what in the world was going on. But you could tell that they were upset that we weren't answering them. Either commander, they got hold of commander and I guess he was commanding us to stop talking

over the radio. Or else the United States might get our signal. I think either that, because whoever was talking, he was really commanding us to stop talking. And then after that was over we went back again. That's when we waited two more days and then the whole crew came back to Iwo Jima. That's when they attacked the island.

EB: Did you land then?

PB: Yes. We land. What happened was they said, well, since we were in the...since we were in the reconnaissance, you guys been over there first so you'll be the third wave. So the first wave we couldn't make it. They just shot all those Higgins boats and they had to turn around. And then you know, the Pensacola, they had a director out there, with a big microphone, he tells them when to take off. If they're being all shot up, why then he tells what's left to turn around and come back. They'll form another echelon to go in. And so they had the first wave, second wave, and third wave all ready. So when the first wave couldn't make it, why then they call for the Army to bomb it again and then the second wave tried to go in again. They couldn't make it. And I was looking, looking at it and I said, 'There is a way to get on there. There is a way.' And so when the second wave started in, why, and then I noticed they were just... they rushed fast. They tried to hit the beach by going straight, making a beeline for the beach. So when it was our turn, I talked

to this coxswain, I said, 'Now, when we go, I want you to zig-zag.' I said, 'I noticed the first wave, the second wave, they weren't doing it. That's why they were getting hit.' And he says, 'Well, I can't do it. Our orders is to go right straight. And I can't do it. Otherwise I'll be court-martialed.' 'Well,' I said, 'That's the only way to get us on there. If you want to get us on the beach...and you too,' I said, 'if you want to live you'll have to do that. And so it's up to you.' Well, we got in and the captain said, he's always calling on me cause see, after I got there I was a corporal. Oh, I forgot to tell you. After I got there, reconnaissance, I was promoted to corporal. So then I was in charge of the Navajo boys. So he'd always call on me. And so he said, 'Chief,' he says, 'you got over there in front of the bow of the higgan boat and that they just took two shot at us and then from there on there was nothing. So we got to the beach all right. But when we got to the beach, then those guys on top of the hill...see, we had to go up the hill and they were up on top. Heck, they could see us, you know, boy, and they pinned us down. We lay there all day in that sand. We just dug in that cinder, you know, sand, we lay there all day. We couldn't even move, 'cause they couldn't see us. Then we start moving, we got, finally got to the top. And then we start pushing them. And when we got on top, and then boy, you could see them running right, we could see their silhouette, when the sun goes down, you know, we're right

to the edge of the hill to the top -- you can see them all running back. So we start shooting. Next morning we got up....lieutenant, at that time it was Lieutenant Thomas, he said, 'Okay, Chief, let's go up and look this situation over.' So I went up there, and we just squatted down and he had a bag, just about like that, on his left side, and I was right against it, and boy, a couple of shots came right away. And boy we just, we just roll over down the hill. And we were lucky, we didn't even get hit. But they hit that, well, he had first-aid kit and everything. There was two shots in it already. And there was some little books that we picked up down below, you know. And I guess he, I put them in my foxhole, but he had it in there...little Japanese books like that. One of them, well, two of them the bullet went through and so he just pulled one and he said, 'Here, you just take this. You remember,' he said, 'if you live, why, you remember we got shot at.' So he gave me one of those books. But you know, my kids pulled it out and I can't find it to this day. So I guess my kids threw it away, so....And then, I'll never forget, my crew that next day, a lot of them was killed. And then I was given about three new ones, three new ones, but there was one boy, he was nineteen years old. And when this lieutenant told us to follow, see, we had taken this airstrip. Then we start to go up the hill. And he said, 'Tomorrow there's three tanks coming. And they gonna unload it off the ship,' and he says, 'I want you

to take a crew and go up and try to go on the other side, on the west side of the island.' He told me 'I'll give you three platoons and you take them over there.' And I said, 'Okay.' So that day, next day came, so then he assigned me three of those platoons. So I told them what direction, which one to take, and one platoon took the furthest one to the west and one was in the middle, and I took the one on the edge, because this one here was the dangerous one, there's a lot of mines. And so this one boy, he was really young -- nineteen years old. He was from Ohio, he said he was from Ohio. And I noticed him, you know, he was kind of worried. Finally he come up, he says, 'Chief,' he says, you know he was kind of worried. Finally he come up, he says, 'Chief,' he says, 'you know, I'm scared.' I had him at the end, I told him since he was a new one that just came in....the others had a lot of training, and he didn't. So I told him, 'You stay in the back.' No, he didn't want to stay in the back. He said he was scared. And I said, 'Okay, you follow me. And you watch my footsteps....wherever I step, I said, I want you to follow my footprints. Because wherever I go, I haven't step on a mine. But if I do, if I get killed, then you know which way to go. If you get that scared,' I said, 'why you can just follow me.' Well, we took off and then I saw souvenirs. I said, 'See now, those things, you kon't pick those up.' I said, 'That's a booby-trap.' So we went and I guess he just couldn't resist and I didn't, without

me knowing he went over to the side and he pulled one of them, and boy, that thing took off, and boy, I hit the deck, and I looked and he was going fifty feet up in the air. And the arm was all broken, everything.

EB: What kinds of things did they booby-trap?

PB: They had knives, they had knives, pearl knives, and they had even pocket books with money in it....American money....where they got it I don't know. They put it on there, see. And that's the one he got hold, the one that had that twenty dollar bill on it. But he was torn up after he went up. And that kid was killed right away. I'll never forget that. His mouth was still, his....he was broken from here....from his chest was over here by itself, toward, right close to me. The rest of his body, his arms, legs, were scattered. And just his chest.....and I looked at his mouth and he kept saying, just think of it, he says, 'I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm going home.'

EB: He was already blown apart when he said?

PB: Right. And so that got me. You know, that got me. I hadn't slept for two days see, so...and then, that's when we headed. And that is, did I tell you that story where, then after that night, towards evening, finally our tank, it ran over two booby-traps. It just knocked the tracks off. So that was no good to us after that. But we stayed there until dark. After dark then we got in front of it, and we formed a line. And then we were ordered to

to advance 200 yards more. And that's when we, it was at night, see, and we moved out and we didn't know we were among the tombstones -- they stand high, about four, five feet, you know. And we dug our foxhole right in the grave. We didn't know that. So I was in with Raymond Smith, and Ambrose Howard. And they told me, they said, 'Why don't you go to sleep first? We'll watch. And I just got done, and all at once, why then they fired when we got through, all settled down. See, from aboard ship the Navy starts at 12:00. And every hour they shoot this flare. And I was just sitting down, just about ready to go to sleep and all at once my buddies start shooting. And I guess when they shot that flares, it's over on the enemy line, but we were right here in front of the tombstone. And they thought it was Japanese coming. They said, 'Hey, Japanese coming!' So we, I got up and we start shooting...here we were shooting at tombstones. We hear all these guys, 'Hey, hey, guys, you're, you're, they gonna spot our position even. What are you guys shooting at?' They all start yelling, you know. And after that we took a good look and here it was...you know, that flare is going like this coming down and the shadow of those tombstones was going like this, it looked like it was a bunch of Japanese was running at you. And that's what happened over there that time. Then when we, next day we started up. We were about half-way to the top of that hill, and boy, they really pour that machine gun at us. And we just all lay down. We

turn around. Boy, I was getting sleepy, 'cause I hadn't slept in four days, and I just closed my eyes and I lay there while they were shooting right over us. All at once this guy says, 'Hey Chief, hey Chief, look over there, the war is over. See that flag is going up.' And I look over there and I could see right straight at Mount Suribachi, and sure enough, that flag was going up like that. And all these boys kept saying, 'Ain't that right, Chief? Ain't supposed to be over?' And I said, 'Well, I don't know, they're still shooting right here. It might be over, over there, but not here.'

EB: They tell that they raised the flag two times. That the first time, someone told me...

PB: Yeah, yeah.

EB: Teddy Draper, said that it was a little flag and they shot it down. And the one they took the picture of was later. It was another flag...it wasn't the original flag. Is that right?

PB: Right. Yeah, yeah. It was a small one the first time. Yeah, but I didn't see that, 'cause we turned around and they said, 'Hey, that flag is gone again.' You know, and we looked back, and sure enough, it was gone.

EB: So the famous picture is actually the second flag.

PB: Yeah, uh huh, right.

EB: With Ira Hayes.

PB: Uh huh, right. And so when we advanced a little, hit further, they spotted us again, they start shooting. That's the time I, that's when the big one went up. That's the one I saw that big one going up. Well, actually, I saw both of them going up...but then they report that it was gone...when I look back, sure enough, when I look back it was gone. And I imagine it, it was another 30 minutes before they put the other up...and stuff like that. Or maybe it was an hour later. 'Cause there was an hour difference between when they start putting up the big one.

EB: And none of the Navajos that were right there ever got any decorations, did they?

PB: No. Oh, no. No....so, uh, then after that, then we came back... after the war. They thought we were gonna take it in about two -- three days or in half a day. But boy, it took us about three months. About two, two and a half. I think it was April 15, it was finally all over. Then we went back, back to Hawaiian Islands. Then on August, I think it was the 8th, August 8th, we boarded ships. I guess there was about two hundred battle....I mean ships there--transport ships. They got in, everybody got in... nobody knew, they never tell you where you going. But the story was, like they say, the scuttlebutt was, we're going to hit the main island. We didn't know. But they say we're gonna hit the main island. And then they never even tell us that they're gonna,

they're gonna use this, this atomic bomb first. They never told us about it. And I guess it was the night they hit Hiroshima with that atomic bomb. And then on the 12th, August 12th, they hit it, they hit Nagasaki. And here we were, we still, we got on board ship and didn't even move. Every morning we get up, there's Hawaiian Islands right there...we haven't moved. And boy, everybody was getting tired. And they're eight, nine, ten, twelve, thirteen, yeah, six days and haven't moved. And then, early, we were still asleep yet, and here they announce over the loudspeaker that the Japanese surrendered -- August 14th. And everybody was happy. Well, a lot of them, all these boys that were on board ship, a lot of them had been down Guadalcanal and all that. But like me, boy, it was, you know, so soon. I hadn't even got started yet.

Eb: You really only had the one major landing.

PB: Yeah. That's all, uh huh. And we were hoping that, well, we'll take the occupational duty of Japan. At least I want to see Japan. But all these other guys said, 'No, we want to go back. I hope they just tell us to go back. But no, about eleven o'clock, just before noon, we start sailing then. And thnn after we got on the west side of Hawaiian Islands, then they said, 'We were told to go to Japan for occupational duty.' And a lot of fellows were mad about it. But I was glad I went over there. I stayed over there about two weeks. Me and Rex Malone, well, Rex Malone and I

were, when we got to Sasabu, Japan, we were assigned to the Army and Navy Intelligence. They told us to go over there and give this report for this Army Intelligence to San Francisco....they'll have some Navajos at San Francisco. And so I took the daytime messages and Rex Malone took the night time. And we had to go with them ahead of the troops. See, Nagasaki wasn't too far from Sasabu, so we went over there. We went with these Army-Navy Intelligence, and I got to see all these wounded Japanese. Boy that town was just leveled. It just looked like a bit city dump. But this is a thirteen mile, you know, a thirteen mile city. And it just flattened out. And all the trees, the mountain was all around the city -- Nagasaki -- and all the pine trees were just sheared off, like that. Just like if you got a clipper to cut somebody's hair -- that's just the way it was. And up on those trees, those pine trees were temporary sheds built. Just like those Navajos make. Just like that. And then inside were these wounded Japanese. They didn't have no gauze to bandage their burns, and they used newspapers. And some were dead, and we walked all through there. Then we had to report back to Sasabu, there was our headquarters, then from there there were some more Navajos and I guess they relayed that to San Francisco. And that was on Kyushu Island and we were going all, we went to the, all these factories, gun factories and airplane factories, see, these Intelligence, they write everything down what was in there and everything. We

PB: So I wasn't drafted, really, yeah. See, I just went in there and well that's what they told me, said, 'If you volunteer, you're not drafted, you're volunteer.' And they told me at that time. See, that's what got me in there, they said then you earn points. See, that's why. So I said, 'I'll volunteer, I'll be Code Talker.' So that's, so that was ten points there. And then I think you get five points for every month you were overseas. And I was thirteen months I think overseas. Then there's five points for each month. Anyway, they added up, by the time I was over there I got 72 points. And so they said, 'Now you can go home.' But I was unlucky. All the fellows that were close to these barracks, that were living in these barracks and were at the main office at Sasebu, see they put out, on the bulletin board, anybody that wants to extend so many months, they can do it. But I was way out with Intelligence and I didn't know nothing. They didn't even tell us. They just got me and said, 'I saw that over there where I can extend, so I want to extend another six months.' 'Oh, no. You can't. No, you can't do it. It's too late now.'

EB: Hmm. Most guys wanted to go back and you wanted to stay there.

PB: Yeah, yeah. And so, 'No,' they said, 'you can't. It's too late now. We already got you. You should have called in'. I said, 'Nobody told us. Nobody told us,' I said. 'I was with these Intelligence group and they didn't even tell us anything about it.' 'Well, we can't do it.' And then they were short of clothes and

they said, 'We want all your clothes you got...leave it here... everything. You just take that one dungarees, just take that... cause we need all the clothes you got.' So I had to go back in just dungarees. They said, 'Well, you'll be over there in the state by tomorrow anyway.' See, we were going in that aircraft carrier. It was going to, going to Hawaii and from there they fly in, they said. Well, just as we were gonna get on they broke the rudder. And it will take another, they say it will take another month before they ever get a new rudder. So there was a Franklin transport, it was named Franklin...it was going to the Dutch Harbor, Aleutian Islands. So they just transfer us to there. And boy that, that was a good thing that rudder broke on that aircraft carrier, 'cause there was one thing I wanted to see was these whales. And boy, I saw a lot of them up there in the north. We went around Aleutian Islands then we got down to Anchorage, down along the coast to Seattle, San Francisco, then back to San Diego. Then I was discharged on November 9th, 1945.

EB: Did you come right back home?

PB: Yeah. I came right back home.

EB: A lot of the guys got jobs on the west coast and didn't come back too soon.

PB: Uh huh.

EB: Did you have an Enemyway when you came back?

PB: No, but I just, like I was telling this orientation group, that

you know they said, 'Can anybody go to these things besides the man that's'....and I said, 'Yeah, you can go in there. But you'll have to pay. And they'll give you medicine.' So that's the only way I got mine. My wife's sister's husband went to Germany and he was having a Squaw Dance. So they told me, well, if you don't want a Squaw Dance why don't you just go in there and pay them and they'll give you medicine for it. So that's what I do. I just paid for the medicine, drank it and....

EB: But you never had the full ceremony.

PB: So I never had the full ceremonial. But they say if it does get bad, if it does bother your mind, then you better have it. But so far...

EB: Never did bother you.

PB: Never did bother me.

EB: Do you think that more guys are being bothered now coming back from Viet Nam than in World War II? I mean, do you see more change in the young guys, the soldiers?

PB: Uh....no, it's just about...

EB: In making adjustment.

PB: Well, you mean like getting a job and all that?

EB: Well, not just that, but you know how they feel. Did the guys you went with pretty well come back, act normal, get jobs?

PB: Right.

EB: Do you think that Viet Nam has been worse for the Navajos?

PB: No. It's just about the same as World War II. Just see one or two that had Squaw Dances. But a lot of them never had. So it's just about the same.

EB: You don't think that more of them start drinking or anything like that?

PB: Well, I don't know just how to explain that drinking, that's a ...

EB: I don't mean in general, I mean especially among the servicemen. That seems to be one of the causes.

PB: Yeah. They, right, they, it gets in their blood. Well, I don't know. It's all, it don't make no difference whether they didn't go. If they gonna drink, they gonna drink. And I don't know, my own opinion, they say they're sick. That's why they do it. But my theory is they're not sick, they're onery, they're onery.

EB: The reason I brought it up is because a lot of guys that I met used the service as an excuse. You know, they say, the reason I drink is because of, or whatever, is because of that bad experience. And I just wondered if you thought that was legitimate.

PB: Well...I don't know. I had the same chance to. It was open right there. There was a lot of us like Raymond Smith, and well just only one, Rex Malone, the one I was with. Right after the war, he got bad. That's what killed him, see. He fell off the pickup gonng back to Tohatchi. He start drinking real bad. Well, there's one out of the six of us. See. Although it was there on the front line, they bring all cases of that chablis and well, we drank, I

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just drank a bottle a day, that's all.

EB: What did you do when you first came back?

PB: When I first came back, I went right straight to Crownpoint. See, that's where my kids were. See, I had about three children before I went.

EB: Well, you were five years out of high school.

PB: Yeah.

EB: You were a little older than quite a few of the guys, then.

PB: Right. Uh huh. So I just went back...

EB: Did you go to work for the Bureau right then?

PB: Oh no. I didn't. I didn't know that you, they didn't even tell us that you can apply for subsistence, you know, I didn't even know about it.

EB: What job did you get right then?

PB: I didn't get any. I just stayed because my wife's father had a lot of cows and sheep so I just stayed home and didn't have to worry until after the middle of January, then I finally came into Gallup. And then I saw a sign there, they need carpenters real bad. And it says special to veterans...they'll pay your tuition right off the bat, and it was fifty dollars. So this fellow was Tony, he was a Chicano fellow, he was in charge....Tony, but I've forgotten what his name was. I guess it was Tony Romero. It had his name on it. So I went over there and I went to Tony Romero. And well I used to do carpenter work for...and in high school

I took carpentry work. And so I went over there and so I told him, I said, 'I used to do carpentry work. And I still can do it -- I know it. I still know it.' So he just gave me one test, he says, 'O.k., draw out a cutout for steps. I want six steps.' So I got, he get the square and I just, right there was the lumber and I just got it out like that. 'Good. O.k.' So he says, 'Well, we'll pay for your fee now...all veterans....if you see any other veterans, well, we'll get them a job. We need carpenters.' So all on that Sunnyside's where we build all those houses. Now they tore it down for the freeway. Although, you know, lumber was scarce right after the war. They were using old lumbers. Tearing some buildings down. Some came from Denver, you know, on freight. But they were all used, old used lumber. And that's what we build and then we... that's how we build a lot of those houses on Sunnyside, just before you get to ceremonial -- all along in there, there was nothing in there.

EB: Yeah. When we first came to Gallup, those houses were still there. I remember seeing them.

PB: And so that's how...then, then finally about April, I work, let's see, February, March, oh, two months. Then this guy, Sam MacGregor -- see, I used to work for forestry, then for, I was working with the BIA in forestry when I was inducted, drafted. So they found out I was working here...well, I put in my name over there and they just told me, well, whenever they get appropriation, well, they'd hire me

back...but right now they didn't have the money. And so all at once, why they came down in April and they said, 'Well, we got some money. You want to go back to your job, why just come back right away.' So they told me that they'll take me around 6th of April. So I worked here in town about oh, day before, I think. Then I went up there.

EB: What kind of work did you do up there?

PB: Uh, I took care of the radio, two way radio. I was a radio man for them. See, that's how I got that job over there...I took this course in Albuquerque I mean, Phoenix Indian School...they used to have telephone, radio, diesel, mechanic...

EB: That's why you were instructor for repairing at....?

PB: Right. So they were gonna start this fire protection for that summer so they wanted me, they want me to check all the TV equipment so they can put up all these guards. So that's why I went back. But when fall came they used up all their appropriations, see, they didn't ask for enough money. So my boss said, well, I know Mr. Grey over at Tuba City. I know him. And I'll try and get a job for you. You can work here this winter and then come back next spring. So I said o.k. and they got me a job. And since I knew a lot about electricity, then I went, when I was in Phoenix I also went through diesel mechanic. And so they had diesel light plants at....somewhere. 'Oh, that's the man we want, that's what we want.'

EB: 'Cause you could do both things.

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EB: 'Cause you could do both things.

PB: Right. Yeah. So then I went over there. Well, that was a beautiful place. You know, I was tired of snow. That's why I went South Pacific, 'cause there was no snow. And I'd been sick of snow when I went there, and oh, that winter was nice...never snows there. It be snowing in the mountain, it will rain there. I told my wife, 'Boy, I like this place.' She liked it too, she didn't like that snow.

PB: How long did you stay?

PB: Fourteen years.

EB: Wow.

PB: Up to '59. Then in '59 I transferred to Tuba City. They told me I was there too long, so I better go to Tuba City.

EB: How did you switch over to the education part of this business?

PB: I'm not on education.

EB: You're still not really in education.

PB: I'm a tribal relations. I do a lot liaison work between the BIA.

But how I got in here is because, it's been two years now, I been on the school board, public school board, and also I'm on the Arizona State Advisory, Education Advisory Board down at Phoenix. So we meet down there every month. So I'm getting involved in this education. But I know, I don't know who told Mrs. Barnel that I knew a lot of Navajo stories and that's what they wanted me over here for. And she asked my super...see, I worked right under the superintendent, so she went over there and asked him last year if he could release

me for a little while and be over here with the teachers. So he thought that was a good idea. He says, 'Well, that's in line with your work anyway. You're doing liaison work between the teachers and you know something about the Navajos,' so he said, 'that's a good place to go over there and talk to them.' So last year was my first time. And this year he sent me again. So that's my main purpose here is just to tell 'em about Navajo. Some of their history, their way of life, what to expect when they get out there, how you encounter the Navajos and all that.

EB: Well, I think -- just my own opinion -- that the orientation now is a whole lot better than it used to be. They're really getting the people prepared, giving them some idea of what the Navajo way is.

PB: Right.

EB: There used to be teachers that have been here for twenty-five years that couldn't say anything in Navajo, had never been to any kind of a ceremony or anything, and weren't interested. Now they're getting people that are interested. With your help, then, you know...

PB: And I noticed too, that like when I was at _____, I think they made a mistake by telling these, you know, the colored people when they first came in, they tell, why, Navajos when they say this word that means you. And that was misrepresenting, because you can name something and it comes you know, same thing.

EB: _____.

PB: Yeah. That's what they did over there and this one guy, he was shaking

this boy when I came out of my house. He was really shaking him, you know...got that kid crying. Then I heard him say, 'You said bad thing to me...I don't want you to say bad things to me.' Well, you know, I went up there and I approached him and I says, 'What did he say bad?' He says, '_____.' I said, 'Do you know how to talk Navajo?' He says, 'Yeah. They taught me over at orientation. I know what he said,' And then so I asked the kids around there, I said, 'What did he say?' And he said, 'Oh, throw me that black ball over there.' And there was a black ball over there and I guess he thought they were talking about him.

EB: He heard 'black.'

PB: Yeah. So then I told him. And then I said, 'What is the difference?'

I said, 'I went to Milwaukee and Detroit and I walked the streets there, and there was a bunch of us Navajos and we saw a bunch of white guys. I mean boys, they said, 'Injuns, look at the Injuns!' Well, we didn't get mad. If they are happy to see Indians, well, so what? So it's the same thing if they did, if a bunch of kids say _____. You know, they are happy to see them, so why should he get mad about it. That's what I'm talking. I said, 'I don't get mad. I can go to some strange city and go up the street and these white boys, 'Oh, Injuns, Injuns,' I said, 'I'm not gonna get mad about that.' Yeah. I thought they were really misrepresenting them, you know, in this orientation.

EB: Well, until the last couple of years it was easy to get the wrong

impressions. I think it's much better now.

PB: Right.

EB: Mainly because Navajos are doing it all.

PB: Right. Uh huh.

[end of tape #1]

[tape #2]

PB: My name is Paul Blatchford. I'm working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Tuba City, Arizona. I'm a Tribal Relations Aide. My work is to help the Navajo people in my area to understand the function of the BIA. When I first started to work, there was a lot of letters written from the Luke Chapter, written to the superintendent about the road situation, and they had sent different people down there to tell them that whenever money is available they will improve the road. That's all they were told. And when I took this job the first thing was the superintendent told me, 'Let's go down there; we've been having a lot of letters written and see if you can explain to them how maybe they want to learn how the BIA actually functions. Because there's a lot of illiterates, they don't understand the American way.' So I went down there...we call, they call for a big meeting; they set the date and we went down there. So we met with all the chapter officers from Tulani Lake, Birch Springs, and Luke, itself, they were all there. There was the three chapters in the Luke area. So one of them, I remember, his name was Henry Bahe, he got up -- he was a real nice talker; and he start talking

about how many years that they heard about a superintendent being up at Tuba City -- he never came around. And there was always somebody sent down there just to tell him a little thing and then they'd go back. So he says, 'Now we're getting a little bit frustrated. I'm glad that the superintendent came; this is the first superintendent that we ever seen came now. And now here's our chance. I'm talking to all of you chapter officers, that here is your chance, and he also brought his interpreter. I guess he works as a liaison, that's what he told me, he works as a liaison between his people and the BIA. So here's our chance -- let's get everything. Let's learn everything we can from them today.' And this was a real experience for me when I first started work. And they had a lot of questions. They thought the superintendent could make a telegram right straight to Gallup headquarters and ask for so many thousands of dollars and start this road project. Well, he explained to them, he says, 'This is a long process, but I went to, since I hired this new man and he's gonna be working with you people. And while we're at it now,' he told them, he says, 'let's form a roads committee. And then you people in this area keep track of where all these Navajos do most of their traveling and then we'll see what we can do.' So they were very happy about it, but they were frustrated after they, after the superintendent said, told them that, 'now this is the way you have to do it. First we have to see if we can get priority, and then we have to ask for the BIA surveyers to

come -- it usually takes them a year or two years to do this. And once it's all set up, then it goes to the Window Rock area, then it goes through your tribe, your councilmen, they agree to it. And then it's not only in Luke area that's sent in their report, there's Chinle, there's Crownpoint, and there's Shiprock, and also Tuba. So when it gets to the Tribal Council, they try to see which one actually needs it.' And then he told them, remember that Congress for the last five years as he knows, that they only allocate about, oh, 20 million, 20 million dollars for the whole Indian reservations. It's not just for the Navajos, it's for all Indian reservations all over the United States. Then this money is divided by the population. You get so much. And then, he said, 'This Navajo Reservation is so large, and that 20 million dollars it just don't go very far after all the other tribes get their part and the Navajos get oh, maybe a million or two million. And that's why your Tribal Council has to figure out which is the most important priority road they want to put in first. And so this is the way it works.' And boy, they were interested and they said, 'Well, we're glad that you told us. You're the first time that really explained it to us. We didn't know -- we thought you just -- once we tell you what we want you make a telegram to Window Rock, and Window Rock sends it down to wherever our headquarters and then headquarters, they telegram to Washington and here we get it in two weeks. We thought that's the way you operate. Now we didn't know that you, that you

have to do like this, and all that...make preparations. We didn't even know that. And we're glad to hear it. Now we understand it. But they said, now, 'Well, what else can we do? Here's why we're concerned -- Arizona State, now, they're building a road up to our Reservation....now can we get that added on...they're willing to help us if we can get some money. They want to help us...they said they'd even send some of their money up to Luke if we can get some money. And that's what we're working for.' So he said, 'Well, the only way for you to do it is you people -- you three chapters that are here -- is to go to your councilman. Now your councilman has some money. Now they're the only one, they can, if you need it real bad, they can ask Uncle Sam to give them their money for this purpose.' And you know, they done that. And then the tribe rechecked it to see if it was really authentic that the Arizona state was really gonna put in some of that money to pave that road to Luke. They were, they wanted to find...well, they found out...and the state said 'yes'. Now if you can give us some money, help us with it, we'll pave to Luke -- from Winslow to Luke. Well, we already got it paved, we're paving it up to the Reservation now. Now, if you give us some of your money, and then I'll talk, we've talked to the local people and they said they would give us the sand and gravel free. So we can, we can get you a road paved.' So we all got together and they went over to Window Rock...the officers went and they talked to their councilmen and the councilmen said,

'Yes, if they're willing to do it, why we're willing to get 'em sand and gravel.' So now, today, they have that paved to Luke. And so now every time we go out down there they respect us. They understand 'em. And a lot of places are like that...we've gone to Kabito, the school is right across the wash, and the store's on the other side of the wash. In summertimes the floods, the flash floods come through there. And they also came...they came to me after they found out that I was working them as a liaison. And they said, 'How can we get a bridge, we been asking Uncle Sam for a bridge for many years and they never would put it in.' And I said, 'O.k., I'll see what I can do. I'll talk to the superintendent.' So I told the superintendent about it and then we went to the roads department. And they said, 'Yes, that's right.' That's right, you know, it just goes through the same procedure again. Well, he says, 'I'll tell you what. We got lots of these bridge beams, they're all over in the government compounds. Now what we could do, we could get them for them.' And then the Navajo tribe, every community, gets allotment from the Navajo Tribe money. They are allocated, every chapter, so many thousands of dollars. And so they told me, said, 'Well, could you go back to that chapter and talk to them and see if they can do the work themselves out of their public works money? And we will furnish the beams, and even the bridge, you know, cover it up with boards and all that. We can get that supply.' And so I guess in the meantime they went

and talked to the trader, and the trader said, 'Well, if you make a headway, I'll help you, I'll help you. I'll even buy some material that the government can't buy.' So this is my work and I got them all together and then the government got all these bridge beams out there. And then the chapters all pick up their men...good stone masons, they put embuttments down in that wash, and they build the bridge themselves. The only thing the government did, did was take their equipment to haul this heavy iron and lift it up and put 'em in place. And then I was surprised, the trader donated the money to buy the 4 x 8, I think that's what they put across the steel beams. And then they put gravel and dirt and then they put pavement on top of it. So today they have a nice bridge and now they can go to the store even though that wash is running high. They usually, they used to stay, if they had to, if they need some food and had to get to the store if that wash was running they couldn't get across...why then they had to turn around and go clear back home -- wait till the next day and then come back again. It was sort of a hardship for them. And it's something like that that I do. Then, another thing we ran into is down Wapaqui and there's three families have allotments in there. Allotments, and I remember when I was just out of high school in '35, the Fall of '36, they started this ECW. And this ECW was gonna make a diversion dam over at Wapaqui and at that time, there was no park there. And the Navajos were going to build this diversion dam

so they could...and then the government was going to develop farming down along that lower Colorado River. And when I went over there there was no Park Service there at that time. But I knew there was allotments across there. Well, around about '38 or '39, why they decide to put a park and never even make an agreement with the Navajos that 'We'll give you this, or in place of it you can range right here.' They just figure, well, across the river's the Navajo Reservation, they could chase them over there. But also, the Reservation was already made and the BIA had already made assignments for all those people that raise sheep. And you know, you heard about in 1932 they made them reduce their stock. When they did that they also made assignment where they could graze whatever was left. If they were cut in half, if their total sheep unit was cut in half, why they were given a unit. So these people were living over here in their allotment. Then all at once Park Service come along, 'Why, you can go back on the Reservation.' Never thinking about those people had an assignment, land assignment where they could....and then not even follow through -- see if people were satisfied. Well, what they did was they just move on to a private land. They didn't know it was private land. Park Service just came in there and fenced it in. So they came over and told us, they said, 'Now this man, he's been paying tax on his land here... we didn't know we were living on his land for all these years. And we got land in the Park Service. Now how in the world can we

get this back?' So I finally had to tell them, I said, 'Well now we have DNA, this is a DNA problem, now.' And I said, 'I don't think we can handle this or the BIA can handle this, because now it, if your story, the way you told me,' I said, 'this is where you go to the DNA and you tell them your story. So then they in turn can go back. They know all the legal aspects of this situation.' I said, 'They know how to get it...and then maybe they'll get it back for you.' So, to this day, it's pending right now. We haven't heard of the outcome. What it's gonna be...so this is the way I run into a lot of these problems with the Navajos. And then you've heard about the Black Mesa situation. That was the same thing. The people came to me and then I told them. And I had to go back and explain to them how it started. Most of them, the older people, I told them that in '52, I said that's where it started. You people reported this coal burning, it was burning. And then it was reported to Window Rock. And then they sent some geologists out there to blast it, to smother it out. Well, they did and around '59 why it start coming back again..it, coal start burning. And then it was brought before you chapter people and they ask you if you, if it was all right. If they go ahead and start mining it, maybe they'll find a use. And at that time, they were thinking about putting a factory down Chilchinbito. This was...they found out they could make synthetic materials out of this coal. So that was their purpose at that time with all those people living on Black

Mountain -- that was their agreement. They said...so this ain't something new about that coal. This was always being talked about since '52. And they were talking about this. They thought this factory was gonna go down there, but I guess the people that, that studies statistics -- they're surveying out, and they came up with this, they said, 'Well heck, we could make a power plant, and then sell this coal.' They thought this would be feasible. Better than building a factory and making synthetic material. So they all agreed to it.

NB: And that was discussed in the chapters?

PB: Right. These were all discussed in the chapters. So when I went to these old people, I said, 'Now remember, this is what we told you. This is the way it was discussed in the past. And this is what we come out. And why are you, we heard that you want to stop all this now -- what is the reason?' So a lot of these old people like Buck, oh, I can't...his name is Buck, I can't think of him right now. And this other lady, Mrs. Russell, and she is the boss -- they call her, in Navajo, they call her the woman boss. And I went to her and I said, 'Now, what is this all going about?' And she said, 'Well', she says, 'I know it. We agreed to it. We're not saying anything, but it's these young boys. Those young boys are scaring us off. They say, 'You people are gonna be blasted off this Mesa. You gonna be dead. And when they, uh, put that dynamite down there, you gonna be blasted off this place. Either

that or else the smoke is going to get into your lung and plaster your lung inside you and you just gonna smother. All you people. One of these, one of these nights you gonna be smothered. You gonna die.' And they're scaring us. That's why. We're just going along with them. We're signing the paper. 'Now you sign the paper you want, you want them to stop mining this. Because this is what it's gonna do to you.' So they're making us sign papers. And so we don't actually know what is really going on. And we're just taking them for granted. They got an education. They're talking about something they know, so we're just taking their word.' So I said, 'Well, that's good.' So I told them, 'Well, here's the way I was told to tell you.' I said, 'Now, the wells go down about a thousand or less. And I said, 'All your water... they claim that further on down, 1600 feet there's solid rock and they say that water stays from there up to the surface. And what the Peabody did, they drew up through that rock and they cemented it. And they went down, further down, to get that water. I said, 'Now this is what I am supposed to tell you. They told me already. So this is what they told me now, they getting this water way over two thousand, 25,000 feet. And you people will never, even all these wells, never use that water down there. And also where they drill through that rock, that water that's up here that you people use will never leak through. They got it plastered to where it never leak through. And you will never have

no trouble. But the only thing is you'll just have to depend on your rain. And if you have plenty of rain, you always have a lot of sub-water. If you don't have not too much rain two, three years, then it does go low -- then it comes up. But this, what the Peabody use, will never affect you. So then I turn all around. 'Well, that's a lot better. Why, these kids, they don't tell us that...they just tell us the scary side. That's why we're all upset. But since you tell us your story, why, we're satisfied, now.'

NB: Did you tell the kids?

PB: Oh yeah. There's four boys, they're in this college, they made arrangements and this whole class came over to the Community Center in Tuba City and I had to talk to them. And oh boy, were they militant. They told me that I shouldn't talk that way to these old people, you know. And they said that they were going to write to all Senators and also since they're going to NAU they know a lot of Anglos that came from different states and they said they would help them, and they was gonna tell their Congressmen. And I said, 'Well, I...' And then they said, 'Now what do you think, do you think it's possible?' And I said, 'Well, like I told the people, the Navajos knew about it in '52. That coal was burning already. It was going worse...'

NB: It was going natural.

PB: Natural, right. I been up there, I went up there. I went up...when I first noticed thas was in '30...it was in the last part of '38,

'cause I was working for the Forest Service at that time. And they were mining, the BIA were mining coal out of Kayenta Mine. And so working for the Forest Service from the sawmill, the tips of those logs that were down to about eight inches, they cut them into four foot lengths, and they stack them up for this mine, for Window Rock Mine, Kayenta, and Cow Spring Mine. And I used to haul this mine props up to that mine. And that's when I went up to there in the latter part of '37, or early part of '38, somewhere along in there... I used to haul. And every one they told me, they said that coal was way down there...there's coal burning...it's coming right through the cracks of the rock. So I went down there and sure enough... that's when I noticed. But you know, people, well, I don't think BIA went that far with it, they didn't know what to do...it was just burning. Anyway, but in '52 the Navajos, you know, a lot of them went to war...lot of them, if they didn't go to war they worked off the reservation. And when they came back on the reservation, they realized it. These people always realized why there's that coal burning for nothing. And they learned this. And they thought, well, that's the BIA's job. They got to suppress that some way. So it's better for our people to report it. And that's when, '52, they got concerned, they reported it to Window Rock. So that's when...

NB: Does that have something to do...I've heard stories about Black Mesa Ghosts.....?

PB: Not at Black Mesa. This ghost is at Tuba City. Just a little ways from Tuba City, there's a well, they call that Black Mesa because Tuba City used to mine their coal from there. That's why they call that Black Mesa. So it's not actually on this big mesa. And when you go...have you been to that trading post there at Black Mesa? When you pass Hooterville? Well, then you go on down, it's right at the end of that rodeo grounds. Anyway, you go by the rodeo grounds and you go down Tilman Hadley is living in that used to be an old BIA house. He lives in there... the miner used to live in that house and then the mine's on down. Well, from that mine way in the middle, I guess this miner's the one that notices one time that....he was a white fellow, you know, he knew how to mine...and I guess it was in the fall when the clouds were rolling by. He knew that peak was there, but then when he saw this, one night I guess he was out, I guess he was restless, and he just walked out and I guess in corner of his eyes he thought he saw something white move, and he look and then he kept walking awhile, that's where he start telling people about it -- he saw ghosts over there. And so after that why they always wanted to go out. And so they found out and that's what it was... it was that peak that sticks out right in the middle, it's a pinnacle, sticks out. And when the shadow hits that, you don't see it but when the full moon, and then the clouds split and then all at once, he, was just see the top part and the top part was white, you know. And

it just disappeared, you know, as the cloud moved and it moves too, and then it disappears and then you think there is a ghost walking around.

NB: Is that Ch'i-dii?

PB: Yeah. That's Ch'i-dii.

NB: Do the Navajos think of it that way too?

PB: No. It's Hopi mostly. The Hopis think that way. But the Navajos, well they knew that pinnacle was there. And the cloud moves. So tha Navajos they just, they just make fun, 'cause it's actually the Hopis is superstitious. They say it's one of their princesses commit suicide and there she's down there. And that's what you people see, that's what they say. And they say they see it too, you know, but it's supposed to be princess that kills herself. So the Navajo, in the Navajo way it isn't to them, but they always say that, that they say that the Hopis said there's a Ch'i-dii down there -- a Hopi Ch'i-dii. See, so it doesn't bother them. That's what it is.

NB: Do you think, I'm going to Black Mesa...do you think that there's going to be...do you think there's enough pressure now to stop it or would most of the Tribal people be in favor of trying to stop the mine now, or do you think they're beginning to realize that it's not so bad?

PB: Well, most of them think it's not so bad. I go down there, they're building this big railroad. And all those Navajos are working. So

superintendent and I, we go over there almost every day. 'What do you think of it,' he says, 'ask those Navajos what do they think. Do they want to stop it?' So I go over there and mostly there all men around 30, 35, all working. And they said, 'No, no.'

NB: Is it true that they've moved, that they made people move their homes and that they've torn down places and things like that?

PB: No. They told them to move, though. I mean, that's optional. 'This train is gonna, you're gonna have a lot of noise. So do you want to move?'

NB: Because the noise will scare the sheep and the sheep will get killed on the tracks.

PB: Right. Uh huh. So it's up to you. If you want to stay there, it's all right. So there's some move, some haven't moved. They're not pushing them off....No. But I know one fellow...we been after him for two years. He got a grant to build him a house. And see, I also work for this man that's with the Home Improvement -- I do interpreting for him. So we been going after this man all this time. He had all that material.. it's been raining there, he's got it covered up and it's gonna be cinder block house. He bought \$800 worth of material and it just lay there and lay there. And we kept after him and then finally this railroad, oh, it's half a mile from his place, you know, and they told him, 'It's up to you, if you want to move, or not, it'll make noise coming through here, you know, and all that.' Cause just a little ways, just a half a

mile. And I guess he did move...he move way out. So not too long ago, about a month and a half ago we went out there cause we saw them building this, well, knocking down trees and leveling off the hills. And we went up to see this man and all and he's gone. He left the country. He even took all the materials. And then we finally had to go to another family and said, 'Where did that fellow go?' I've forgotten what his name was. Anyway, this other fellow knows, and he says, 'Oh, he's gone away, about two miles.' And they told us, and we went over there. And he already started...he got his foundation started...and so this housing authority officer, he was real glad. He says, 'Boy, I'm glad you start working on your house now. Now you're gonna finish?' 'Oh yes. They say that thing's gonna make a lot of noise.' And he said, 'Good thing...good thing I had this all. I know I made you mad,' he says, 'but you know, I'm glad that I waited this long because they told me that trains gonna make a lot of noise. So we move two miles away, now. Now I'm happy. That's why. I had to tear my home down there.' We said, 'I know. We couldn't even find your house.' He had that old house, you know, it was all torn down.

NB: Where is the railroad going to connect? Where does it go?

PB: It goes to the power plant. And then it comes right along the highway. It stays right along the west side of the highway, clear up to west of Cow Springs. And then it turns right here just

there before it gets to 164, Highway 164. And then it follows that highway all the way up to that turnoff to Betatakin. Now, as I understand now, somewhere along in there the trucks will haul it up to the hill and then its conveyers, it will come down conveyers down that hill into some chutes. Add this train will just run under and each car will be loaded and then it just takes off.

NB: And then it goes to the power...

PB: Right. Yes. And so I've, we talk to a lot of these people, we told them that they're griping about...what do you think? And they'll say, 'Well, as far as we're concerned we want this to go...it's already gone.' And so I think they spent maybe 20 million dollars already, so I doubt whether they ever close it or not. I think it's just gonna go on through.

NB: The thing that has bothered me is that all the complaints make it sound like the government, the BIA that just is tearing the land apart. And it's the BIA and the government doing all of this. And I can't understand why they don't realize the Tribe had to o.k. it. They couldn't have gone on without it.

PB: Right. Right. It's the tribe. They go by their tribe. And the tribe realizes, well, they're working from, they want a job on the reservation.

NB: Uh huh. Do you know how many Navajos are employed there, approximately?

PB: I've forgotten. Last time it was 127 of them...was working there, but

that's labor and everything. There's quite a lot of them. When we stop there, there was a lot of them working. Then also the State of Arizona, the geolo...anthropologists. They hired, boy, they hired about maybe 20 to 25 Navajos digging up all those ruins and picking up all those Indian relics and everything. And they were all Indians working. And there is a lot of them working. That's why we were talking to them. And we asked them, 'What do you think about these other people? There's some people objecting to this.' And they said, 'Oh, we're all for this.' And then they all said, 'Well, it's just, well, they say, 'It's the college boys. They're doing it.' See, they're all going back. They're blaming it to the college boys, -- they're the ones. 'They're scaring our people.' And then I talk, and then they say, 'In fact, we lived in smoke all our lives. We had smoke in our hogan. What the heck, what the heck this dust going to do to us anyway... we're still living.' They say that. And they said, 'All of these college kids, they want to be bilaganas. They're going to be bilaganas ways, you know, that's the way they talk, you know. So then the question you asked about the traders. The traders, what I think about the traders that it works both ways as long as you all get together and work together. They will help you as long as you help them. And the way I look at it, deep in my heart, a lot of these Navajos are real good to the traders. They understand. But it's the very few -- the drunkards -- the drunkards is

the ones that's spoiling them. Even today, these two medicine man that we had...that's what they were telling these young boys that the Squaw Dance is being ruined. This whiskey is spoiling it. The whiskey is spoiling our nice relation with the traders. Once they get to be a drunkard and then they tell the traders to go to the devil...they'll never pay their bills. And that's what's spoiling it. That's why we're having a lot of conflicts with our traders. And I think this is true. And that was the reason why. And also the trader didn't do it upon himself, saying now, 'Well, I'll make a card, a book, and then just say here I'm gonna give you this.' He didn't say that...he did the same thing...he went to the chapter and he says, 'People, I'm having this trouble. I have to live just like you live. And what do you think of it now? If I make out a book, make up a book and then it will have a dollar stamp, two dollar stamp, fifty cents, seventy-five, and then when you bring your rug or something you can buy it and then you can keep it like that. Or, I'll just give you a book and that'll be your credit and that's all you'll have spent for that month.' And I know, Mr. Hubbell when I was going to the mission school there, you had to buy these tokens.

NB: Uh huh. What did they call those secos?

PB: Uh huh. And then you have them. And then if you owe a Navajo why you just give that to the man and say, 'Why, you can get your money over there.' And that was done. But it wasn't forced on to

the people. They were always, the traders always got them together and said, 'Can we solve it like this? Can we do it?' So that's the way they done it. But it's just young kids coming out, they see, now. And they say, 'Oh, he's done wrong. He's doing wrong.' But they never go back and ask the older people, 'How come he started that? How does he get by with that?' They never ask the old people. And then otherwise the old people, the old people would say, 'Well, this is the way we did it. So and so, maybe he's dead now. He's the one that got us...at that time he was our head-man, he was our spokesman. He was doing our thinking...and what he agreed with the trader and he got us together and we all agreed.' See, they don't go back and ask them. It's just the young kids, they just come back and you know, make it had. And it kind of ruins it for the old people. I feel sorry for them. And so the trader, well, he says 'O.k., I walked and I made with the older people. I'll just cut it off. I don't care. If you guys want to make trouble, that's...' So it's kind of a hardship for them. I know that. And there was a brought upon my mother-in-law, father-in-law, that was brought on them. They used to have a lot of sheep. Used to have a lot of money. But when these kids started ruining everything for them, you know, they couldn't get no credit. Then I had to, or their sons or their daughters were working. Then we all had to pitch in our money. Then besides we had to pay our tax. We got to pay our our in-laws

so they can come out because the young kids, the college kids have ruined it for us. And so then we can't claim them, because they have their enterprise or business, you know, they raise stock. But the tax, the Internal Revenue said we're not qualified to...you know, to get an exemption for helping them. Because sure, they get in debt so bad that by the time they sell their sheep, why it's just enough to whatever Navajos have helped them, they pass out the money. And then when it comes to his own kids he says, 'Well, you know, children, you're my children. You're my son-in-law, you help me.' But I ran out of money. I had to pay, you know, that's not relatives. So then their kids say, 'Well, that's all right, father -- we're trying to help you raise us, so in turn, we're helping you.' So that's the way it works. So all these Navajos that are working on the Reservation, even though they're getting nice \$7,000, \$8,000, this is what they run into. They have to help their in-laws. Now, this year's gonna be bad, 'cause they couldn't sell their wool. And I know it. My in-laws got all the wool...can't sell it. And she's got to learn.

NB: They couldn't take it over to the tribe?

PB: Well, they closed it for them already...all the people around Window Rock, Fort Defiance, and Crystal, they already, and then they closed it. And they're just holding the sack.

NB: Full of wool.

PB: Yeah.

NB: Well, they could weave a lot of rugs.

PB: Yeah. That's right, but that takes lots of time.

NB: That takes too long.

PB: You have to go out and get your herbs and dye. Then you got to card it and you got to wash it and you got to spin it. And oh, it takes a long time. By the time you just about ready to starve then you finally make one. That's the way it goes...it's really rough.

NB: I've heard stories about traders being killed or beaten up. Do you know any stories about things like that? I'm not sure...some of them were right around, oh, 1920, and 30's, that's when I heard of it.

PB: Yeah. There's some been killed, I think. There was one at Lukachukai, but I never could find out the name. I just talked to the wife of this fellow. She told us that he got killed, they kill him. And she has children living by him. And she said he was a trader, and that's true. And then some over at Torreon, over at Torreon, I think. Well, he was kind of bad. I know that. It's.. the most, well, the older traders, they're not like it. It's their sons, when their sons take over and then they...

NB: I heard about a trader at Torreon was one of those guys that kept checks and he wouldn't give them...

PB: Right. Well, it's all did it. But the rest of them...those that don't get in trouble, they, like I said, they always work together.

They all kept a check. And I know that. And I used to carry mail from Kayenta to Chilchinbito to Dennehotso, and the postmaster, see, they don't have any post office. The postmaster's at Kayenta. So he puts it in a bag and he says, 'Now this goes to Chilchinbito -- these are check, now.' And then the mail's in a separate place. And then to Kayenta, here's the checks in here. See, they put that in separate...and so, and I take to the store, take the mail around and then right away the trader picks the little sack, he knows the checks are in there and he puts it in the safe. That big walk-in safe. They do that. And then the other mail he just tossed it over there. And that one thing, I didn't like that..I tried to talk to them. I said, 'You shouldn't put those mail in there, in the basket. Because all those people go in there and they look at it and then they take it out, you know. Maybe it's their folks. But still they tear it out and they take the money order out and they cash that.' And I tell them about it. And they say, 'Well, I don't have time to do it. But they should be here. They know when the mail comes. It was brought once a week. I think it was Wednesday when I went around...it was on Wednesday. And 'They should be here. If they know they got money coming, they should be here and get it. I don't have that time, see.' And that's why they do it. So they keep the check in there. And then, like I say, and I still don't blame the trader...I don't blame Torreon

because that's where the big drunkard started. And this guy didn't want to pay him. Well naturally, I think even you and I, if he was a drunkard and he wasn't gonna pay me and he demanded that check...and if I gave him the check and said, 'O.k., I give you the check, now, here's your bill. Now here it is.' And if he doesn't come back, I'd do the same thing...I think you'd do the same...anybody...we're all humans. If you do something wrong, somebody's going to do some...so I don't blame the traders. That's the way I look at it.

NB: At Torreon it was the son, the trader's son that got killed.

PB: Right. Uh huh. And he was the one that was doing it. The old man wasn't...he was, you know, he talks to them. He takes his time..he's patient. He knows the Indians are patient. And so he went along, but the hot boy, he said, 'I demand it and I want it right now. And if he doesn't do it, I'll do this. I know the law.' See, they say that, they know the law. And you know, they not gonna go by the old man, you know.

NB: Yeah.

PB: See, that's where all the trouble start. Otherwise, the way they done it in the past is just..they doing the right thing. They just follow the man, this old man, he'd say, 'Well, let's think it over tonight. Go home, well think it over tonight, you know. And he probably give him, you know, can or something, 'Here, take this home...eat it...think about it.' And that's what they worked

for anyway, these Navajos. They want something he can give. They want to see if he can give, see. Once you can give, then they said, 'By golly, he's a good man,' you know. He's not gonna raise the devil. So then the guy comes back, 'O.k., I'll sign it for you now. You are a good man.' It's even the way among most Indians. We do the same way. We lend money to them. And you got to think... well, all Indians, they, you know, we're Indians, you know, come on, lend me ten dollars. And you know we're Indian. Now I can't pay you next month. I can't pay you next year. Maybe two years. That's why you have to think...is ten dollars worth two years, you know. You got to think about that. And you give it to them and that's it. And then out of the blue sky, all at once, maybe sometime you really need the money and here this guy, oh, you know, he's in a good mood, he's got the money, and 'Here, remember the time you gave me some money.' That's all. It just works like that. I don't know...that's the way Indians say it, 'What's money?' 'What's money? You can make that.' But it's the human being, yourself...when you lose a human being you never replace it. That's what they're saying all the time, 'And what's money? Money's nothing. You can get that if you want to. You can... tomorrow, you can hunt a job. If you're desperate for money you can do it.' See, that's the way they talk.

NB: That's a good way to talk.

PB: Yeah.

NB: Where do you think...I've heard talk about the BIA being, oh, in some cases kicked off the reservation...on other cases they say, 'Well, the tribe will take over the BIA.' What do you think about that?

PB: Well, like a lot of these Navajos, here we're going back to the educated people....the educated people, that's the way they're thinking. But then like me...I'm not young, I had experience. And I've heard a lot of other Navajos are in my group. They say, 'Oh oh. We hate to see that.' This will go back before the white man ever came to our country...we'll be fighting each other.' And right now, you can see it. I think, you heard in January when MacDonald took over. How he was canning some of these Navajos, they held this position so long...Jones had them in there, but he never got rid of them. Nahkai never got rid of them. Until MacDonald came in and then he started hiring, firing different key men. And that's what's going to happen. That's what we're afraid of. We're afraid there's...seventy-five percent of the Navajos afraid that that's what's gonng to happen if we take over. And I don't know if you heard Annie Wauneka over there when she said she went to a place where these chickens was green, pink, red, blue, and she look at that and she noticed then how they were getting along together even though the colors were varied... but they're all worked together. And she said that somebody asked that question, 'What do you think about the Navajos taking over?'

And that's what she brought out, and she says, 'We don't want that all white, all black. We don't want that. We want it just like that...different colors on our reservation.' And she knows it too. And I'm thinking just the way she think.. That we don't want the Indians to take over...not to take the whole thing over. We still need everybody. We need Chicanos...we need Anglos...different races to be in with us. Ask just the Navajos to kick out the BIA -- No. We want the BIA in there too. We don't want it. We want to stay with the treaty; that the BIA stays in there as long as Indians are half, three-fourths. But when it goes down to where they're a quarter, one-eighth, and then the BIA can leave if they want to. That's the way all these Navajos think about. They said they want to keep the BIA on the reservation as long as there are half-bloods, quarter-bloods, but when it comes down to where they don't even look like Indians, then let's get rid of BIA, then.

NB: Do you think that the Tribe can eventually take over some of the functions of the BIA?

PB: Oh, yes. There's some of it, uh huh, they're talking about... that they want to take over the dormitories. Because they realize -- I know it -- and because we think that because see, Anglos are in charge, but they don't actually understand the culture. And they always tell the aides, the dormitory aides, 'Now you do this and do that.' If they don't do that there, you

know, they get a bad mark. And then he start saying, 'Well, I'll either can him or transfer him...cause he doesn't go well.' So we know this. And so we thought if we can get 'em in there, get the Navajos on this dormitory, then I think there'll be a real second parent. Because that's a Navajo custom. If there's an orphanage over there, next door neighbor, they take it gladly... they take 'em, they always help. And it'll work this way. But this, the way they run it, the Anglos, he's gone to college...he's learned psychology and yes that psychology works a little bit. But then the culture part...it doesn't fit their part. And then they go by the rules...it goes like this. And then they...and that's where a lot of these kids, they get frustrated and they want to do this...we have to do this...we don't do that at our home, you know. And they can't get used to it, so they run away. Then they don't want to come back. If they do go through, why, next year they don't want to go back there.

NB: And it's because of the dormitories in most cases.

PB: Right. Right.

NB: That's the trouble spot.

PB: Right. That's just where it is. And that's where we were, we are trying to work at it. We think of the BIA, the Tribe could take over these dormitories. Now, they're not having trouble at Rough Rock because they got all Indian in there working the dormitory. They're having a lot of fun, as I understand it. And I go over

there and I ask the kids' parents, 'What do you think about it?'

I have a lot of friends up there where I live, and they say, 'That's real good. They don't even run away. They don't even get lonesome 'cause of those aides...and they're older people and they tell them stories at night...and they feel like they are at home.' See? So I think that's where the Navajo should take over. But for the school, I don't think so. I thnknk we should have it all mixed... teaching...we should have all different nationalities. That's the way to learn it, too. The kids will say, well, you know, the teacher will say, now 'I'm a German. But I was born in the United States.' You know, they go through their geography and they start to learn...that makes them learn.

NB: Uh huh. How about if we finish with the Eagle Story?

PB: O.k. Mr. Beall, he's a senior. He told a story today about how he learned from his father to catch live eagles. He used to go out with his father...he learned the songs. And he watched him how he performed all these songs and learned them by heart. How he dug a foxhole where he got in there, and how he put, to conceal himself, put this greasewood over the hole and then tearing off this bark from the cedars and used it at...where in front of the rabbit, where this eagle comes down why he would grab it. And this was all fixed. And then way back before iron was introduced to the Reservation, they used twigs. And they put them tags down and they'd get this...first they'd get a live rabbit.....they'd try to

get a live rabbit. And they put him out there...they tie him up... and they also used green twigs and it's turned...and then it's bent over and it's tied on inside his legs and so every time he try to kick either he'll jump out..it looks like he's jumping up. They had it fixed like that...and then in those days a rope was pretty hard to get. And so they used buckskin....they made little strings out of buckskin, they tie his leg to this peg. And so he would get away. And then after they get him all fixed up and then they start singing again, they start singing. And somehow the eagles then start coming and they always, there's all different kind of animals, there's one has to be a scout and he goes out. And this first eagle comes down and this rabbit's just right in front of the doorway where this cedar box is, and he's ready to catch it. And pretty soon the eagle comes down, he catch that. Before he starts killing that rabbit he catch it by the leg and then he's brought inside the hole. And that's where they wrap him. The first eagle they catch, they wrap him up in a blanket or cloth or whatever they have, and then they hobble him. And then they get ready for the one, they do their blessing first. But this is their capture, and they're supposed to tame this eagle. So this one they don't kill..this one they sort of bless him with that corn pollen. They sing to him...they rub it on his back and all that. And maybe they take out, while he's alive they pull out a feather...and that's sacred to them, too. They save that, and they say, 'This is a live

one.' That's the one that's supposed to, when he takes off, that feather they take and keep is, they know they let that eagle go and he is supposed to help them to do away with the evil spirits; so they keep that, you know, inside. And then after this is done and then they take it.. now they have another rabbit...they have other people that go to them. .they kill another rabbit but they got it and then they put inside, oh, you know, dirt or branch to fix it like it's another rabbit. Then they get this real eagle over there and then they put some bows over it like this...because when this eagle comes down fast and he sees this rabbit you know, he comes down when he gets caught in that...these bows are close together, four, three or four. And the eagle's over there. So when the eagle sees that eagle -- he's moving, and then they see that this is actually a dead rabbit. And then that eagle's over there. So when he comes down, when the other one comes down, they say, 'Well, we sent our scout down there and I think he's ready to catch that rabbit. And he's on the other side of those bent twigs. He's on the other side, so somebody's got to go on this side.' So here comes this other eagle, he comes down and then he tries to grab this...and he's coming so fast that he gets caught under these twigs. See. And then also the eagle is on the other opening, so he can't go by him. So when he comes through, and that's where they grab him again. He's caught in there. And then that's the one they kill...and that's the one they use all

the feathers off of that...they kill that. And they don't hit it over the head...he says what they use is they got a basket and it's full of...it's full of corn pollen and they stick that head in there and I guess he chokes to death. And that's what...and then they use the gall-bladder.. and I didn't know today, he said that the gall-bladder is used, to snake bites, you know."

An Interview by

John D. Sylvester

and

Benjamin Lee

North Dakota Number 1172

The American Indian History Project supported by Miss Doris Duke

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INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 10, 1971

PLACE Window Rock, Arizona

Informant's Name Thomas Claw

Birth Date Feb. 23, 1922 Birthplace Many Farms, Arizona

Tribal, Band, or Other Affiliation Navajo

Family Relationships _____

Informant's Occupation _____

Extended Comments Member of first graduating class from 8th grade

Fort Defiance school.

Served 1st Marine Division

11th MHQ Regiment

Ora Bay, New Guinea; Okinawa, Peilieu, Pavuva,

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The following is an interview with Thomas Claw, conducted by Benjamin Lee and John D. Sylvester, at Window Rock, Arizona on July 10, 1971.

JS: "We're sitting here today talking with Mr. Thomas Claw from Parker, Arizona. The interviewers are John Sylvester and Benjamin Lee. We're in Window Rock at the Navajo Code-talkers' Reunion. Mr. Claw, when were you born?

TS: I was born on February 23, 1922.

JS: And where were you born?

TC: I was born down in Many Farms.

JS: In Many Farms.

JS: In Many Farms.

TC: Yes, Arizona.

JS: Mm-hmm. And into which clan were you born?

TC: Clan? The T'ha-nes-za'nee clan. And my father is the T'ha-ba-hi clan.

JS: The T'ha-ba-hi clan?

TC: Yes.

JS: And where did you go to school?

TC: I started at Chinle as just a youngster and I think I was there just a year. I can't recall; and then, this was boarding school. I went to Fort Defiance over here nearby and I graduated from there. That was an elementary school, and in fact, that was the first graduating class since the

school was established.

JS: First graduating class of Fort Defiance school?

TC: Fort Defiance school was established there back in eighteen something. From the eighth grade, that is; and I went to Fort Wingate High School. And unfortunately I dropped out of school when I completed my sophomore year.

JS: You dropped out your sophomore year. What year was that?

TC: That was in 1940.

JS: 1940. And what did you do after you dropped out of school?

TC: Well, I went to work.

JS: Work? What were you doing?

TC: I first...my first job was, see there was a war going on, and I went to work for Fort Wingate Ordnance up here in New Mexico.

JS: Doing what?

TC: Well, just labor, and after that I went out to the coast to San Francisco and I got me a job working in a shipyard.

JS: You were working in a shipyard?

TC: Shipyard.

JS: In San Francisco.

TC: Uh huh. At Richmond, California. I lived in San Francisco. I worked there until I got my notice that I should report for

a physical examination, and I did in Berkeley.

JS: You reported in Berkeley?

TC: Berkeley.

JS: Mm-hmm.

TC: For a physical exam and...

JS: When was this?

TC: This was in 1941, I think.

JS: In 194...

TC: No, in '42, '42.

JS: It'd be '42, uh-huh.

TC: And, this must have been in the fall, somewhere along there, and not too long after that, see, I was married then..

JS: You were married.

TC: Yes. I was married and had a child and my wife wrote to me and said there's a paper or a letter from the induction station; I guess that's what it is. So I figured that they wanted me and I didn't give them my address so they wrote to home. And so immediately I returned back up here to the reservation, to Chinle. That's where I was living then and from there on I went down to Phoenix and when I got down to Phoenix and they _____. I went through another physical there in Phoenix, and I asked them when I went through, I

asked the people there what, you know, if I was qualified to, for the Armed Forces and they said yes, you are. So then I told them, can I choose whatever branch of the service I'd like to be in, and they said yes, it's your privilege; so I told them Marine Corps. That's when, then they gave me ten days, or seven days leave. I could leave there and go back home. And I told them I'd go from here. When I left, I told my wife the same thing. I might just as well go from there, coming back up. So I went to San Diego from there, me and four other men. Three other, no two other, two were Navajos, and myself, so there were three of us went from there to San Diego to the recruiting...

JS: Do you remember the two other Navajo men?

TC: One is Samuel Sole who became a code-talker too; and also Jack Jones.

JS: Mm hmm. Did he also become a code-talker?

TC: He also became a code-talker, so there's three of us in that one platoon. This was in early, I think it was in March, 1943, then.

JS: March of '43.

TC: Yes, we went through our boot training and then we went to Camp Elliot for, first I wanted to be a tank man; that was my,

I wanted, I chose what I...they asked on a questionnaire what I wanted to be, and I said I'd like to be in a tank if I can. Well, I didn't know about this code-talking until they later on told me they had a school for Navajos where there is a code-talking school, where the men which will be used for communications. So I said I'm willing to, and I did. That's when I became acquainted with Mr. Johnston; he was the first person I met when I came to Camp Elliot.

JS: Mr. Johnston was?

TC: Mr. Johnston. There's three of us, three of us boys arrived there at the Camp Elliot and we went into the PX there and a man came out; I guess he knew that we were Navajos and he came up and said, 'Haa-go sha a-shee-keh de-ya?' (To where is the boys walking?) And I looked at him, and I sort of laughed because here is a white man that just sort of come out of the PX and here he questions us. And it wasn't real good Navajo, because 'Haa-go sha a-shee-keh de-ya?' means that you're talking to only one person.

BL: Asking two, but talking to one.

TC: Well, he was talking to three of us, so I answered back we're going in here. I answered back in English, so then later on, then he questioned us again, asked us what we were doing

here, and we told him we were coming here to go to the school that they were having for Navajos. So then he told us that he was the one that, he was...

JS: ...in charge of the school?

TC: The man of the school, yeah. So that's where I got started, and we got started.

JS: Who was the man that trained you in class? Did you go under Mr. Johnston, or would one of the Navajo men train you in class?

TC: I think, I cannot recall, I think Mr. Benally was there.

JS: Mr. Benally, mm-hmm.

TC: And there was another man by the name of Johnny Manuelito, another Navajo. I think those were the two. So that's where the whole thing got started see, training to become a code-talker.

JS: How did you find the training schedule? Was it pretty intensive?

TC: Well, it wasn't bad, at all. It really wasn't too bad, 'cause I didn't have any trouble picking up the code that was set up. In fact, after we moved from there, from Camp Elliot to Camp Pendleton, I was sort of advanced more than several guys were, because I helped train some others that

came in a little later. Me and James Nahkai, Jr., was one of the men that helped. And there were, I think it was James Nahkai, Jr., and myself, and I think there was two others, could be the raider battalion and I don't remember which one it was, wanted to go on maneuver, so they chose, they wanted some code-talkers to go along with them, of course. We, it wasn't too difficult for us because I was accustomed to being a Navajo and living out on the reservation before and I done a lot of walking. So we started out one morning to go on this maneuver with the raider battalion, and of course the raiders were tough and they were being trained and this was their last maneuver before they went, before they were shipped overseas. So they wanted some code talkers to go along with them. So myself, James Nahkai, and I don't remember who the other two or three were, we went on maneuver with them back in the San Mateo Mountains behind Camp Pendelton back up in there. So we had a hard day that day, and we stayed out there the following day, but several raiders had dropped out during the day; and that night up there, they got all the battalion together and their commanding officer that night told them that some of the men were pretty sloppy. They weren't physically in shape and he pointed out that there

were some Navajos that were with them that had kept up with them.

JS: Mm-hmmmm, without their training.

TC: ...without their training, which these other men were doing. Practically every day they had to run and this and that, I know I seen them going around there during the day many times; they had to run from one barracks to another barracks whenever they were going to chow or things like that. So that was pretty good when the man, when the commanding officer told that that, you know, it makes us feel good.

JS: Sure.

TC: So, that I cannot recall just how long the school was, but anyway, we shipped overseas from there.

JS: Which division did you...

TC: I, ah, well, I didn't know which division I was going to when I went with the replacement battalion; we went to New Caledonia. And that was my first stop there at New Caledonia, and that's where they divided. Then they told us that we're going to First Marine Division, from there they shipped us down to

Australia where we went on an Army transport on to Australia, Brisbane. We stayed there until December, in the early, I think about the first week in December. Finally they got us out of there and we went to Ora Bay, New Guinea. From there, from Ora Bay, New Guinea, we went up to Finschhafen, New Guinea. That's where we joined our division. That's where the division was, and the division was preparing for landing in Cape Gloucester, New Britain; that's when we joined.

JS: You joined just before...

TC: ...just before Cape Gloucester.

JS: And which unit in the division did you belong to?

TC: I went to well, I went to the Eleventh Marine Headquarters, the Eleventh Marine Regiment.

JS: Eleventh Marine Headquarters.

TC: Uh huh. I stayed with that, in headquarters with the Eleventh until, well, I sent to Cape Gloucester with them; and we returned no, we didn't return; we went from Cape Gloucester to the Russell Islands, that's a little island by the name of Pavuva which...

JS: Pavuva?

TC: Pavuva; we established a camp there, a rest camp, for...the whole division went back. So after getting the camp established, the streets were put in. We had a...we recuperated there for...I don't really know for how long. Then we had to go through maneuvers again, start training again for the next push. We didn't know until we were on our way again, this time it was Palau. And after that, after Palau, we returned, just a minute, when we were on Palau, I was sent to the Fourth Battalion.

JS: You were sent to the Fourth Battalion?

TC: Fourth Battalion.

JS: Their headquarters?

TC: The headquarters, of Fourth Battalion, Eleventh Regiment, and I returned, when I returned back, when we returned back to the rest camp in Pavuva, I went back to the headquarters there. We did additional training, and some replacements came and then some new code-talkers. Some left from there that were on Guadalcanal; there were some new replacements. But then, of course, we did some additional training, of course, there was some new, like John said, there was some additional, Benally said there was some new...

JS: New words?

TC: ...new words that we need to know, and we had that for, let's see, I don't know how long it was, but I cannot recall just what month it was in 1944. It was during the winter months sometime; we went on maneuvers again here and there, and finally we boarded ship again and on February 23, 1945, because that was my birthday, we left Pavuva. We went on maneuvers here and there in Guadalcanal, well, before that we went to Guadalcanal. This was a maneuver, and finally we didn't know where we were going. I didn't. I guess some of them did, but until we were several days at sea, and finally the word was given that we're going to Okinawa. I think it was a day or two before we landed that this was Okinawa that we were going to. So we landed there on April 1st, 1945, on Easter Sunday, too.

JS: How long were you on Okinawa?

TC: I was on Okinawa from the landing, April 1st to late in October. I was there during when the Japanese surrendered.

JS: You were on Okinawa when the Japanese...

TC: Okinawa.

JS: Okay, Were you ever personally involved in front line battle?

TC: No, I did volunteer one night for security line. They

needed some men on the security line. This was in June; of course it was officially announced that Okinawa was secured from enemy resistance, organized enemy assistance on June 21, and on June 24, no, June 23, it was. They asked for some volunteers for security lines at night. So I was one of the volunteers, some of the other guys from the communications it was, and we went up on the line, and early in the morning, it must have been about four or, it must have been about four o'clock in the morning, a Japanese, we knew it, we seen all right, the security post, a machine gun post about, not too far away, about a hundred feet or so away to our right. We were on a ridge. All through the night, the flares were being sent up, and then the moon was up too. The moon just happened to go over the ridge, and it was dark on our side then. Then again too, the flares stopped coming. Just then to our right, we seen some one silhouetted on the horizon coming our way from the post where the machine gun post was. So the sergeant, I cannot recall his last name, his name was John, from Boston, a real good guy. He was with me. I had a watch later, earlier in the night. Of course, he sort of woke me up, I don't know why I woke up; I was asleep, him and another person was on watch, there

was six of us, all told. So he wanted to challenge him. First this one boy that was sitting in front of me, Nussbaum, his name was, from Tennessee. He was, he didn't want to, because he says that couldn't be one of our men. Then he said it could be, because he's from that area where the machine gun post is. So he said, I want to challenge him, and he was coming, and all of a sudden the head disappeared down, you know, coming down on our side. Then he challenged him; he said who goes there. Just at the same time, the boy in front of me, had a machine gun, a sub-machine gun. I think it was a Thompson, and he opened up, and this man, I could see the arm of this man, come up silhouetted against the horizon. Then I knew then that he had something. He threw the hand grenade right in our midst. And the boy that opened up the machine gun, of course the tracers were coming out, and he knew where to throw the grenade--the potato masher--they call it, grenade. And it landed right, I guess that must have been where it landed, right at his feet.

JS: Yeah, right in between his feet.

TC: Yeah, right in between his feet and he absorbed practically every shell fragment. There's a feel of it; one got me in the face, right below me, and one got me in the arm here and

it spun me around, the concussion did, and I landed over head first back in the other direction; there's a boy, a Navajo boy, too, by the name of Tom Hardy. I expected him here, but he hasn't come around yet. He was over in the other, to my left. He, I think he told me that he landed head first too. I don't think that any other person got any shell fragments. This one boy absorbed every bit of it. His teeth, lips, you'll see some in, you know, pushing his skin out. He's..the worst place that he got it was right in the one leg; this whole kneecap was torn out. So we didn't really know where to, didn't know what to do. We had a phone with us, but that phone wasn't there any more. It was the concussion, I guess, the explosion blew it away. So there was another post to our left, not too far away. So one of the boys crawled over there and told them to call back, send up some more flares; and they did. They told him what happened and we have a man that's seriously hurt. They started throwing up flares again. And they brought up some boys with a stretcher from the sick bay. So they took him on the stretcher and they took me along too. They went back to sick bay, and they had to give him blood plasma and all that. So it was daylight by then, so we, him and I, rode a jeep out to the airstrip along

the coast there; not too far from there. They took us up to the medical hospital, up, further up on the plain. I had medical attention then up there. Of course, they gave him first aid first. They gave me first aid, too. So I didn't stay too long, I only stayed a week, I think, in the hospital. But they shipped them out from there. And we got a letter from him, from Honolulu I think it was, that he was recovering.

JS: Hmmm. Amazing. He didn't lose his leg?

TC: No, he didn't.

JS: That's amazing, a lot of men did with grenades.

TC: A lot men did, uh-huh.

JS: Mines, so forth.

TC: So...

BL: This was on Okinawa?

TC: This was on Okinawa.

JS: After it was secured.

TC: Yes, it was after it was officially secured, announced it was secured. Of course, there was still a lot of fighting going, which was...

JS: In little pockets.

TC: Uh huh. It wasn't organized; it was here and there. So...

JS: Then you said you were still on Okinawa, when you, when the

Japanese surrendered.

TC: Yeah, I was on Okinawa.

JS: Now were you discharged then, or did you go to Japan or China?

TC: No, the point system came out, and you had to have 140 points to get out. They put a list on the bulletin board over at headquarters there. So every one of us ran over there to see if our name was on it. My name was on it. The reason was, which made me, pushed me over some of them that didn't, was that I was married and had a child. I also was wounded, which gave me about 12 points or so. So I made the, I think I just barely made it by 141 points or so. I was real happy about it. And of course they took us from there, those that were eligible to be, to come back to the states for discharge. They took us from there down, not too far, from all the division, you know, the whole division. There wasn't too many of us. I don't think there was 300 of us I saw of the whole division. They put us in a camp right near the beach there. This time we knew that the division was going to China. Of course, I was more happy to return to the states than to go to China and they put us there. We stayed there at least a month and a half before the division left for China. Finally they got a ship, I guess, and I was there during a typhoon, too. We

had a typhoon; and the whole camp area where we were was just covered with water about that deep. There wasn't a dry spot, unless you have to run for the hills. A lot of them did, went up to the hills, spent the night there. The following morning we seen a ship setting on dry land right near us, there.

JS: Blown up on the...

TC: ...blown up on the beach. It was a terrifying experience too.

JS: I'm sure of that, heavy, heavy winds.

TC: Yes, heavy and well, we were warned, and they got some of these big ropes to tie down our tents. We tied them down through middle of that thing that comes through that top there and hooked on to a tree or something that we could tie it to, and drove some stakes. A lot of them were blown down though. A lot of them didn't stay up. But it was a terrifying experience. We finally got out of there, returned to the states and I got my discharge on December 12, 1945, when I went to Los Angeles after I got my discharge. I seen a buddy of mine in Los Angeles; he went to China with the division. The division came back from China then and he was there, in L.A. ready for discharge.

JS: Before you got there. Didn't that make you feel bad?

TC: You're not kidding. He tells me all about what a good time

they had in China. I missed out on it. So I would have liked to go to China, but I didn't.

JS: What did you do after you got out of the Marine Corps

TS: Well, I came back and I didn't do a thing for, I really don't know, for about six months or so. Finally, I decided to go out and look for a job. So I went down to Barstow, California, and I did get me a job there. Of course, they were pretty nice to me because I was an ex-marine. They gave me a job in the warehouse, put me in charge of a bunch of Navajos that were working there. And we went around, I think I would've stayed there because there are a lot of people that are still working there that I know. I could have stayed there and worked at the Marine Corps Depot there. I wanted to bring my family out, my wife and the kid. Of course when I returned my girl was grown pretty, she didn't know me. So I wanted to find a place where I can have them live. I couldn't find any house at all. The housing program had started, and the line, the list was about that long. So finally I just gave up and returned back up here to Chinle. So in 1948 I heard about quite a bit of construction going on in Parker, Arizona. So I went down there. I got me a job. At the same time, they were having what they call colonization; they were moving

some Navajos from here down to Parker, and same with the Hopis. So I got interested in farming; of course I had always had my interest in farming before that. I wanted to try and get land down in Many Farms, but I couldn't. But this time it seemed like I had an opportunity to get one. I put my application in and it didn't take long. I mean, I guess because I was there already. They came around and questioned me and this and that to see if I can do any farming and this and that. I guess, I look like I was qualified. So they didn't take long for me to get a forty acre lot there. I started out with forty acres and then later on, I received another forty acres, and I farm...I did some cotton farming, alfalfa, and then finally...well, at the same time, I got me a job as a maintenance man at a school there. So I was working at the school and then I was also doing some farming. I tried to do some of my farming on the weekends. I did that for three or four years. Then it got to where it was just seven days a week. You know seven days work, so I didn't want that. I though maybe I'd better try to do something better than that and I leased my land out to a farmer. And ever since then I've been leasing the land out. I had a contract which expired last year with one of the land companies. I had

it renewed this past year for another three years, which is okay.

JS: Did they give you a pretty fair deal on it?

TC: I get fifty dollars an acre for it, for leasing my eighty acres out; which is pretty good money as an extra income. Of course I work for salary as a maintenance man.

JS: Are you at the high school there in Parker?

TC: No, I'm at the grade school; it's located down in the valley.

JS: Down in the valley...

TC: I've been there for, this is my eighteenth year. I went to school over there. I have a family, five children.

JS: How old are your children?

TC: My oldest is the one, the girl that I had before I went into the service. She is twenty-nine, I think.

JS: What's her name?

TC: Carolyn.

JS: Carolyn.

TC: She's married.

JS: How many children does she have?

TC: She has one child. She's married to a man that she got to know while they were schoolmates at the University of... Western New Mexico University. She graduated from there,

got her degree in education, the boy that she met there, well, they finally got married. He is an accountant. He's got his degree in accounting.

JS: Is he a Navajo boy?

TC: No, he's Mexican-American. They are now living in Stockton, California.

JS: In Stockton, yes. Uh huh.

TC: He had a hitch in the army, just returned from Viet Nam here in January, completed tour of duty. Then he laid off for about a month or so and then he went back to work. Of course, he had a job in Stockton.

JS: Before he...

TC: At the army depot. He works for the government at the army depot. And he returned and got the same job back and...

JS: It's awful nice to have a job to come back to.

TC: Oh, yeah, he has a pretty good job, and he's satisfied with the money he's getting. Of course my daughter was, of course, when he was gone she was teaching.

JS: She's not working now.

TC: She's not working now. But the boss that he had there before he went into the service at the army depot, went to Virginia. He works in Washington, D. C. now. He took five other men

with him, pulled out, took, them out to Virginia. Before he got discharged, he corresponded with him and said I'd like to have you out there too, but first go back to work and if you would like to I will bring you out there. So they're, I think he's going to.

JS: He's going to maybe go to Virginia or Washington.

TC: Yeah, to Washington. He...maybe...next month they might go. So that is one of my children there. And my next oldest is a boy who did a tour of duty in the army for three years. He had a couple of years at the University of...Northern Arizona University, before he went in the service. After he returned he went back to school. Then he dropped out after one semester again. But then he got himself a pretty good job. He's working with the Arizona Farmers' Commission. He's the rural manpower representative for the Parker area. He's married and his wife is also a graduate of Northern Arizona University. She's a Navajo girl from this area.

JS: How many children do they have?

TC: They don't have any.

JS: They don't have any.

TC: They just got married last November.

JS: How old is your son?

TC: He is twenty-four.

JS: Twenty-four.

TC: Yes, twenty-four. And my next child is a girl. She has a couple years of, maybe a couple of years, maybe a little better, maybe five semesters of college. She went down to Arizona Western for a year and a half and then finished out this year over here at Many Farms at Navajo Community College. I think she's majoring in business.

JS: And how old is she?

TC: She is twenty-two.

JS: Twenty-two.

TC: Uh huh. My next child is a boy. He is twenty, a little over twenty years of age now. He too, has a couple of years of college down at Arizona Western. He studies data processing. Now he is doing the same work in the army and works at the Pentagon in Washington. He stays at Fort Myers there.

JS: Fort Myers, yes, uh huh.

TC: And my youngest is a girl. She too, had a couple of years of college down at Arizona Western. She studied business and she's a bank teller now for the state bank in Parker.

JS: Sounds like quite a family.

TC: Yes.

JS: They've really kept you busy, you can be sure of that.

TC: Yes.

JS: Okay, do you have anything you wanted to add to this tape before we call it quits. I think lunch is on about now, I think the people are starting up the hill, so...

TC: I don't know, what way do you...

JS: Well, are there any other experiences in the Marine Corps? What you, now do you think your experience in the Marine Corps affected you?

TC: Well, I think that it did a lot to me, for me, like seeing the country which I would never had seen it before if it wasn't for it. It gave me an idea just what people in different, especially in the islands would, it's the natives what you see there. They were almost primitive at the time then. I guess things have changed since then. Then again it didn't mix with the outside. Of course, we were accustomed to living on the reservation before we, before that time, you know World War II. Many, I had a very, well, a couple of years or so, spent my time in working at San Francisco there, and that sort of gave me some idea of what is was outside the reservation and again when I got in the Marine Corps and I got to know the white people from different parts of the

country and many of them didn't know what Indians looked like, they were from the East. But this gave me some experience and sort of a challenge, I guess, for what I would do when I returned to the Navajo, or after I get my discharge, when I returned to the reservation maybe. I wanted to, the first thing I wanted to do was, I thought was, I don't want my children, if I only have one child, then if I have any additional children, I thought I'm going to do everything possible for them, see if they can get any education, which I didn't. So they can go out, if they have to leave the reservation, go out and make a living for themselves, and this is what they needed. I think that the Marine Corps sort of gave me that challenge. And I, a lot of people say the war isn't good, which it isn't good, no, it isn't good at all. But then when our government is at war, I think we should do everything we can to help, instead of criticizing the administration or what have you there. I think everybody should try to get behind their government instead of trying to tear it down. That's the way I feel about it. Today, what goes on throughout the country, looking at it on TV, the news, media; it is real bad, I think. But I wish that, I'm not in favor of war. No, I don't think anybody is. They

like to have this thing come to an end. But if our government says we should be in there, then I think everyone should do their part in some way. So I always feel that I'm a patriotic man and I have taken part, and after the war I would like to be patriotic and I like the veterans organization and the American Legion. I am a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I have done a lot of work. I'm even, three of us, I won't say, three of us, three or four, and I have a lot to do with building the VFW post in Parker, Arizona. I've put a lot of work in it, manual labor. From foundation. Like I say, I do maintenance work in a school, and I do a lot of it; I do electrical work, any kind of plumbing. So this is the reason why the man in my post, the VFW post, they look up to me, you know. They know I can do this kind of work, so I did it. I come, if I'm not working on Saturday or Sunday, I come out and do a lot of work in the evenings. So I have been active in that organization for, gee whiz, seventeen years or so. They have even had confidence in me to be their leader, and I have commanded that post two different years. I've always been active and I imagine that the reason why, you see these people, they are business people. They are bank officers and in this area, doctors, some lawyers and they

are members of this post, and there are a lot of business people in the Parker area. And this gives me a feeling that they know that I can do this, which I'm proud of it.

JS: You should be proud of it.

TC: So I commanded the post two different times, I was elected to be their commander two different times. I am proud of it.

JS: You bet, it's a big _____ men around you have that much confidence in you. It's something to be proud of. Well, Mr. Claw we sure do thank you for sitting down with us and we'll send you a copy of the transcript of this if you'd like it.

TC: Fine.

JS: Where do we send it?

TC: Send it to Route 1, Box 74, Parker, Arizona.

JS: Do you remember the zip?

TC: Yeah, 85344.

JS: All right, it'll be a little while before we get them all out, but we'll be glad to send you a transcript of this and we sure thank you for sitting down and talking to us."

Teddy Draper
Window Rock, Arizona

An Interview By

Ernest Bulow

July 10, 1971

Doris Duke Number 1163

The American Indian History Project Supported by Miss Doris Duke

Western History Center, University of Utah

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INTERVIEW SHEET

DATE July 10, 1971PLACE Window Rock, ArizonaInformant's Name Teddy Draper (Ashki Baha)Birth Date April 2, 1923 Birthplace Canyon Del MuertoTribal, Band, or Other Affiliation NavajoFamily Relationships Ashiihi (Salt)To'aheedliinii (Water Flows Together People)Informant's Occupation Navajo Community College-fieldworkerExtended Comments Code talker- w/Jimmy PrestonLanded with Ira Hayes at Iwo JimaTape Recording Made? Yes X NoLanguage of Recording English TranslatorInterviewer's Name Ernest Bulow

(PLEASE USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS FOR EXTENDED INFORMATION)

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Interviewer: Ernie Bulow

Informant: Teddy Draper

Place: Window Rock, Arizona

Date: July 10, 1971

Tape #1

TD: My name is Teddy Draper, and my birthday is April 2, 1923. And I was born and raised in Canyon del Muerto which is east of Chinle, Arizona.

EB: What's that called in Navajo?

TD: Canyon del Muerto? Tse-ghi'h.

EB: Just Canyon?

TD: Just Tse-ghi'h. Del Muerto comes, del Muerto, the word comes from the Spaniards. That word is translated Death, Canyon of Death. Canyon of Death. And the Canyon of Death, back in the eighteen hundreds..early in the eighteen-hundreds, probably, there were a group of Navajos living apart close to Tse-hi-li, up where there is more forest. A lot of trees, more like a jungle towards to the canyon. And about three hundred Navajos were living up in that area together in a band. They have about three chiefs, three leaders, war leaders. One war leader, and the other one was Ho-zho-ji, that means the Holy way of the being led. They lived there. And then, in one morning, early in the eighteen-hundreds, three men went out and looked for horses, to see if they're still around. Some are still around. They went out maybe less than a mile, and one was ahead. Two of them were. They were apart about two-hundred yards, maybe less. This

TD: first man was walking, looking around, and looking for the tracks, and then there's a coyote coming by in the sagebrush. And the Coyote was singing like a human. And this is the song that Coyote was singing:

My sheep, my sheep.....

Before you know it, Coyote's gone and disappeared in a band of trees. So he knows there's something coming up. So he speed himself up to the hill. First he looked at the east and there was a band of Spaniards, probably a whole regiment are coming on. They're coming down. He described it, must be about two miles. The whole Spanish regiment are coming. So all these people living here, the Navajos, close to three hundred people, there are babies, there are mothers, there are children, there are warriors. Everybody were there. And this man took the message back, and he called on the two others, and they went back and they carried the message to these people. There are a lot of Spaniards coming. There's no way we can fight. We don't have any weapons. We just have small weapons, and also bow and arrows. So they start going down the canyon, move down the canyon. There's no trail, but you can go down. We went up there two weeks ago, didn't we?

X: Uh huh.

TD: We took two, a couple of white people out there with a sand buggy. And they [Navajos] start going down. Took all the children, took all

TD: the food they can carry, took everything that they can carry. When they were down, down the cliffs, they were about three-fourths of the way down, the Spaniards came on the top...on the canyon rim. And they start shooting down, and some of them got killed. But a few were trying to back it up. These warriors, Navajo warriors with little small arms. Everybody went down the floor, down to the floor of the canyon, and then they moved on down. On the first point, all the children, all the mothers of the children that are small, they have to take the first trail up on the opposite canyon. They have to take the water. So they went up. The rest of the band went on down the canyon and then they departed again. Some older ones are not too fit to fight. That group separated again. They took another canyon to get on the other side of the canyon and look up. So the main group that are young, they can fight, they have weapons, they went on down the canyon. Oh, they moved down to about six miles... five or six miles, and there's a big cave close to the top of the canyon rim. And they started fortifying themselves on that hill--up the hill. And then they went on, part of them went up on, in that cave. And there were about one-hundred people were there before they came up--Navajo people. I guess when they heard about it already, they moved up in that cave. There's one way up to come to the cave. the cave is about--must be about two-hundred yards, isn't it?

X: Uh huh.

TD: The length of the cave. And going up is about three-fourths of a

TD: mile climb. So they got settled. They waiting for the Spaniards to come. The Spaniards came down the canyon, and they don't say any word. They're just stay silent as they can be. And the Spaniards moved on down the canyon, move down the wash. And they were quiet. But one old man started to jump up. "You damn Spaniards. Come on." Somebody hit him on his head with something from the back and knock him down. But they heard it. They waited down there for a while, below the cave where the people were--where the Navajo people were. Then slowly they turned around. Then they came underneath them. And then they start climbing, all these Spaniards with the weapons. Now the fighting started going--arrows, everything. A lot of Navajos got killed, but a lot of the Navajos came back up to the cave, but the Spaniards can't go up. They can't. They, it's kind of hard and all, so a lot of them got killed there, too. So they went back on down and waited the rest of the evening and the night. When the morning came, some of these Navajos went down and escaped. Not too many, though. And then the next morning, they divided in two groups. One group stayed, and then the other group, the Spaniards, the soldiers, went back up in the canyon. So they waited all day. There's no fighting at all, until close to the evening, about, somewhere about four o'clock, I guess. There's a point right over the cave. Then somebody start firing from the top. So this man, the Spaniard, the band of the Spaniards went up in the canyon,

TD: they found the trail, and then they went around towards north and came back to the top. They start shooting these Navajos, but there's a ridge under the cave, so they went behind that ridge and they can't shoot them. So another way they approach is hitting the cave so it could be ricocheted. So that's the way they killed lot of them, but many of them die right away. They were wounded. And the the Navajos, what they have to do is just wait. Then the other, the other Spaniards started coming up on them from the bottom part. So they get caught right in, right in the cave. They start coming up, but a few of them still are using bow and arrows and what small arms they had. And then the Navajos were out of their, out of their weapons. Probably they just have bows, and no more arrows. So they just lay down and play dead. And the Spaniards came up. They got up in the cave, but these other Navajos were just waiting, until more Spaniards come up to the cave. So they waited. When they come up, and then all they have to do is gather around them and go down with them in the canyon. This is how they call Massacre Cave up there. There's a lot of bones now. You know, the forearm, the blade, and the legs, and then the handmarks on the cave with their hands, blood and they touched the blood and they put their hands on the wall with the blood. It looks fresh. It doesn't rain up there. There's no way it could disappear. And these ricochets, you can see it just like it just happened today ...fresh. They're still there. It's hard to climb up there, though. You have to know how you can climb the cliffs. So that was it, and

TD: many Navajos got killed there. I don't know how many got away, and I don't know how many suffered from it. But there were people from across the canyon looking at them--Navajo people that live right across, top of the canyon. They saw all this for two days. And then about the third day, they reunited their armies--the Spaniards. And then they came out to Chinle, and the Navajos ambushed them. So they got most of them. Very few went back, this direction, south. So they don't know where they come from, but they got what they want now, after they ambushed them. They let a few go. See, the Navajo way of fighting is, you don't kill all of them. That's the Indian way to fight. You just let them go and carry the message there what happened. This is the story you might need, I don't know. Talking about my life, I lived in the canyon for about thirteen years. And I'm trying to go to school when I was about nine years old, but they always told me that, "We don't have room for you. We got enough students, and next year we don't have room for you, too, because we have, those students who were here, their choice is first, then you do."

EB: Hmm.

TD: That was the answer to me. O.K. we select a few more people to come to school, but the school's already filled. "You can't come in. Just come back next year and see if we can put you in school." It's always filled for three years.

EB: That's unusual, because most places, they were trying to force the kids to go to school.

X: They do in Fort Defiance.

EB: Yeah, most places they do.

TD: Well, that was a small school at Chinle. Yeah, very small.

EB: Was that a government school?

TD: Yeah, that was BIA school. So in three years, I tried to get there in school. I was growing at the same time. When I became the age of eleven, I was a pretty good-sized boy, and when I went with beginners, the beginners were small and I was so high--comparing.

EB: You didn't speak English, then?

TD: I didn't speak a word of English until I was eleven years old. So the foundation of my English and the concept is poor, very poor. I tried to educate myself, but I don't know how far I go.

EB: You speak very well.

TD: So I went to school at eleven years old and, I like I told you, I didn't see a white man until I was seven or eight years. There's a trader at the Thunderbird Ranch, Cozy McSpinnis. And my father, not my father, it's my grandmother that took me down there, and she told me that she gets a check every month. So she took me down there to buy me some clothes, and she was right. She got some kind of a paper and she signed it, and got the grocery, and got my clothes. And that was the first time I was familiar with the trading post, too. They

TD: were some people. They chewed tobacco and smoked. It was something new to me.

EB: All those things.

TD: All those things were new to me down there. I guess that I saw white people before, but I don't remember--maybe the age of two or three. But I stayed in the canyon most of my life, and my sister and my brother were going to school. When they go to school, they go back to school in the fall and they come back in the spring. And then I always expect for them to come back in the spring. My mother goes to see them, and my father goes down there to see them, but I always have work to do with the sheep--livestock. Not my own sheep, but there's some other relation, like my aunt and my uncle. They have sheep, too, so I have to put all together and take care. This was my life then. And when I got into school, I was a big fellow. About six months later, they pushed me in the second grade. And then the next year, when I came back, I still too big for this class, so they put me in third-grade. About half of the year they put me in fourth grade again. And then the fourth year, they put me in fifth-grade, and the rest of the year I was graduated with the sixth-grade, and they told me, "You are ready to go to Fort Wingate." So, I was satisfied with it, but--they just pushed me on like that. And I never got in trouble. But I used to fight or defend myself.

EB: What was Fort Wingate like in those days?

TD: When I got there, there were a lot of students. It was a high school. They called it special classes, from 6th grade. Then 7th grade to 8th grade, then 9 to 12. So when I got there, I got a lot of boys that I can go with that are my size now, but I am not able to speak good English yet, but they do. They speak good English and they talk much better, but I kind of hesitate to say the words that I might use it right. If I say something, somebody might sock right in my--sock my nose off. [Laughter]

EB: That's the way I feel about Navajo.

TD: So I shut my mouth a long time till I know what to say and when I have to say it. And then I was a 7th grader. Then an 8th grader. I finished those two years. Seven and Eight I finished. And then no promotion. So there, there's only, those two years I have a good foundation. And then when I became 9th grade, I was pretty good I think in everything there--in each subject. I didn't, I was just beginning to wake up then. When I became 10th grade, the war started in Japan. No, when I was in 9th grade. The war started in '41. So when I became 10th grade, that was it. I was ready to go. But I was going with this first group, like Carl and the others. John Manuelito and John Benally. When I got down to Phoenix, I failed. I passed the primary physical examination at Fort Wingate, but when I got down to Phoenix, "Teddy, you have a hernia. You can not get into the service. You go back and take this paper, and get your hernia

TD: repaired, or we can call down to Phoenix Indian School. You will stay there, and they can send the a parent's consent home. They can sign it and send it back here. That'd be faster that way than going back." It's one of the sergeants or a lieutenant told me that. I guess that's his work there, but he's not an officer. So I went to the Indian school, took the paper and they told me, "Oh, you stay around. You'll help in the kitchen." So I signed the paper and sent it home to Chinle. I waited for one whole month. No answer. So I told them that I'll just go back. And I was working at Fred Wilson's trading post after a while to buy a bus ticket. I did some art work for him. Right after that I made some sketches and painting. He sells it. He make the profit on it, but I was getting only about...

EB: Yeah.

TD: About fifty cents an hour, or something like that, or forty cents an hour. So I get about \$2.40 a day. And then I came back. And I asked my father and my mother, "Did you pick up the mail?" Say, "No. We went down to Chinle. No mail." So I don't know whatever became of that mail. And then---then I told my mother and father that's what I have to do. I have to go to the hospital. And you know how the traditional way of living. So my father says, "If you have defect, if you have a bad physical, why do you want to go to the army? I think it's better for you to stay here and take care of the livestock." So, it kind of hurt my feelings, but I stayed around for

TD: awhile. And then I came to Ganado, Arizona. I talked to Doctor Salisbury about it, and he gave me another paper, said, "You take this home, and let your mother and father sign. The same time I want to go to work too, and I want to go back school, too. I don't know which way to go. I kind of frustrated then. Do I want to stay home, take care of the livestock, go back to school, or go to hospital, or go to work. So I was confused. And then I went back and my mother signed it. My father didn't. Then I came back again, hitchhiked back to Ganado again. And then I went in. I was admitted. So they took care of my hernia and repaired it. And later on, about seven months afterwards, I was home, but I was working for the Park Service. And I worked Park Service, and I worked for Fred Maxwell. He was a district supervisor at the time I was in _____. Bought the livestock. I working for livestock.

EB: The stock reduction?

TD: Uh huh. No, just a little that's afterwards. That was already happened, yeah.

EB: Yeah.

TD: This is just to recount the livestock. And I know which side I am, was just an interpreter, you know. I just interpret what they should do, and what they think about it, and all that. Then I wrote to St. John. Then I make up my mind. I want to go too. See if I want to fight, too. And because of some of these, my great-grandfathers were

TD: good warriors and they went to Fort Sumner and all, just came back to me. So I wrote a letter to St. John to Selective Service Office. I told them I want to kill some Japs before the war was over. So in about two weeks I received the paper that I have to fill out. Then I sent it back. And then the questionnaire came, and it's just like that. About four weeks, almost four weeks, I was called. That was in October. October I was called. And I went to Fort Defiance to get my examination. "Teddy, you're a perfect man. There's nothing wrong with you. Your hernia's all healed up. Your operation went well." So they told me to come back on November the fourth, then go down to Phoenix. So I was sworn in on November 6, 1943. That's how I got into this. And then.....

EB: You already knew about the code talkers, though, right?

TD: Yes, I do. But I don't want to be a code talker. I don't want to be in communication.

EB: Oh, I see.

TD: But I'd like to be in weapons company or some other out in the infantry line. I was thinking about, being in a weapons company you could use a lot of these modern weapons. And then if you do good your rating will be better to get it. This was what I was thinking about, rating, and not PFC Corporal and Sergeant. I was thinking about getting Sergeant right away when I get into combat and learn my maneuver. So when I got down there they told me, "Teddy, this is

TD: where the Navajos go--go through this training. After bootcamp, you go into Camp Pendleton and learn about communication. Learn about how to splice the wires, and how to use the radios, how to use the morse code, how to use the semaphore flags, and you use your own language. So they put me there. I got no choice. So that's the way I got into code talkers. And I got through the training camp in Camp Pendleton. I met Philip Johnston and then Johnny Benally and Ross Haski. And they were there, and I kind of glad, you know. I was in bootcamp for seven weeks. John Manuelito, he was one of the students at Fort Wingate, too, and also James Dixon. And what was that other boy's name---Cleveland, Benjamin Cleveland. They were there, and then some other boys that I don't know. And then I took my training and there's nothing hard about it. It's just how to use the language, how to use the alphabet. It wasn't too hard for me to catch on. Just like today. I forgot all about how to use it, then I tried, and then everybody else qualified, you know. And ---O.K. I was there for eight weeks, eight weeks training, I believe it was. And then I went to a line camp, Tent Camp Two. And at that time, they was just forming the Fifth Marine Division, so I will be one of the babies of the Fifth Marine Division. And then they formed it--we formed it. And then they want the Fifth Marine Division to be just as good fighters as at present time. And they have modern weapons, how to use them. Learn all about all the machine guns that we have.

TD: And I had my PFC after I went through communications school. And then the line camp. And then we formed it, and then after the Fifth Marine Division was formed, we have regiments. But it's not official. So we left again for the Hawaiian Islands. When we got to the Hawaiian Islands, we have to do more work, and then we have to work on sand. And many people said, "We're training, but know where are we going?" Some of them said we're going right straight to Tokyo, and some of them said we're going to the Sahara Desert. [Laughter]

EB: Where did that story start?

TD: Well, I don't know. I believe it, anyway. I don't know where we're going, you see. We were, you know, out in the desert, right in the sand. That's where we've been practicing at Hawaiian Island. Right on the sand, every day. We got tired of being in the sand, so we did some sea training, and it's how to make traps, you know, and then the swimming. Of course, we have to swim a lot for safety. I guess we were the best equipped, and the best Marines that had ever been trained through the Fifth Marine Division. We have a good solid foundation, and now we have to be divided into our permanent positions. We were all together before, and then we formed the regiments and the companies where we're going to be. So all these mostly Navajos that I was with, we're all together, then, "You'll be in this Marine, you'll be in with this company, and there'll be certain Marines that you have to go with." There were three of us in one, in H and S Company,

TD: Headquarter's Company, twenty-eight Marines, and two in First Bat, Second Bat, and Third Bat. So we have to work together. And the others are not code talkers, like Everett Thompson, Frank Toledo, Ned Becenti. They were with Ira Hayes. They were in the weapons company. I wish I could have that. I wish I was with the weapons company. So right away Ned Becenti became a Corporal. And here we're PFCs with the communication.

EB: Now, that happened to most of the code talkers. They stayed a private.

TD: Uh huh. And there'd be no rating. You know, it comes out every month, or often. And we did more training just now than before.

EB: Who were the guys that stayed with you, the other code talkers?

TD: Jimmy Preston. His father is Scott Preston. He was the vice-chairman for a long time here at Window Rock. And then another man was James Cohoe. He was a veteran. He went oversea and came back. He was one of the Marine Raiders, and also

End of Tape #1 and beginning of Tape #2

TD: Another man I was with was James Coe. He was in the Marine Raiders, and also Air Marines. He told me he jumped five times.

EB: Did he come to the---to this reunion?

TD: Reunion? Yes, he did. But the paramarines were abandoned, because it wasn't sufficient. Paramarines or the paratroopers. And then there's another group of, another regiment. I believe it was the

TD: Raider, First Raiders. There were some Navajos in it, too. And those are the men that I went with. So we were in 28th Marines, Headquarter's H and S Headquarter's Battalion. And we don't send messages all the time. If there's a very, very confidential matter, if there's something to be changed out in the front, then we have to --they call on us. When we were practicing, we'd probably be away from the radios about a hundred feet with our rifles, just like any other Marines. Some of the runners will come and get us---Arizona Message. Then we come over and copy the message, or send the message, and go back to our position again--whatever that is in the platoon. Sure, we don't carry radios all the time. We use three hundreds too, that small one. And if there's any message from the Headquarters, from the General or from the Division Commander, we get it and it was confidential. There'd be a Navajo out there, too. Samuel Sandoval was one of the General man--a General code talker.

EB: He stuck with the General, huh?

TD: Uh huh. Then there's another group. I think it was, Samuel Billison is one of the commanders, too--code talkers at Iwo Jima--Samuel Billison.

EB: Why didn't he come to the reunion?

TD: I don't know. Probably he's away somewhere.

EB: Oh, yeah, he is. I know.

TD: Uh huh. I was with him. And I have a picture. It's somewhere in the

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TD: car. And after we finished our training, well, we're the best, I guess. And then we head on to Pearl Harbor. We were ready to move out there, but we delayed for one day. And then we went. We don't know where we're going. Nobody knows. Some say we're going out to Korea. Some say we're going right straight to Tokyo. Some say we're going to Okinawa. So everybody thought it's Okinawa. Nobody talks about Iwo Jima. About the seventh day we were on the ship, they say we're going to invasion on Iwo Jima. And we start studying it. They have a plastic island just like you. And then how are we going to do it. At first we were going to land, it was marked for the landing from the north side. And then they changed it again, from the south side. And we were marked right next to Suribachi, on the green beach--- 28th Marines. Twenty-eighth Marine Division will land here, and then the 4th Marine Division. And then the 3rd Marine Division. So I guess we got the hardest part, I think we were assigned to do that. Yeah, we laughed and talked about it. And when we got to Guam, we spent the night there, out on the beach to get restored and get in more materials. Well, the next day we went on to, there's an island away from the north side of Guam. We met to our invasion there on that island, what we're going to do. Just got four more days that we have to get to Iwo. So we're well-equipped. We know what to do, and they told us, "You're going to take this island in three days. It's only two-and-a-half miles, and four-and-a-half miles long. Two-

TD: and-a-half miles wide; four-and-a-half miles long." Oh, boy, this is going to be---Just take the airstrip. It's simple like that. We'll just take the airstrip and we're there. The airstrip is not so far from the shore. O.K. We've all got our equipment ready, then we start sailing. A day and a night, and a day and then a night. Early in the morning, you could hear bombardment. At the time the troop ships used to go on a zigzag. When we got there early in the morning, guess we were about ten miles off from there, we got our breakfast. We got a big steak. And eggs. We got a big breakfast. But some people don't eat. They got all the breakfast. And then the laughing go down. Every time we move, we know we're approaching that bombardment. Some of them, some Marines took their prayer books out and are sitting there reading, and their eyes, they don't blink their eyes any more, some of these. They just walk and walk to the washroom, to the head and back, without saying anything. Everybody went quiet. So everything went silent--quiet, very quiet, and all you hear is the airplanes, and then bombardment. And I went on the top of the ship and looked from there. And you can just see the bombing--really a bombardment---just bombing and fire and--It just seemed like the island was burning, early in the morning. We got closer then. All the equipment--inspect our equipment, inspect our rations, inspect our---everything had to be inspect. "O.K. lay down below." And we were pretty close. The first wave was just about going in. And the message says--we got a message in Navajo--that they sent some swimmer

TD: early this morning---to the beach. But it was a confidential message, you know. It's got to be Navajo. So we got that out. And, and then another message from the Generals and their staff, the HR, you know who the HRs are, don't you? See, they don't give it to you like tomorrow, like the plan.

EB: Yeah.

TD: They might withdraw and land other times, so--and the hour came, and then the message, and then they give the plan of the day in Navajo, a Navajo word, in Navajo words, too. Not in English, see. And what they're going to do, what they found, all the Navajos on that beach. So we are the guys that gets it first, all these confidential messages. We write them down. We write them down. As soon as we write them down, the Lieutenant will pick it up, and that's the last time we saw it. So we went up on the top. "Man your battle station." We did everything. I think I was all right. I was fit enough to go, to go down and get on the beach. Only three days, that's not too long.

EB: Yeah.

TD: And then we climbed down off the ship into the landing boat. And one boy was ahead. The first landing boat went there, and then the second one, we went on there, but the first landing boat, there's a last guy going down, Anglo kid. And somehow he fell between the ship and the landing boat---press him right there. And they worked on him for a while to bring him back out, and then we went down there. And, you

TD: know, Preston, Jimmy Preston, was the bravest Navajo. He's a brave man. Got courage. It was nothing to him. I was with him. And we went down, and wasn't nothing to him, and then the Ira Hayes group came down right next to us. We were on the right side, and they are on the left side. All those guys who put up the flag was on the left side of that landing boat, the one right there.

EB: The same boat you're in?

TD: Uh huh. See, there was E Company and our company. So they go first, and then we go right next to them. Soon as they go over the line, then we get on. Then we start circling around. Ned Becenti was in the other group. He wasn't in that boat, he was in another boat. And Everett was on another boat, too--Everett Thompson. That's Clare Thompson's brother. And then three of us in the same boat--Coe and Preston and I--line up right here sitting, going round and around. When we hear that firing--took off. We were on the tenth wave. The tenth wave, there's a landing, the first landing went on ashore. It's kind of far, you know. One of my legs went to sleep while I was kind of sitting like this. When the door opened, there's a lot of shelling down, all over. Some of the landing boats got hit, and Marines are in the water and just floating around by the shore. Many of them died already, floating. A lot of them going back on the beach, too. But this shelling is just coming down just like rain, all different types--some small, some big. Artillery, knee mortars. And

TD: then the airplane comes through here and makes smoke, that smoke, what they call a smoke, you know when they call a smoke bomb. But they dropped it right between us and the Suribachi. So there are a lot of machine guns along, all the way around the Suribachi. Probably about fifty feet apart, like that. From the bottom to the top. And when they fire from Suribachi there's shells all over the place. And then that E Company's supposed to go our first, but--- others went, but Ira Hayes was back here. He doesn't want to go. And we told him, "Gee, let's go. We got to get out, too. We're going to get shelled down here." He stands there just playing it cool. Just decided that he--everybody was moving right in the water out there, and he said Sergeant--what was his name? The Sergeant with the moustachio. It was Sergeant Hank. Sergeant Hank. I can't remember his name right now, but I'll remember it. And then Ira Hayes went out. Then we went out. We didn't know he was going to be a hero. We got a--we all run, and--I don't have a radio. I just took that small spool of the telephone wire. You know, those little ones.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: You hitch them on your belt and start running and they make a line. When we hit the beach and my--There's a lot of people, I mean there's a lot of soldiers. I think the design of the sand on the shore was kind of steps, like this. So they can get us from the Suribachi before we climb another hill--before we climb the sand hill. I think

TD: that was a trap that way for us. I ran real fast from the shore to where there's a lot of bomb holes. I make a choice on one of them. Went down and I felt something right back of my seat, like cool metal. I know it's a bomb. [Laughter]

EB: Oh!

TD: It really took a long time to turn around like this, real slow, and then I know that's a bomb, definitely a bomb. And then I run this way, a little bit this way kind of kind of away from Suribachi at a left angle. And something I hunted--just flying shells, all over. You can't see. And just dirt and a kind of a--and I can see my company here, and Sergeant Ray. Then Sergeant Ray hollered to me over here, "Chief, don't get too far. Teddy, don't get too far." There went another hole. And just before he called me Teddy, something hit me. I almost knocked--it almost knocked me down. There's no, there's no pain. And I looked at myself, and you know, we have combat boots up to here, and then the dungaree pants.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: They kind of come up like this and then you tuck them in. There's a big hole in there, right next to my skin.

EB: Wow!

TD: And I, I got that feeling again. O.K. Just in a few minutes, I got those two feelings, and I thought, "I don't know if I'm going to live or not."

EB: Yeah.

TD: And then I looked back down and James was over there and Preston was over there, together, almost together. And I was way ahead of my sarge. I told him, "There's a bomb over there where I landed first." We can't get it. About that, about that much of the gap we have here to use, and this is all Japanese shells or Japanese machine guns. And then the mortars coming down, too. Mortars shelling down. The shells coming down. The shells coming down, all different types. And then we tried to get on the, on the top of the hill. Nothing to get behind. And then there's Marines there, and the Marines over there. I can see them, way back about two hundred yards. And then there were some trenches go out to the north, went back to west, and go back to north again. There's one big trench that comes up like that. And the first people that, the first Marines that landed, they exploded some pill boxes. Oh, boy! They're about that wide, with all the steel in them. And they're, it wasn't too far from the front line. Then it's about, less than two or three yards and there were Marines coming back. "I got hit. I got hit." Blood running on their arms and their legs, and, "Where's the aid station." They have an aid station right on the shore. But they have to lay down, and then after while, later on, then they bring up the stretchers. Aid station was over there and medical care. And we moved up about 150 feet, I guess. Now, we were attacking the airfield. Almost midday.

TD: And we got to get this line, communication line, but we can't do it. We were pinned down. And Sergeant Ray says, "We forgot our clips." You know, the clips go on the terminal strip on the telephone, the main telephone, on the terminal strip. We can't do it without it. He told me---When we came out, when we came out of the landing boat, we got a lot of equipment. Some of this equipment, we have to leave it there at the shore so we can use it later.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: And leave one man there. So we left one man with that equipment. And he told me, "Try to get back and get those clips." Well, I, I kind of hesitate to go down over 150 feet and get those clips. But I said, "Can Preston help me?" Yes, he said. Then I, I, you know. When somebody supports you, then you feel all right.

EB: Yeah.

TD: But if you are all alone, then you---But there are a lot of Marines there, they, they just hold the gun like that and it's all gone. And some of them down, and some of their legs are up. Everybody's running. They don't know which way they're running. This way or this way or this way. Just like there are a lot of people that have gone crazy, you know. But these are Marines. Went back to the beach, and I got those clips, six of them, and took them back. Then we, down, down, got to get down. O.K. In the afternoon, we just have been pinned down most of the day. Then they used that smoke bombs

TD: again, and then we moved. And we supposed to move closer to Suribachi from the north shore, close to, only about a hundred yards from the north shore. To get our communication. Where we can get our position. But we failed again. We didn't get, we didn't get there. We still couldn't move. It's right close to the Japanese, to the front lines. We were there, when we got there we saw some Japs. Say, "There they are, they're, they're, we're fighting with Marines." Right in the trench, everybody start shooting. And we forgot our equipment. We start going for it, you know. It just picked you up there trying to kill that dirty Japs. And I guess what happened was they, they play, you know, they just lay down underneath each other. And they lay down like a dead man, and then when everything's clear, then they start running. These are these Japanese that we killed. And then they called me a killer right away. The group. Teddy the killer, and they went on. In the evening it started raining. Just a little piece, just a little cloud came over and started raining. And we got nothing. We didn't have any poncho. Or probably it's along the way somewhere to the shore. I remember they shelled us when we got together, when we tried to make a station for our communications. They shelled us, and when everybody got shelled down, we picked two men, two men were killed, and five men were wounded. And only the Colonel was still sitting there. Colonel Livingstead. Right where we're going to put our communication center. And then we have to take these guys back.

TD: I remember Whitney was all skinned after we got shelled down. Even his right through here, and you can see all the veins all through there. Kill them, Chief. Kill them, Chief. Kill them. What he telling me. But he died. And then three of them died from being wounded. Two of them got it right away. Two of them lived. So we lost all our men, just one time. But Preston and Coe was there for one night, but Coe got double pneumonia that night. So they took him back to the ship. There's only two of us. Well, then all our men was gone in one day, and then the next day we tried to get some recruits, but we probably have four, three or four of them to replace them. And then the second day. The second day we got more men, but the second day in the morning time on the Suribachi, more people got killed in hand-to-hand fighting. Well, we were sitting right in the foxhole, and the rock extended on my left side towards the east, and there was something on the top of the hill. Everytime I look there, it seems like it's moving. I look at it and then I look at it again. It's still moving. It more like a helmet shape. That's the type was moving around. And I told him, Preston, I see a Bi-naa-a-dahl-ts'o-zi (ones with narrow eyes) up there. I guess it's, it wasn't too far off from us. Not that far, but it was a little farther than that. You know how you see it against the horizon. There really is somebody over there. And I said let's holler Jap. They almost brighten up over it. Say, "Jap." Tum, tum, tum. They go tum, tum. And there's

TD: many of them going down that way and this way and there were already some down here past us. And that guy was sitting this way. The other one was still sleeping, I guess, over there. There's a Jap coming, and they shoot every place. And there's a rock here, and then the other side's kind of this type, this shape, too. That's where we were sitting. So we were almost protected here. Almost like a boulder, type, setting over here. So we got a good position. Then all these Marine guns, machine guns were lined up here and back here. Boy! All over. And that's where we had some hand-to-hand fighting, on the other side. With the rifle. With the bayonet. Everything. Battle goes on for about twenty-five minutes, something like that, that we battle. And then the third day we were up. We didn't get any messages all through there. There's some messages coming but it's in the Morse Code. At the communication center, the intelligence, I don't think we carry it now, because it's out of our hands. It's too close and there's no way to move. And the, the first day we cut off the neck between the Suribachi and the main body of the island. And the third day Ira and his platoon put up the flag. A small one but they blast it out. Snipers. And they went back for another one, the bigger flag. They put it on. That's the one that they took the famous picture of.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: I was, we were just about, close to a hundred feet away from the north

TD: side. And they were, I guess they were afraid to get up that pole again. They just laid down, and the Lieutenant was hollering over there. We can hear, "Ira Hayes, Ira Hayes." And then there's other guys. I know their faces, but I kind of mix up their names, and I can't who they are. There was a lot, what I'm talking now, there's a lot of things happened here and here.

EB: Yeah.

TD: And then we went back down below, and our Sergeant, Ray, says Sergeant see right was the one that told us to go back down. So we went back there and then they told us to send them a message in Navajo that we took--they wrote it--took Suribachi, Mount Suribachi, hour and hour. That meant what time it was. And let it go into headquarters. Then we got another message that we have to move over more. Regroup your platoon and go on the north Side. Then attack; the time. Some zero numbers.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: So we re-formed again. There are a lot of new faces. All they do is get up and get killed. I don't know where they come from. And they told me to try to look after these guys while we're making move, when we attack north part. And we went on. And only one place that I remember. There's A Company on the right side, and then B Company. C Company's on this side. And we're right here. And from the A Company, a man came--a corporal came. He brought the message with

TD: him, to bring a telephone line and connect to A Company. There's terrain, there's all these little canyons that are just the same. They look alike, but that's the Jap country on that side, and there's a lot of bushes here. And there's a kind, the bigger canyon comes out like this. I know it comes out like this, and I know where I am. These big bushes. See, as long as you lay down, down below, you don't know where you are. Sometimes you get lost, unless you get toward the hill. And there's a turkey knot over here, and then the meat grinders back this way. I know where the 4th Marine Division's. And he says they want something, line up to A Company. Well, I said O.K. I took a little spool on my hip, and then the lieutenant, one of the lieutenants, he's a new guy. He said he was a veteran too. So he said, "I'll go along too. So we started the three of us. We got down, crawl on the ground again around, crawl around. And pretty soon I know we're going too much to the left all the time. And I noticed the Marines, with the BAR. If it's BAR that means there's no-man's-land from there. And said this way, this way. So we went on this way. Must be about a good seventy-five yards where I don't want to go. And the Lieutenant says, "I think you're right." And the Corporal says, "I came through here. I came through here." I said that this is--look at the shooting. It's coming from that way, and the shootings coming from that way. We can't go. Why don't you go up there about four or five yards. As soon as he got moving, there's

TD: a lot of shooting coming out. It's the Japanese. He started coming back and he got hit right on the right side there. You could see it. You could see the blood running when he fell. And then we start crawling back, but we moved too far off to the left, and there's a little hill like this, just a little hill, went around it. Then some BAR started shooting at us. From our own company, close to our own company, somewhere. Somewhere from B Company between C Company. And I told the Lieutenant, I think we're too far in. And then at the same time, the Japanese shooting at us. That guy got careless. So we went back around a little bit, but if we get behind this hill, there'll be Japs will slaughter us. And there were some amphibious tracks. You know, when they turn around they build a ridge with the dirt? We crawled right in there, and you could see the

End of Tape #2 and beginning of Tape #3

TD: We're on this, that little hill. So we're behind the little hill. And I can see the BAR, you know, coming right over me, and they go through the earth. You can tell. Go right through the earth or in the dirt.

EB: Hmm.

TD: And we went back into the bush, then. And there's another little hill. Oh, it must have been about four feet. And then there's another little

TD: hill. It's a little bigger. There's a wash going back to our company. Japanese are shooting us, and some Marines are shooting at us. And we went around one hill and there was a Jap sitting there, laying down like this holding his rifle. And I said, "There's a Jap." And he's got a hand grenade.

EB: Hmm.

TD: And put his rifle down and do like this, and holding that grenade.

EB: You mean he was looking for the---

TD: Uh huh.

EB: For the grenade.

TD: And looking at us like this, and he was holding the grenade in his left hand. I took my carbine. Ding, ding, ding. He says, "I think grenade is open." We went back in the, in behind that hill. Bong!

EB: Wow. That was a close call.

TD: So I said, Let's get going. I think the Lieutenant was a good fighter. Very good fighter. He can, an expert, I mean excellent shooter. Here are some Marines right laying down. And if we're together, we went back up there, and we went back and we located our station. Then the message came. "There are Japanese with Marine clothes on, on the other side of the ridge." O.K., who was there? Us.

EB: You were the Japanese?

TD: I was one of the Japanese with Marine clothes on. Boy, that killed me.

EB: Almost!

TD: Yeah. Then the Lieutenant explained it. And I never see that Lieutenant again after that.

EB: Hmm.

TD: I don't know if he got killed, or went on some place with the other company. It might be just somebody came down from Heaven and took me out of there.

EB: Who knows?

TD: So it was quite the, quite an experience. Well, O.K. When we went to communication school, we went through code talker's training, and we got our equipment there, how to use these things, how to use our voice at the combat. When we're overseas, we changed to some other outfits, and some of these code talkers never used codes in their regiment, but some did. And some were in the company, but they're still classified as with the other Marines, and they never used, they never touched their radios or telephones again. So many of them happened to them, many things happened to them. But very few used the code talk, or where it can be useful.

EB: So, you didn't use it much, did you?

TD: I didn't use it much. Just often when we was there---If there's a move, like an attack.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: That's the only time that I used it, and I received the messages. But I think you can use, I could use it more if the, if the land is

TD: wider, more spread, to move around. Like Iwo, you're almost tied down.

EB: Yeah.

TD: You can't move and you can just run over there and tell the intelligence.

EB: You don't have to radio, huh?

TD: You didn't have to send it. And there's something that we did, too, with Preston, at nighttime. You know, when you got to the front, and then you all get co-ordinated. The other company are resting, and then you go for so many hours again. And a lot of Marines got killed, so they told us to go volunteer. "We want volunteers tonight. We want volunteers, Teddy. We want volunteers, Preston. We need some men right in the front, you know." I'm supposed to be specialized in code talking, but---So we volunteered, and I asked for that, too. I was one of the volunteers for the front line for two nights. New record.

EB: Wow. You and Jimmie Preston

TD: Uh huh. And both of those nights our men that went up for volunteers to the front all night long, all of them got killed, except two of them got wounded. So we're the only two that never got it. I was wondering why they got wounded, and would die from the wound. And another thing that we did was too. At nighttime we usually go out and crawl. See, we know our, we know our code. And at nighttime

TD: we come into our company. We usually go out, and Japanese around and we could hear them talk. And we know where they are, too, but we don't tell anybody. We know where a lot of Japs are. We know where they are. Come back at night again. We know which way to turn the next day. Boy, there was a brave man. It seemed like to me, it's just like playing a game--afterward. After you have the experience four or five days. And Preston was a great man. He was in the paramarines, paratroopers, and he died. After he came back, he died. He was still a PFC. He was in the Marine corps longer than I was, but I made Corporal. And then when I was in occupational duty, and I was assigned with the interpreter's aide or whatever they called it, I became a sergeant. And then I was busted down to corporal again before I was discharged.

EB: How did you get busted?

TD: Oh, we went out in Japanese, we went on liberty. And I was supposed to take a confidential message on that Monday to Koyata, and then to Niazaki, and then back to Kogoshin and back to our camp. And on Sunday we went too far out, and then it started raining. Rains all night, rains all morning, and that's when we get back at the camp to take that message. Get on the plane, get to Koyata, take the message and pick up some more messages and take it to the other place and come back. There I am, I'm still out on liberty. I told him it was raining. And I don't know, I didn't like one of the sergeants.

TD: And I don't know, I didn't like the look of the staff sergeant that they have over there, and also the lieutenant. Those three guys, you know, they, I don't know. There might be some discrimination.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: And they wanted the headman, lieutenant colonel. This is what he did, and the message didn't go out. He's supposed to take the message, supposed to be on the plane. And I told him, "It was raining and I was late." And then they, I guess I said something that might hurt them, and they hurt me too, and back and forth, and finally went to the old man. These two guards took me down there, and they told me. "You did this?" And, "Yes, and I know what happened, but it's---" O.K., they're going to strip me. That was a sad story anyway.

EB: Yeah.

TD: We're the messenger most of the time on Japan, but most of the time we go out on the mountains. It was after I learned a little bit of Japanese, and interpret. Take the Marines out there on my occupational duty, where the weapons are, where there are more weapons, where are they hidden. And they should go back to the village instead of living in the cave in the mountains. So these are the things that I explained to them on my occupational duty. After Iwo, I went back to Hawaii, and then we went on to Sasebo in Japan, Kyushu Island. And I was in Japan for nine months, and then I returned to the United States. Became a civilian. Nothing to do. No job. No place to go.

TD: Well, where are those that my father told me to take care of them. Most of them are gone. So just lived here, tried to find a job. No way. The railroad--tried to get the railroad. It was all filled. And I have a pretty hard time that May, June, July, August, September, October, November. Then in November, a guy came from Holbrook, "I think I can put you on the railroad as an interpreter at Barstow, California," he said. And I said, "Can I take my wife?" "Yes." So we drove down to Holbrook. And he said, "I'm going to give you a train ticket and your wife. Go down to, go down to Barstow. If you don't want that job, go to the Marine Corps Supply Depot, but I'll buy you the ticket to work on the railroad. You rather report at the roadmaster. If you don't want to go to work for the railroad company, don't report there. Try to find another job." So I was kind of lucky. I went to Barstow, California and then I went to the Marine Corps Depot. Oh, you're the man we want. You know, we got lot of people here. I want you to go back on the reservation and recruit some more people to work here at the supply depot. So I came back again, and I came back to Chinle. And I got somebody's truck over there. And then they sent a ten-wheeler up to Holbrook, and then I took those men down there. Twenty of them. Twenty-one. And we got on the truck and went down to Barstow. And I was a leader. General help is what they called it. So these people were working for me. All these renovating the clothes, these clothes, the blankets,

TD: the shoes they used overseas. They bring it back in and renovate it, and separate them. That's what we were doing. And then about a month later, I had a about forty people working for me.

EB: Wow.

TD: And then my boss, so I interpret. I didn't get much money, though. I was only getting a dollar and thirty-two cents an hour, but that was big money in those days.

EB: Yeah, then that would have been a lot.

TD: Uh huh. And then I finally make up my mind. Oh, heck, I want to go back to school. So I did. In 1947, I left my job and I put my brother on, Nelson Draper, and he took my job, and I went back to school in Oklahoma. And he's still there, too. He's just getting, he's retiring in a few more years.

EB: Wow.

TD: And I went back to school for two years at Oklahoma, Sherlock, Oklahoma. And then I heard about a job at Bushnell, Utah, which is now Brigham City, which now is Intermountain Indian School.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: So, when I got there I was a truck driver, and then a house painter, and then they put me in the instructional aide in the classroom. I was an instructional aide for twelve and a half years.

EB: Wow!

TD: Oh, yeah, I worked with many professional teachers.

EB: Living in Brigham City all this time? You were living in Brigham City all this time?

TD: Yeah, I was living in Brigham City for twelve and a half years. I worked with all type of professional teachers. Some good, some not. Some are real good. And that's how I learned how to use the, how to make a presentation in the classroom and a lesson plan. And by doing all the material, the pattern, teaching. And then I took some courses from, I wasn't graduated yet, then. So I went to school with the high school people at Brigham City, Box Elder High. I didn't graduate until 1961, '61 from high school.

EB: That's the same year I graduated. [Laughter]

TD: I was pretty old.

EB: Yeah.

TD: I had a good time with them. I graduated in '61, May 20th. And then I took some college courses in Logan, and then from Weber, and then from ASU. At that time it was ASU. Now it's NAU. And then I took some, lot of these college courses in the summertime to keep my work. And then I--the new way, the new way, the new way of, tried to find new ideas, new methods. That's what I'm after, to teach these, my own people, is what I'm interested in.

EB: Yeah.

TD: I don't want to leave them. I want to bring them up, too. This is what I'm doing. Because it's hard to live out there behind the

TD: hills. And O.K., all the people in new---using a new modern-equipped house. They don't have to chop wood, they don't have to haul wood, they don't have to haul water. Say, "Look at those people over there. They're forgot, being forgotten." We want to try to get involved, too. So these, most of my work now is teach them, teach them to live the right way, the happy way. What I went through, I learned by experience. There's a lot of different ways that people can get hurt, even like the high school people. O.K., they didn't learn their culture, and their way of living, the Navajos. They just go to school, go to school. They finish. They go into the other world, out of the reservation. O.K., there's a competition. They have to come back, then, if they don't know how to live on the reservation, O.K., they fall right between it. They don't know which way to go. There's no choice. Then they get into a lot of problems and drinking--alcoholic. So we got problems here on the Navajo reservation.

EB: It's getting better, though.

TD: Uh huh. Well, that's what we want. We want to try to get moving some way, and live in a decent way. These are the, the approach we have and my job now is what they call Adult Basic Education, Adult Basic Education Experimental Program. That's where I am. Funded by HEW, and sponsored by Navajo Community College. And I know a lot of the, I know a lot of stories about the way of life and the traditions and the culture of the Navajo. And I also, I

TD: probably know some of the Anglo side, too.

EB: Yeah.

TD: So this is the work I'm doing. And I have 56 students at Chinle.

These are by volunteers. They come.

EB: They're older people?

TD: Yeah. They're all volunteers. Yeah. They volunteer to come. They come all the time. I have class there on Thursday, and on Tuesday half a day and Thursday all day. And at Noslini, Monday half the day, and sometimes I have a whole day on Wednesday. So I have four days teaching, and Friday is a preparation day, also staff meeting. So I have to go back to the college on Friday. Then I'll be at the college on Friday. And they like it. They enjoy it. So, it's something that will help them right now, it's something they want tomorrow. They're going to sell wool tomorrow. They have to learn about how to, they have to learn about the pounds, cents.

EB: Yeah.

TD: And then how much money they're going to receive. All this. There's other things they have to learn. They have to learn how to read the price in the store, and they have to learn about the food, the nutrition. And then they have to learn about the government, the state, the national, and the Navajo tribe, so when they vote, they know what to do. And they have to learn how to write their names. When they write their names, they're eligible to vote. So we've registered about 200

TD: people now who can vote, from Chinle and Noslini. I had an assistant. His name is Wilson Gorman. He's one of the veterans who went to Korea. So two of us are working with the Chinle group and Noslini group. This is something new that I'm talking about.

EB: It sounds great. It really does.

TD: So what they have to know, what they want to know is what we teach them. If they want to know about if they want to know about driving education, how to read the signs, how to pass the examination, things like that they have to do. So they're not going to get involved with the legal or the law. These are the type we're teaching. How do they get--If they need glasses, if they need a hearing aid how to get their body, and first aid, and also the hazards around their houses. And also the sanitation. So they learn, they try. And then we have a food program. This commodity food we call it. We get a girl or we get a lady or somebody comes in demonstrates it. And we use all materials from other organization. They can come in and talk to them, too. What they do, what the new jobs are coming up, how they can find their way to get something. Or where can they go if they're sick. All this type of thing. How can they get a fund. Where the funds are available for their family use, or where can they go to get help. Social security. So all these things we have to explain, a lot of things.

EB: That's good.

TD: This is my job now, but I'm proud of doing this for my people now.

TD: And also I'm on the, I was selected and they voted and I'm on that planning board from Chinle. I'm the vice-president. And then I'm the vice-president to Outdoor Drama. We won't have that for about four more years yet. Those girls you saw? My daughter, Geneva? She was one of the narrators.

EB: Uh huh.

TD: And see, we train them now. And we're going to get the site for that, and we're going to get the, try to get some money to start. But see, these are the plans that we're doing. So Chinle is my place that I'm thinking about trying to get the----and so forth. The tribal recreation, we have the site picked, and we want some more industrial to bring in to Chinle so people will have a job. And then after they'll be secure.

EB: Did you ever hear about the plays they did at Wingate--the Coyote plays?

TD: No.

EB: Based on the Navajo Coyote stories? They did them at Chinle Boarding School, winter before last. That was my project.

TD: Oh, good.

EB: And the kids really liked them.

TD: So these are the type, the work I'm doing now, at the present time. And I like it.

EB: It sounds very good.

TD: I forgot all about code talkers. [Laughter]

EB: That's o.k.