

NAVAHO means PEOPLE



McCOMBE • VOGT • KLUCKHOHN

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Navaho (Navaho) National  
College for the Arts



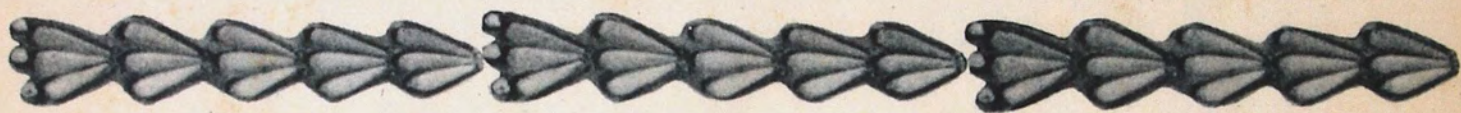
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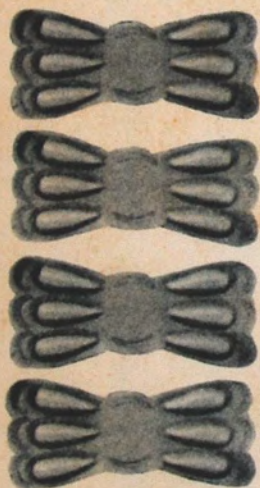




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Sumati Kumar (Hatterji)  
(Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A.,  
26 January 1952)

# PEOPLE



photographs by

LEONARD McCOMBE

text by

EVON Z. VOGT and CLYDE KLUCKHOHN

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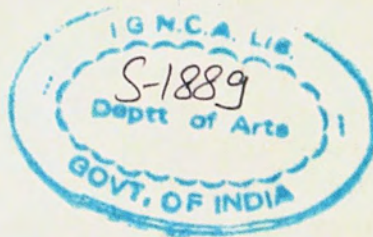
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# PREFACE

This is, I think, the first time the Navaho have been photographed in this manner — to show, without embellishment, the real way of life of a people who live quietly in an old tradition in the midst of the most modern society in the world. I hope this collection of pictures will contribute to a general understanding of Navaho life and will be of specific value to the student of Navaho culture.

L. McC.

The photographs in this book are their own superb justification because of their artistic and human excellence. For the anthropologist, they are especially noteworthy because they give detailed pictorial coverage of certain ceremonials, of burial, and of sweat baths, in a manner never before achieved. The pictures on these subjects constitute exceedingly important ethnographic documents. The pictures illustrating contemporary human, educational, and health problems also amount to a brilliant photographic essay. It is perhaps true that the difficulties of adjustment to the white man's world are overemphasized at the expense of satisfactions remaining from the aboriginal culture and the genuine rewards brought to the Navaho from our modern world. Nevertheless, the drama of this story at the moment is mainly that of clash and maladjustment, and this is what the pictures appropriately reflect.

The pictures in this book do not cover every aspect of Navaho life. Mr. McCombe was in the Navaho country during the winter and hence was unable to take pictures of farming, for example. Also, silversmithing and weaving are given only slight attention. This, we feel, is as it should be, since many excellent pictures of these activities have been published and are generally familiar.

E. Z. V.

C. K.





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to the editors of *Life* for their cooperation in the preparation of the photographs for publication. I am also indebted to Milton Orshefsky, Father Silver Mayer, and Dr. C. G. Salsbury for their invaluable assistance during my visit in Navaho country. — L. McC.

The text of this book has had the benefit of detailed reading and criticism from Allan Harper, General Superintendent of the Navaho Area (United States Indian Service); Walter Olson, Associate General Superintendent; and Robert Young, Specialist in the Navaho language. We are deeply indebted to them for their expert advice and the many suggestions we have incorporated. We also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Robert Rapoport in the selection of photographs and preparation of the book. Some of our material has been drawn from an earlier publication, *The Navaho* (Harvard University Press, 1948), by Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton. — E. Z. V.; C. K.



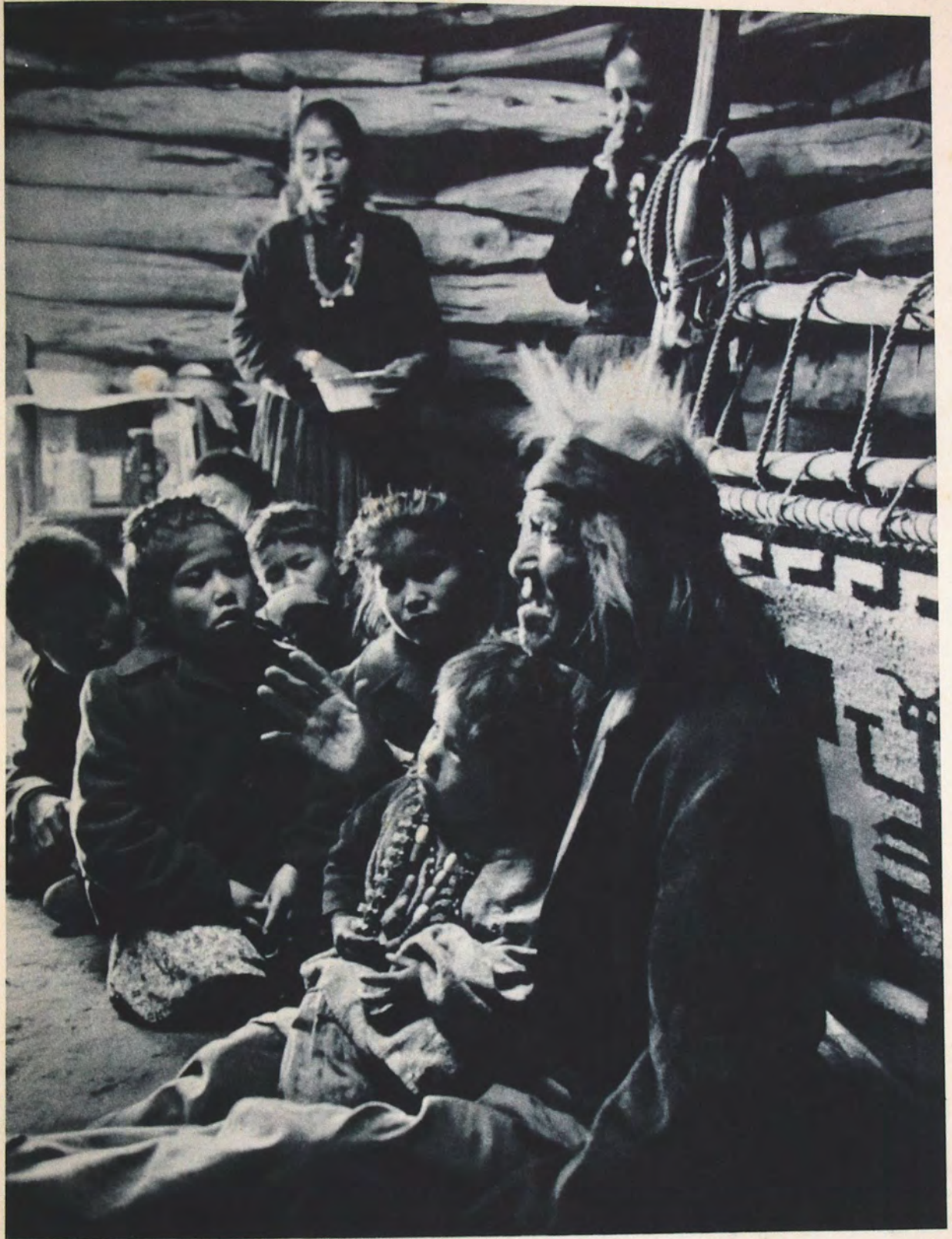


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Seated close to the evening fire in his hogan, Old Man Gray Mountain, 91, tells his grandchildren legends about the early days of the Navaho people. At the right, a partially completed Navaho rug is still on the loom.





# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NAVAHO

The high and rugged plateau country of northwestern New Mexico and northeastern Arizona is the home of the Navaho — America's largest Indian tribe and major Indian problem. The idea of the "vanishing Indian" is certainly a myth in the case of the Navaho, for in 1868 there were no more than 15,000. Today the tribe numbers at least 68,000. The Navahos have a further claim to the interest and attention of the general public in that nowhere else in the United States is there a minority group of this size whose ways of life differ so markedly from our culture and whose problems of adjustment to our society are so great.

This photographic essay on the Navaho is a pictorial case study of the possibilities and limitations of bringing a small nonliterate society into satisfactory adjustment with Western industrialized culture in such a way that the human values held by the minority group will not be utterly destroyed and that the individuals involved will not be left in a state of personal disorganization. In a word, this is a study of the central problems of President Truman's Point IV program on a small canvas. Here within our boundaries is an opportunity for the American people to grapple with one of the crucial problems of our age and to win some of the insights, skills, and knowledge needed to carry out the Point IV program in underdeveloped areas of the world.

To understand the "Navaho problem" one must understand Navaho culture: the ways of life which these people have developed over centuries of experience in their natural and human environment in the American Southwest. A glimpse of Navaho daily life immediately gives one some understanding of their culture and especially a sense of difference of the ways the Navaho do things as compared to the ways in which other Americans live from day to day. Changes in recent years have been so rapid and have gone on at such different rates in different parts of the Navaho country that no series of brief statements will hold exactly for all Navahos. In general, we have in mind the older pattern, but the one to which the majority of the Navahos still conform. Our description applies only in part to tribesmen greatly influenced by government or mission schools, and even less to those living close to the railroad or the transcontinental highway.

The prevailing dress of Navaho men and boys is a colorful variation of the cowboy costume — blue denim pants, bright shirts and scarves, and large felt hats. The women's long, fluted, calico skirts and bright calico or velveteen blouses reflect Spanish influence as well as the fashions worn by the wives of American Army officers in the 1860's. In public, women wear Pendleton blankets draped over the shoulders. The hairdress of women and of conservative, long-haired men is an adaptation of hair styles from the Pueblo Indians. Both long-haired and short-haired men often wear a scarf tied across the forehead.

Navaho families live in "hogans" made of logs and mud. The hogan is a hexagonal structure with no windows, only a door which faces east and a smoke-hole in the center of the roof. The people sleep on sheepskins with their feet to the fire and their heads to the walls — like the spokes of a wheel. The family



typically rises at dawn. The men go out to round up the horses; the children take the sheep and goats out to graze in the cool of the morning; and the women take out the ashes and start preparing a breakfast of bread, coffee, and sometimes mutton. When the men return with the horses, breakfast is served the family on the floor of the hogan.

After breakfast the men work in the fields or haul wood and water. The children take the sheep and goats out to graze again, while the women remain at home to care for the babies, weave rugs, and attend to general household tasks, such as washing dishes or sweeping out the hogan. A noon meal may be prepared but often is omitted altogether.

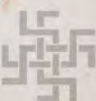
If the family is relatively well-off, a sheep or goat may be butchered during the day to provide meat. After the throat is cut, the animal is skinned and quartered and the meat hung up in a tree out of reach of the dogs. Occasionally there is a wagon or horseback trip to the distant trading post — an event which is looked forward to by all the members of the family and which often takes all day. At the trading post the family purchases such staples as flour, sugar, coffee, and lard and sometimes luxuries such as candy, soda pop, and canned tomatoes. There is always an exchange of news and gossip with the trader and other Navahos before the family starts home.

About once a week the men of the household take sweat baths in a sweat house located in the woods at some distance from the hogan. This sweat house is conical in shape and constructed of upright poles covered with earth. Like the hogan, the door faces east. Rocks are heated in a fire and placed inside the sweat house. The men then disrobe and enter the house, first shouting an invitation to the Holy People (Navaho divinities) to join in the bath. Sacred songs are sung during the bath and afterwards the men rest and talk as they dry and cool off by putting sand on their bodies. In winter they roll in the snow. Though formerly groups of women used to take sweat baths, the sweat house is today an exclusively male institution in most areas. It seems to represent, among other things, a sanctuary from female scolding and interference.

In the evening another meal is served, and this is often followed by the father or grandfather giving a talk, both educational and ethical in nature, to the children. By an hour or two after sundown the family has retired for the night, unless there are visitors, who might stay to gossip until quite late.

The whole pace of Navaho daily life is leisurely and relaxed most of the time. The daily and annual round of life is geared not to the clock and calendar (as in our own society) but to the passage of the natural seasons and the position of the sun during the day. This relaxed and informal atmosphere is one of the most difficult aspects of Navaho life for white people to understand.

It should be emphasized that this description of Navaho daily life and the characterizations of Navaho culture in succeeding sections of the text are highly generalized and not necessarily true with respect to any given individual or family within the tribe. The description also emphasizes the more conservative patterns which prevail on the Reservation rather than to the features of off-Reservation life which are treated near the end of the book.

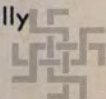




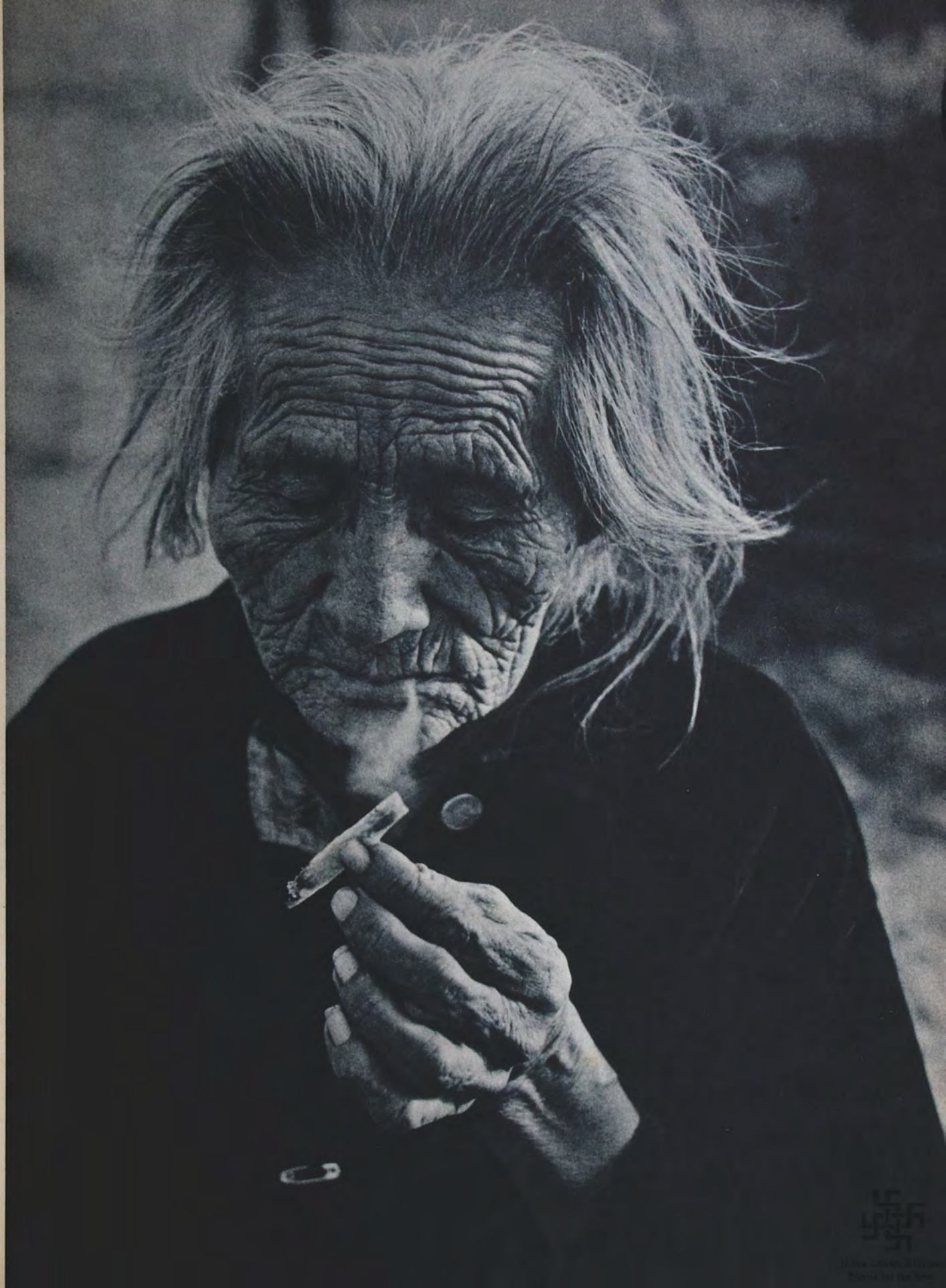


Toward sundown the Yellowsalt family finishes the outdoor chores and starts the fire for the evening meal. To the right are the wagon used for hauling wood and making trips to the trading post and the water barrel in which the family hauls water for household use. In the distance is Navaho Mountain, one of The People's sacred peaks.

Old Lady Gray Mountain, the respected grandmother of the Yellowsalt family, smokes a "roll your own" cigarette. Navahos typically hold cigarettes between the thumb and index finger.







STYLING  
BY  
JULIA JONES

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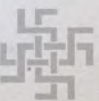


Baby views the world from the cradle board, which is used during the first year of the Navaho child's life. Although many white missionaries and teachers condemn the use of the cradle board as "backward and uncivilized," the device is an excellent adaptation to the circumstances of Navaho life.

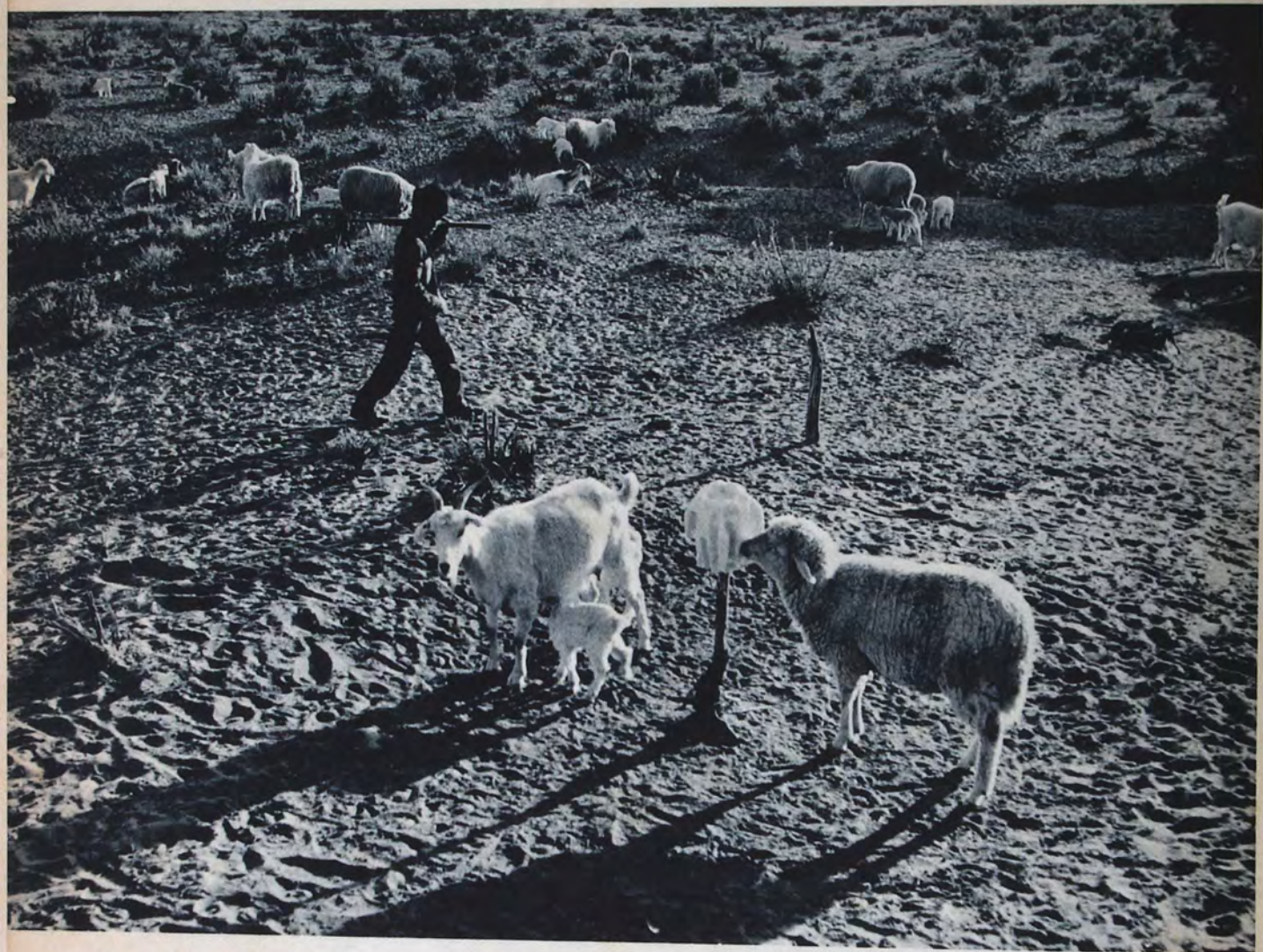




Sheep are taken out to graze in the early morning. Sheepherding is usually done by the younger children, and this small girl has full responsibility for a herd of fifty sheep. Although Navaho dogs are not always trained to help much with the sheep, they provide company during long and lonesome hours.







Small boys often combine rabbit-hunting with herding, thereby adding to the family food supply. Most Navaho herds include a number of goats, which fare well on sparse vegetation. One of the sheep is licking a cake of rock salt.

A Navaho mother prepares bread and coffee for the family breakfast. Bread is made of wheat flour, baking powder, lard, and salt, all purchased at the trading post. Formed into round flat loaves (resembling the Mexican wheat-flour tortilla) by slapping the dough back and forth between the hands, the bread is cooked in dutch ovens, on a metal grill, or sometimes fried in deep fat. Here the mother shapes one loaf as another bakes on a crude grill.

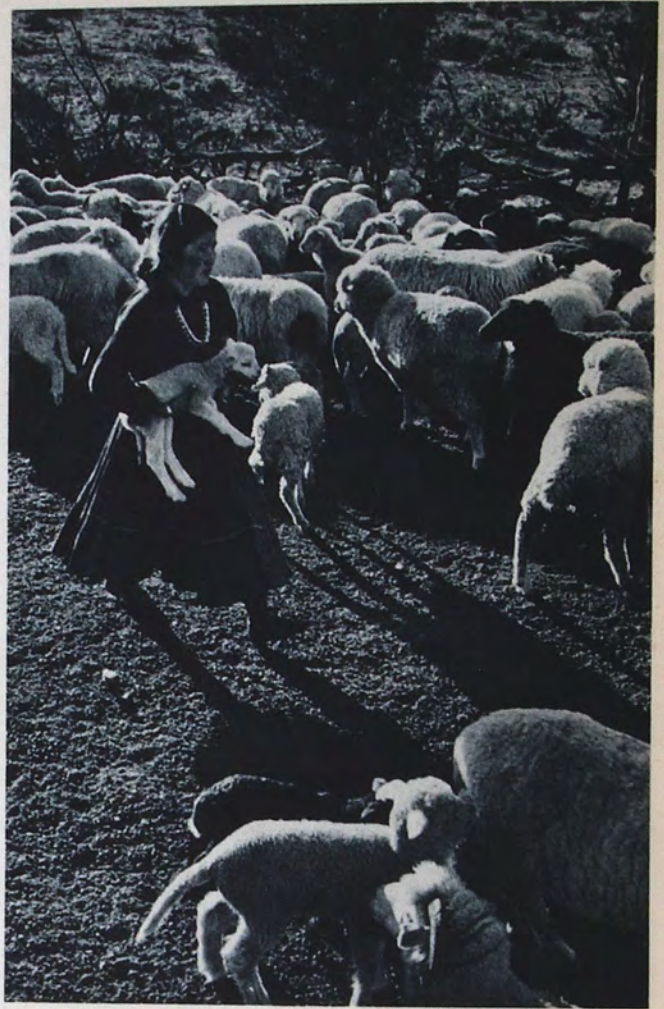








Few hogans have table and chairs; adults as well as children eat seated on the dirt floor. Children usually drink the weak coffee — one of the safer drinks from a sanitary viewpoint which could be offered them.



Sheep are the traditional basis of the Navaho family's livelihood, although many families today have few or no sheep. The sheep are corraled at night in small brush enclosures like the one pictured here.





This Navaho man with long hair, scarf tied across the forehead, and turquoise earrings typifies the appearance of the older, more conservative men.







Hauling wood with team and wagon is the work of the men. In the winter wood must be provided for heating as well as cooking.

Navahos raise spring crops of lambs. In the early summer the sheep are sheared, and part of the wool is used for weaving blankets, part sold to the traders for the outside market.









Navaho women weave rugs from wool which they have carded and spun by hand. Most Navaho rugs are sold to the traders for the outside market, and The People purchase Pendleton blankets to wear themselves. Some of their more utilitarian Navaho blankets with simple horizontal designs they keep to use as saddle blankets.

Hauling water is a big chore in Navaho country since few families have wells near their hogans. The water is usually carried by hand in buckets or hauled in barrels with a team and wagon from water holes or small lakes which are filled with the winter snows or summer rains. If the snows are heavy enough, ample household water can be supplied in winter by melting snow in buckets on the fire.





Women usually do the butchering in Navaho country. The throat is cut, then the sheep is hung up to be bled and skinned. All the blood is caught in a pan and later used in making a kind of sausage.



The entrails are cleaned out and used as food. A prosperous family will slaughter a sheep or goat nearly every week, but poorer people get much less meat.











Many older Navaho women are forceful personalities — have a great deal to say about the management of family affairs.

A goat's head is singed before being cooked in the embers. Nothing that is edible is thrown away.







A Navaho girl wears a velveteen blouse trimmed with numerous silver buttons.





A Navaho girl brushes her sister's hair with an old-style grass hair-brush. Navaho women care for their hair by washing it in hot suds made from the roots of the broad-leaf yucca plant and then brushing it frequently.





A Navaho family travels to the trading post in a team and wagon, starting soon after sunrise and returning by sundown.





The trading post is a center for the exchange of news and gossip with friends and relatives. Navahos usually spend hours loafing and talking at the post.





The larger trading posts sell everything from wagons to safety pins. Trading takes place item by item, with long pauses between purchases for discussion and reflection about the next purchase.





The trader estimates the value of a rug and discusses the price with the weaver.



Old Lady Gray Mountain has sold a sheep pelt and is carefully considering the purchases she will make.



The rug transaction has been completed and the weaver is purchasing candy for the family.





Two younger men at the trading post exchange the latest word about wagework on the railroad and discuss the possibility of going off to work for the rest of the winter.



A shy little girl wears a Pendleton blanket, part of the costume of most Navaho girls and women in public.

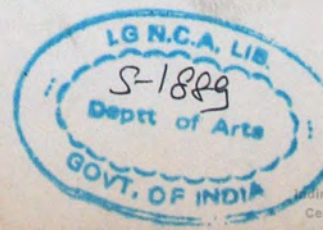




A group of younger men loaf and visit near one of the family hogans.



Others enjoy an afternoon card game on the sunny side of the hogan.







A game of marbles is explained by the small boy at center to his brother and sister. He attends school and learned the game there.





Navaho men prepare to take a sweat bath. Heated rocks are taken out of the fire and are placed inside the sweat house. The door is covered with a blanket to keep in the heat.



Three or four men enter the sweat house and sit on juniper bark opposite the heated rocks. The door is covered again with the blanket, and the men sing sacred songs about the fire, rocks, and sweat house while they enjoy the bath. Most conservative Navaho men take a sweat bath about once a week.



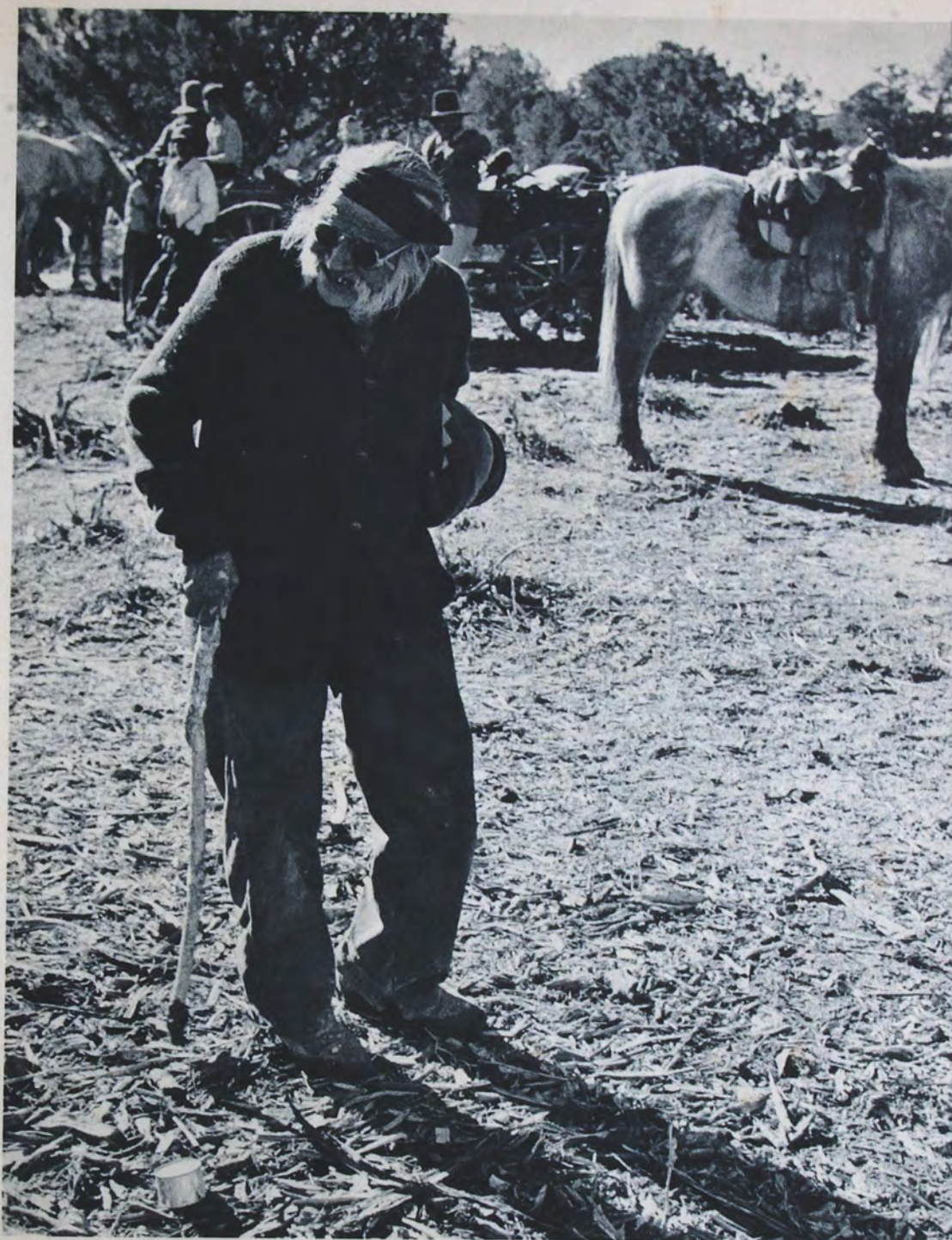


After the bath, the men relax in the sun and put sand on their bodies to dry off the sweat.



The tempo of Navaho life is leisurely and relaxed most of the time.





Old people remember the "Long Walk" and imprisonment at Fort Sumner (1864-1868).





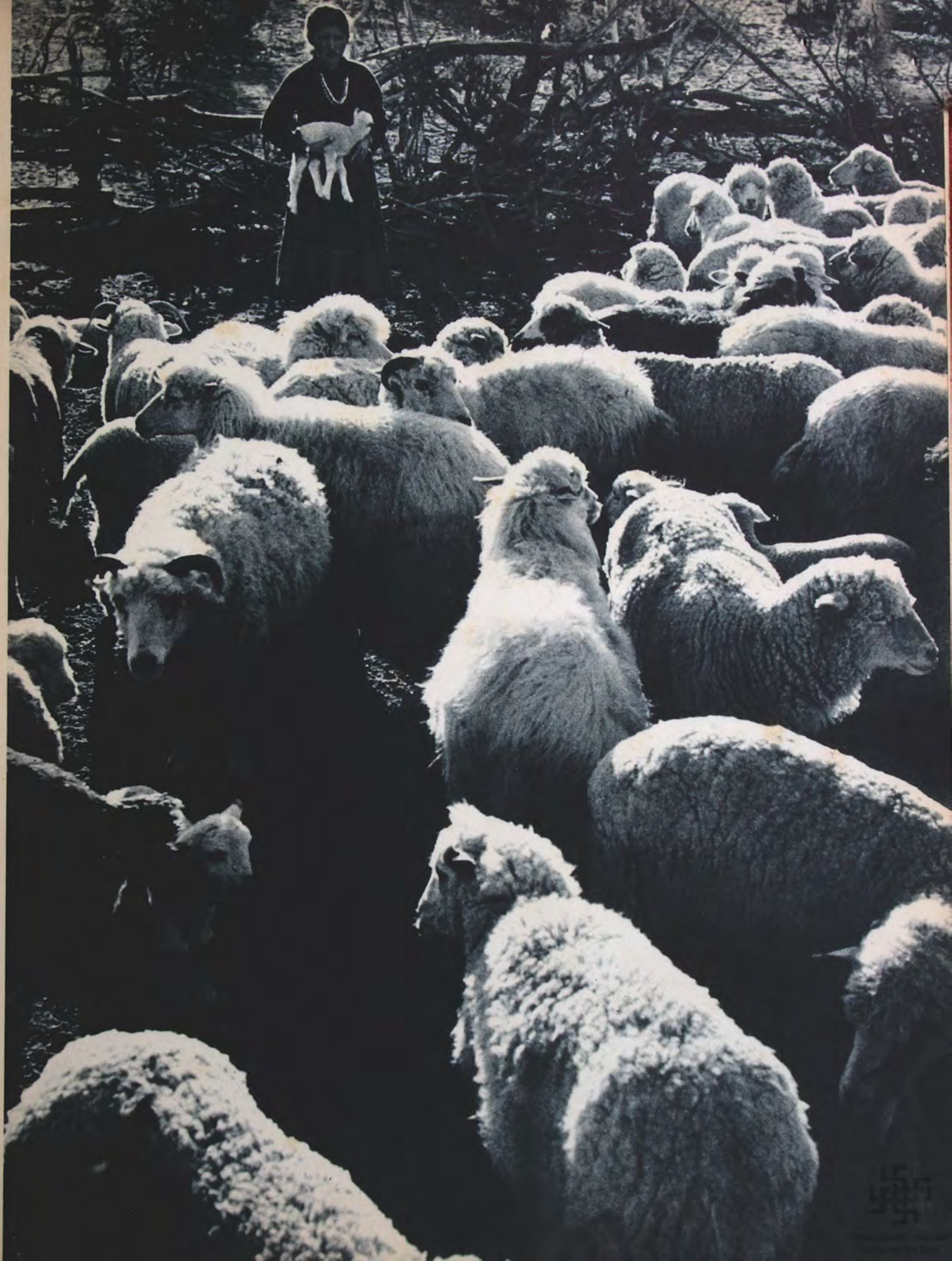
Father Berard Haile, O.F.M., is generally regarded as the foremost authority on Navaho culture. He was the first to work out a system for writing Navaho — a language which linguists regard as one of the most difficult for outsiders to learn. Approaching eighty, he continues to produce authoritative reports on the Navaho, for which he uses a special typewriter.

The Navaho country is a land of pinyon and juniper with vistas of sandstone canyons and mesas in distance.

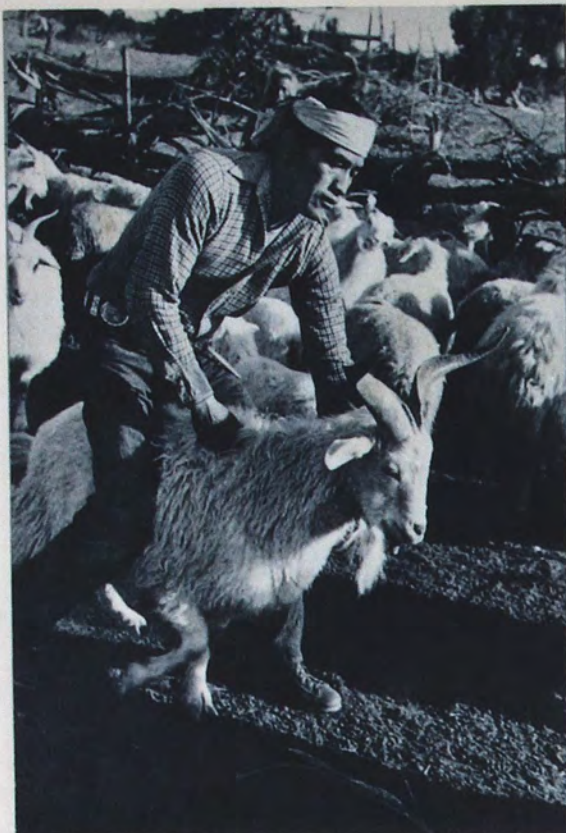


(Opposite page) Lambing season is one of the busy times in the annual round of life.









Goats are valued for their milk and their intelligence in the flock. Mohair is also sold.



A small shepherd watches new-born lambs protected in a special enclosure.



The trader is also the banker. These concho belts and bracelets have been pawned for cash.





A well-known trader, Roman Hubbell, confers with a Navaho family.



A woman brushes and ties up her husband's long hair. Nowadays most young Navaho men wear their hair short.







Children play with puppies and goats. Household animals often take the place of toys.



Small children often go without trousers when they are being toilet trained.



Navaho babies almost always accompany their mothers on journeys.



Permissiveness is a keynote of Navaho child training. A small boy smokes while his father looks on.



Navahos believe disease is the result of violation of a taboo or of attack by one of the Holy People, a ghost, or a witch. "Hand-trembling" is the most often used type of divination to discover the exact cause of illness and to prescribe the proper ceremonial cure. Here the hand-trembler (left) is performing the rite over a patient. The way in which the hand shakes provides the information sought. The hand-trembler traced this patient's trouble to contact with a tree that had been struck by lightning and prescribed a "Holy Way" ceremonial as a cure. This ceremonial is shown on the following pages.







The five-night Holy Way ceremonial takes place as soon as the family of the patient can arrange for the services of a Singer. Here the patient and her granddaughter disrobe and prepare to enter the ceremonial hogan.





The Singer sits at the back of the ceremonial hogan with his bundle of ritual paraphernalia.



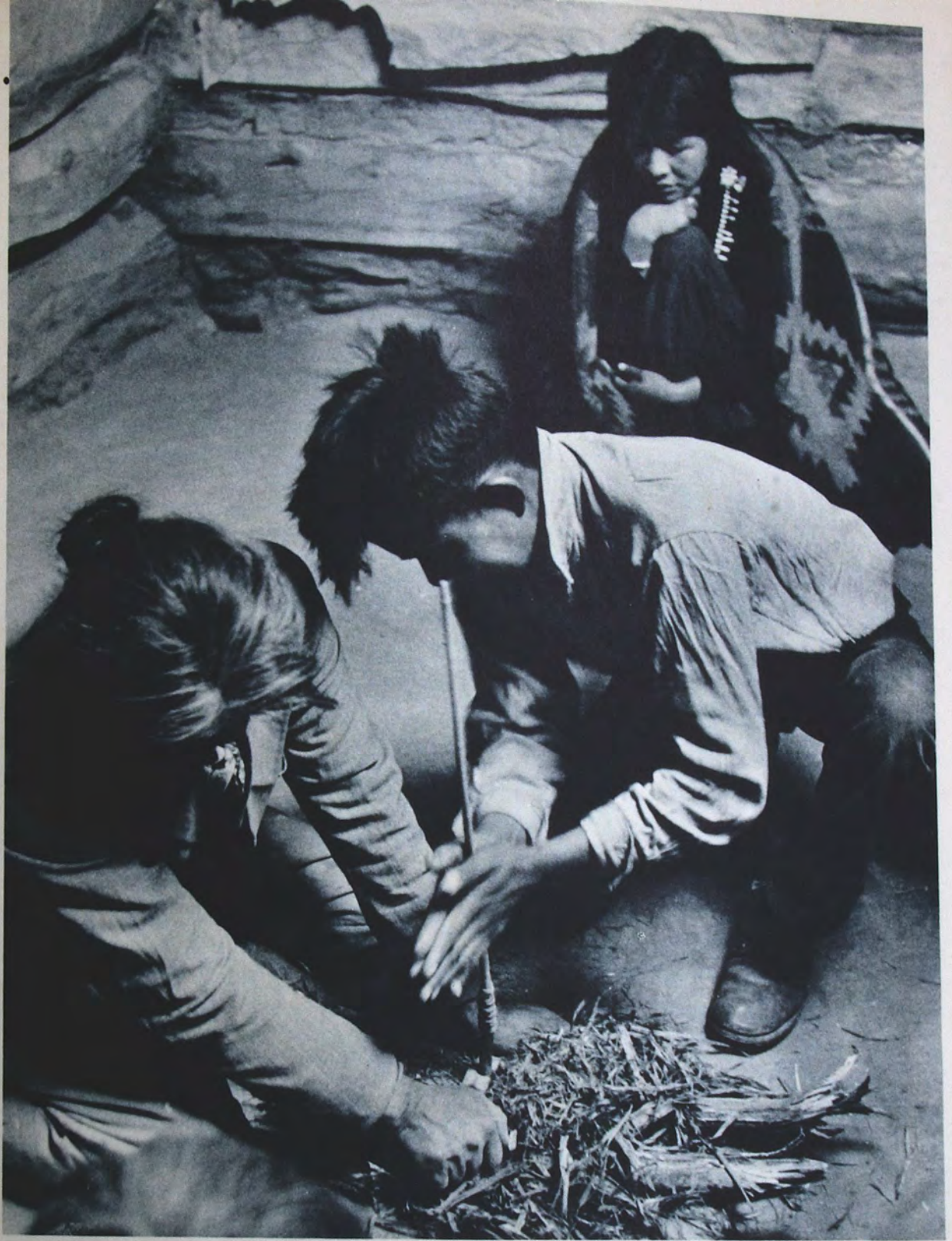


Each day a "sandpainting" representing an episode in the legend justifying the chant is constructed on the floor of the hogan under the Singer's direction.

The patient sits on the completed sandpainting and the treatment begins. The Singer gives the patient an infusion of herbs to drink. He touches the feet of a figure in the painting and then the patient's feet, saying, "May her feet be well. Her feet restore unto her." In turn he presses his hands upon the knees, hands, shoulders, breast, back, and head of the figure and the patient, praying for their restoration. Then the painting is destroyed and the sand is carried out. The relatives of the patient may walk in ceremonial fashion across the painting, thus like the sick woman coming into close communion with the Holy People.







Another ritual is initiated for Lucy, a teen-age girl (sitting in background), by the lighting of the fire using the ancient Navaho friction fire-drill. The ritual pictured in the following series is the "sweat and emetic" ceremony which occurs during a five-night "sing" known as "Female Shooting Evil Way." This Shooting Way ceremonial is directed specifically against the malevolent activities of Navaho "ghosts" who have the power to disrupt an individual's harmonious relationships and create serious illness.







The fire is being fanned by Lucy's uncle while the grandfather and other relatives look on. Lucy's mother died of tuberculosis in 1946. Two years later Lucy began to complain of loss of appetite, insomnia, and of "bad dreams" in which the image of her mother appeared. Her family summoned a hand-trembler who discovered that she was being "bothered" by the ghost of her mother and prescribed Female Shooting Evil Way as the cure.



Lucy's uncle and grandfather dig a shallow trench with an axe and bury a wild rose hoop around the fire in the ceremonial hogan.





Men strip to the breechcloth, women to the waist, in preparation for the ritual. Here Lucy sits quietly on a sheepskin outside the hogan while the fire is being built up inside.

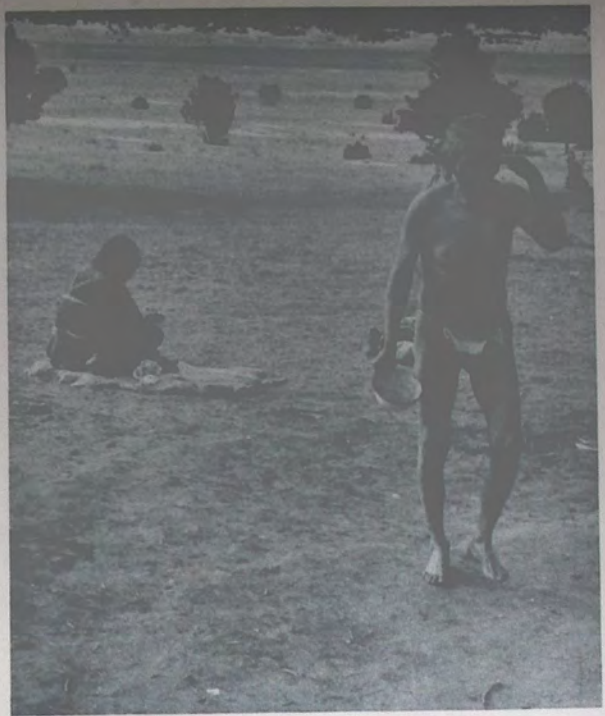






Two small cousins of the patient are also waiting to enter the ceremonial hogan.





The grandfather in his breechcloth walks past Lucy carrying a pan to hold the emetic.



Lucy's girl cousins enter the hogan.







While the Singer chants, the fire burns brightly in the small hogan. All participants begin to sweat profusely.





Lucy's female relatives sit on the north side of the hogan.



Her male relatives sit on the south side of the hogan.







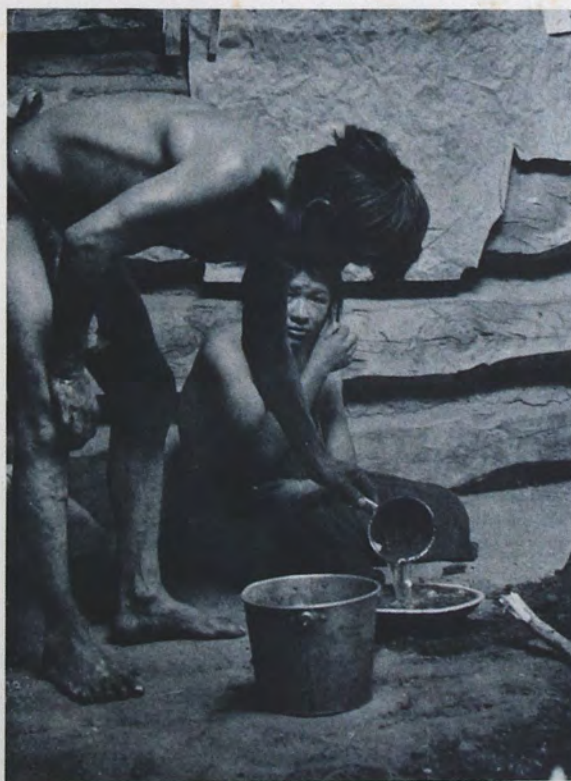
The patient washes in the emetic made of various wild plants mixed in hot water. Her body is covered with particles of the herbs.



Members of the family apply the emetic to their bodies. An older girl (at left) helps bathe a young boy. The fire is too hot for the girl at right who has turned her face toward the wall.



After bathing their bodies in the emetic, the participants drink the rest of the mixture. It must be drunk without touching the container. The Navahos say, "If you pick up the pan, the evil will jump back into your throat."



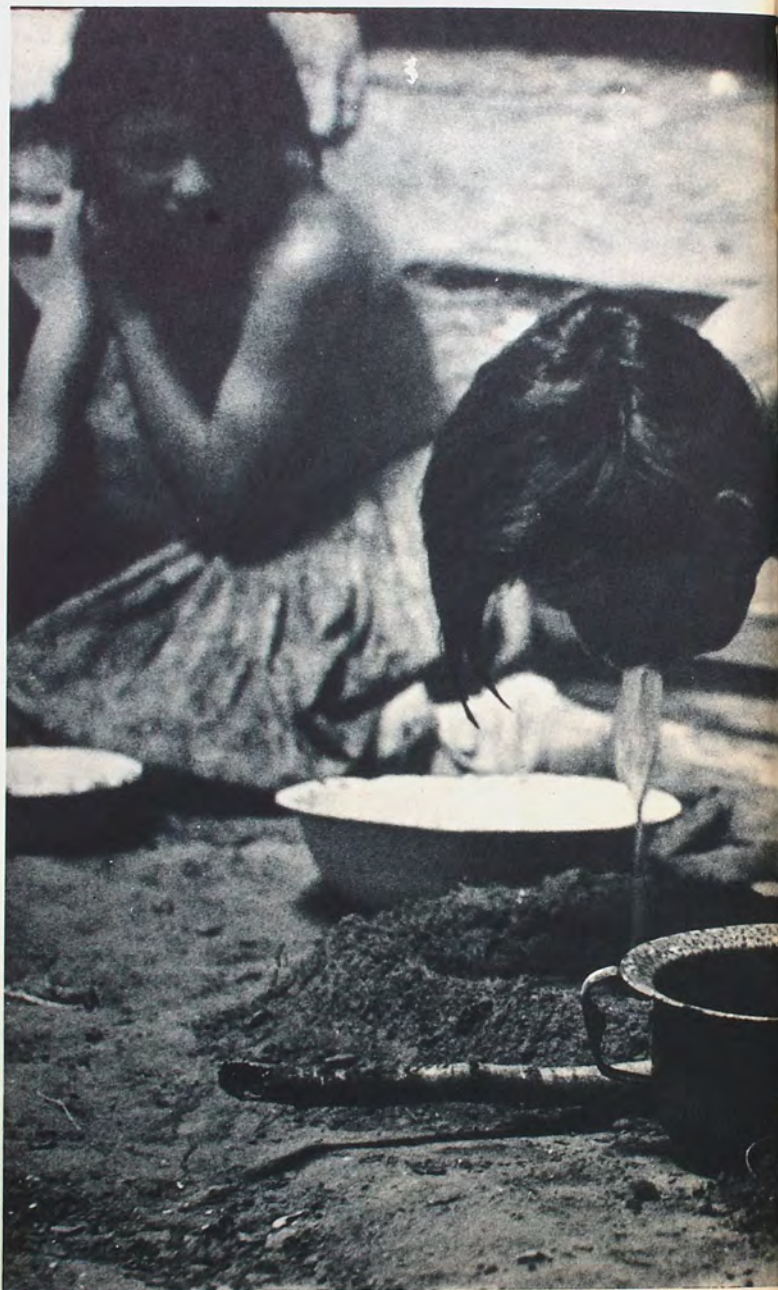
The Singer adds more hot water to the emetic in preparation for the ritual vomiting. Lucy looks anxious.



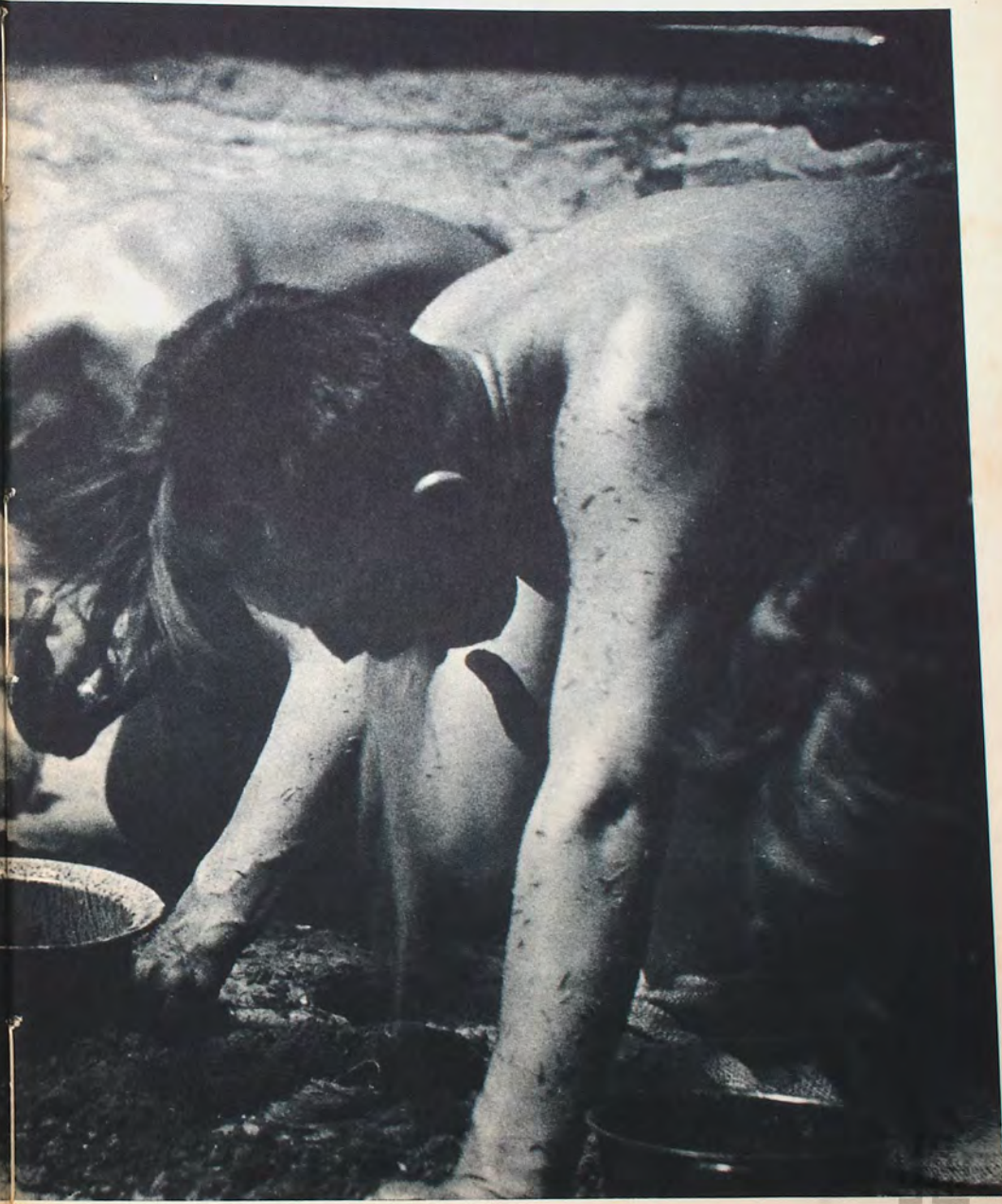
The patient uses an eagle feather to induce vomiting.







Two of the men vomiting vigorously into piles of dirt. Vomiting is accompanied by loud groans. The function of the sweating and vomiting is to purify the bodies, not only of the patient but also of the members of her family, and to eliminate the evil influence of the "ghost." The sweating rids the evil from the outside of the body; the vomiting purges the evil from the inside.

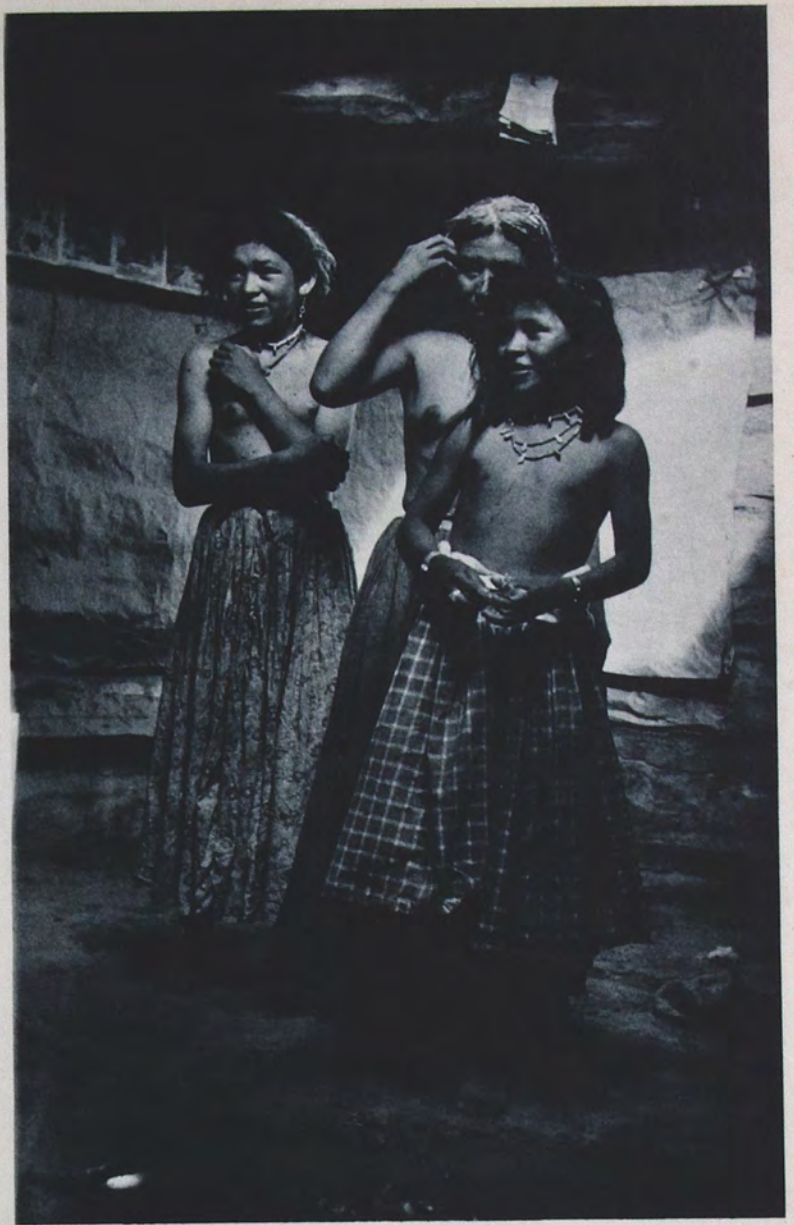






The grandfather relaxes after participating in vomiting ritual.





The aunt and two cousins of the patient prepare to leave the hogan at the end of the vomiting ritual.





Each participant carries a bag of dirt containing the vomit through the snow to the north of the hogan to dispose of the evil by throwing the dirt away.





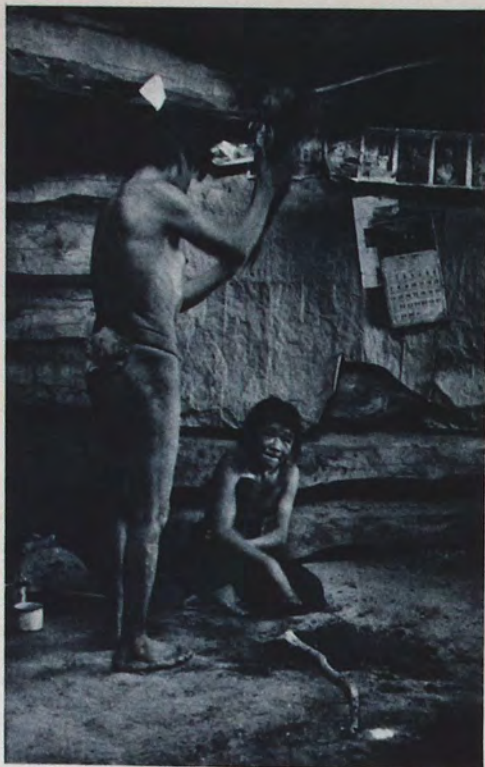
The containers and other objects are removed from the hogan.



Using an eagle-feather wand, the Singer sprinkles the patients with "chant lotion" containing fragrant herbs. Note ceremonial paraphernalia in background.





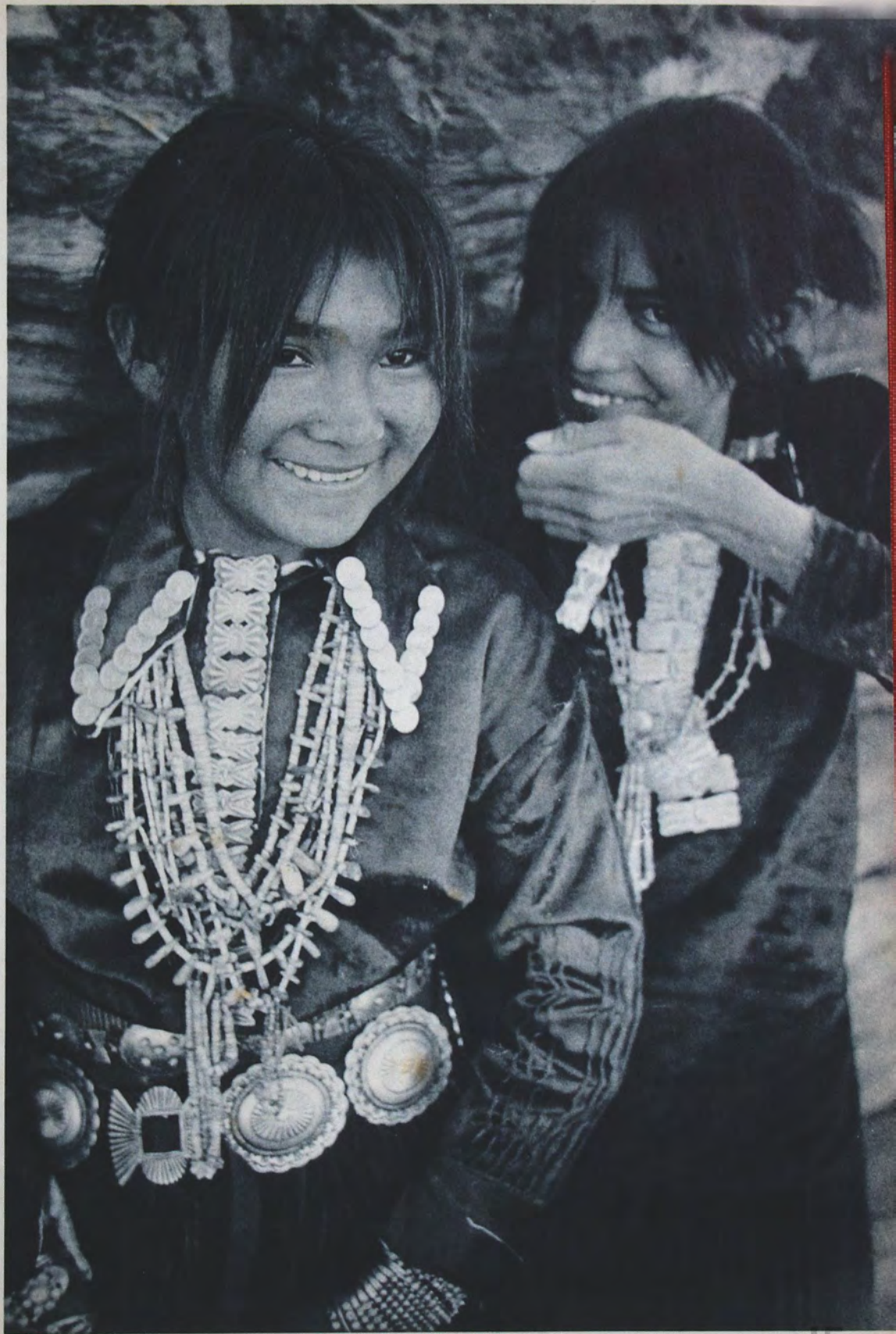


The Singer chants as he sprinkles the patient with chant lotion.

Singer asperges the other participants. This cleans and cools everything: the pokers, the fire, and the people. The sweat and emetic ritual is repeated on each of the following three mornings of the ceremonial. Other ceremonies are performed in the afternoon and evenings. On the final night a large crowd gathers to help the Singer invoke the power of Navaho deities as he sings until dawn. Two weeks later Lucy's father reported that the ghost had been driven away and that Lucy was fully recovered.







When a Navaho girl first menstruates, a four-night puberty rite is held for her. With Navahos, to become a woman is something to be proud of and to announce to the whole community. The girl at left has reached puberty and will go through the ceremonial.





Each day there is a "molding" ceremony. The girl lies on a blanket in front of the hogan door. An older woman who has been chosen as a kind of model kneads the girl's body and straightens her hair. This is to make her shapely and beautiful, like Changing Woman — the principal Navaho deity.





During the first three days a quantity of corn is ground by the girl and her relatives, using the ancient type of grinding stones.







On the evening of the fourth day the ground corn is mixed into a batter by the adult women.



The corn batter is placed in a corn-husk-lined pit oven outside the hogan. A fire is built on top and the corn cake bakes all night while the ceremonial practitioner leads an all-night "sing."





Each day at dawn the girl races to the east. Others may run with her but they may not pass her, lest they grow old before she does. After the race on the last day, the ceremonial ends when the girl distributes the corn cake to the Singer and other participants. She is now considered ready for marriage.

Next morning the corn cake is uncovered.





Continual erosion of land by wind and weather and years of overgrazing — forming large arroyos as shown here — further decreases acreage for use by the growing population of The People.







When rain does fall, roads on the Reservation become virtually impassable.



Even the horses labor to pull a wagon through the deep mud. Note mud-caked wheels.



A group of Navaho families are waiting outside a mission to receive relief supplies. Since the early 1930's the government has known that the Reservation could not support The People. But it was only in the winter of 1947-48 that the American people "discovered" the plight of the Navahos. Supplies of food and clothing poured into the Reservation in response to heart-rending reports published by the nation's press.







An old woman looks through the relief supply of dresses to select clothing for her grandchildren.





Mother and daughter wait for the family wagon to take them home with their relief supplies.





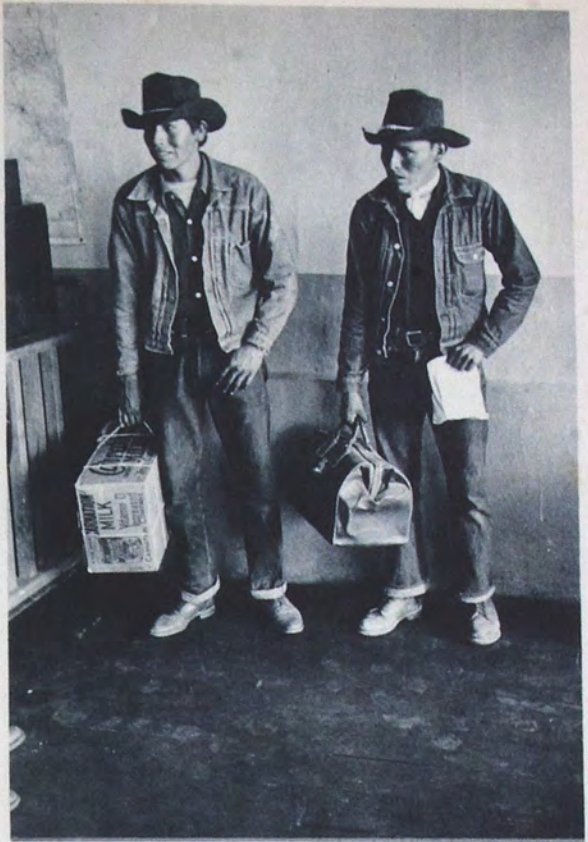


A small boy helps carry his family's relief food and clothing.



By sundown the supplies have been distributed and families leave for home. Empty cartons which held food and clothing litter the mission grounds.





Increasing numbers of Navahos are seeking wage-work jobs on the railroad to relieve the economic pressures at home. Here two young men are waiting for transportation in the bus station in Gallup.



Navaho railroad workers live in box cars and ride to work each morning on hand cars.







As railroad hands, Navahos are hard workers.



Time out for a drink of water.

A Navaho crew lays track across the Arizona desert.



Indra Gandhi National  
Centre for the Arts









A railroad worker pauses for a rest during a busy day.





Navaho children learn to salute the flag at day school at the foot of Navaho Mountain.





Daily showers are one of the new experiences Navaho children meet at school, where great stress is placed upon cleanliness.

School children practice a "lesson" in nose blowing with a white teacher.









Drying hands and faces on individual towels. Navaho garb for these small girls is permitted in this day school.

School girls sweep the walk as part of their daily chores.













White-style foods are unappetizing at first to many Navaho children.

Forks and knives present difficulties for beginners in school.





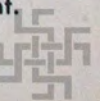


School activities include singing lessons and playing in the band.





This school girl, with a comic book in her pocket, might be taken for a white American student.







Older girls are given instruction in good grooming and the use of cosmetics.



Bashful young teen-agers learn to dance at school.



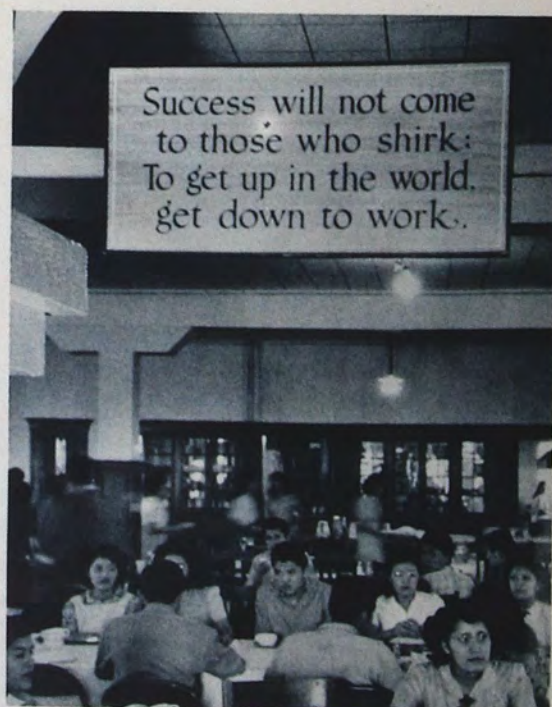


Many of the day school dormitories are overcrowded. In many places the children go to and from school every day by bus; in others they live in these simple dormitories at the day school through the week and return home for Saturdays and Sundays. There are still at least 8,000 to 9,000 Navaho children for whom no school facilities exist.





Conflict in values: a traditional Navaho wagon passes on emphatic slogan at entrance to a Protestant mission school.



Another sign in the mission school dining hall expresses the American values of "hard work" and "success."





A Catholic priest delivers a sermon to a young Navaho congregation.



Older students sing in the choir at mission school.





Nice study in contrasting life-ways: a Navaho woman comfortably sips tea at a mission.



Young Navahos familiarize themselves with formal dinner etiquette at mission school.





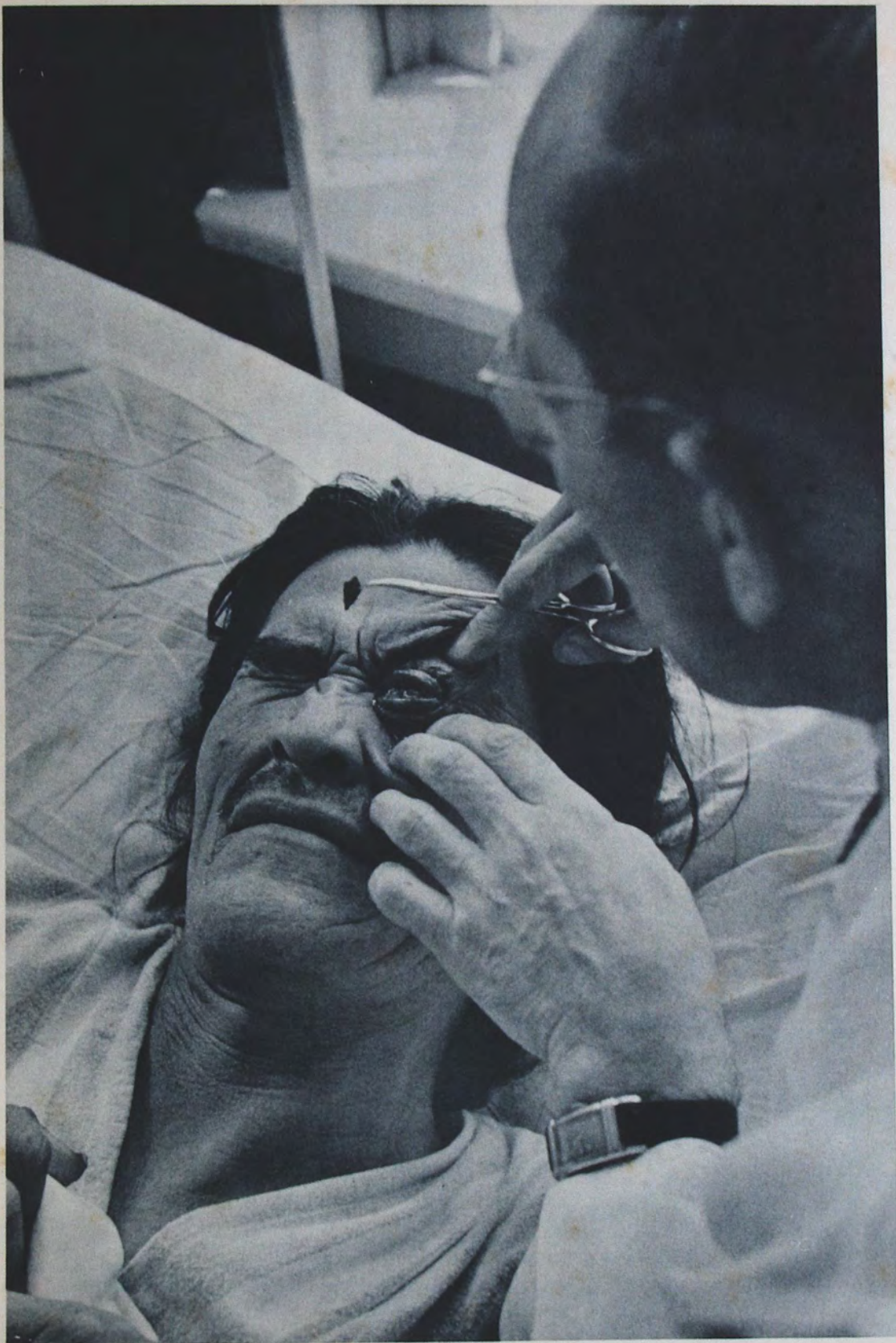
Learning to pray to the white man's God at a mission Sunday school.





A Navaho who, three months before, walked into a branch of a tree and got a splinter in his eye arrives at hospital on Reservation for treatment. He had to travel seventy-five miles to reach this hospital.





A white doctor removes the piece of wood from the man's eye.





The man remains in the hospital for further treatment. Navahos realize that white doctors have superior skills for treating such accidents.



The same patient combs his long hair.



A small girl eats a meal on her hospital bed.





Two Navaho children with sores on their bodies. Impetigo and other skin infections are common.





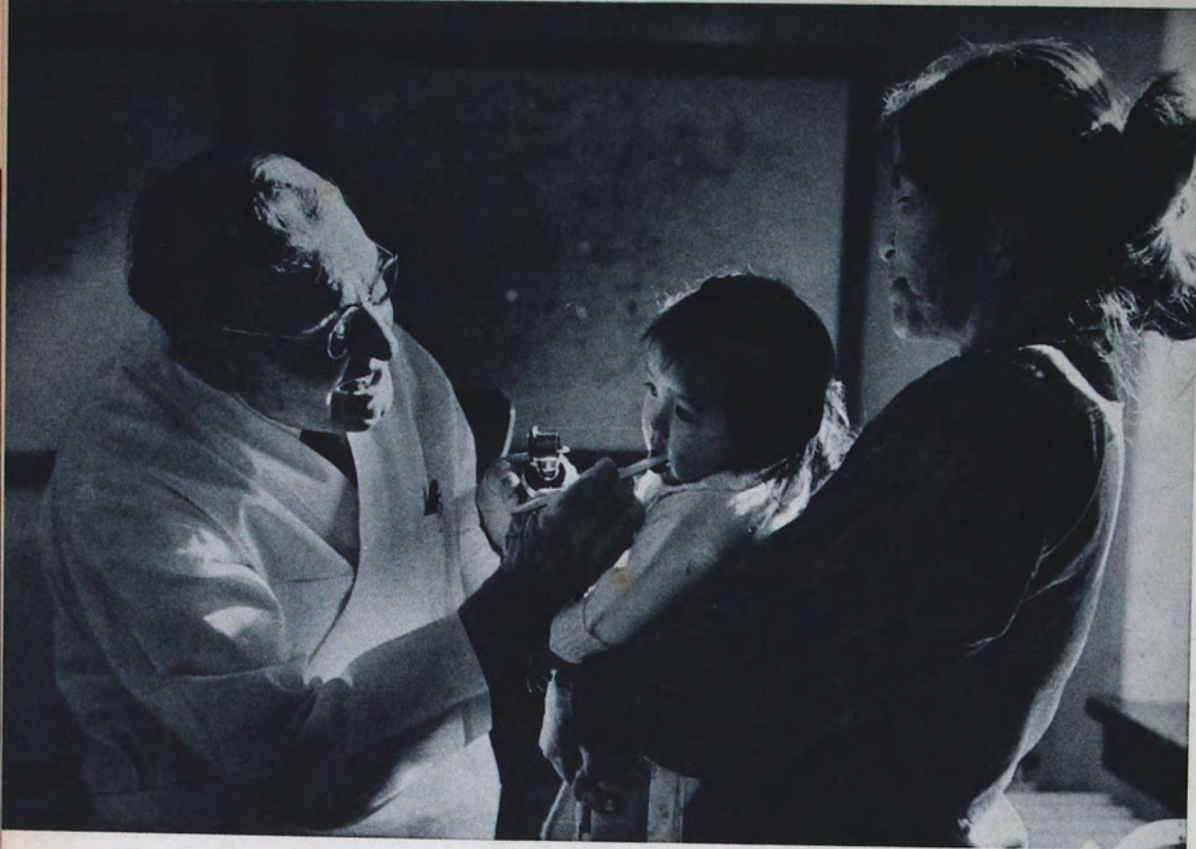
In a tuberculosis sanatorium a little boy and an old man are classed as "terminal" cases — are expected to die. Tuberculosis, a disease which was probably brought by the white men, is now the Navahos' greatest scourge.











A physician examines a small child. The Navahos fear sickness more than anything else — and for good reason. The People have been so plagued with illness that only an amazingly high birthrate has kept the tribal population increasing.



Relatives visit patient in the hospital. Navahos are often reluctant to be hospitalized because they feel that their "medicine men" can help them more and because there are more people dying in hospitals and hence more "ghosts" around to cause additional illness.



Card No. ....

Mother- Yazzie Ilmo Lukachukai Arizona  
 Reservation Navajo (Address)  
 Degree of blood 4/4

Amos (Given name) Ilmo (Sex) M (Age) 44

Tribe Navajo Typhoid Negative

Vaccinations or inoculations against: Smallpox Negative  
 Other (specify) Negative

Diphtheria Negative

Serological test for syphilis: Positive

Clinical notes and treatments: (Each clinical note must be dated and initialed by physician.)  
Not admitted back of bed. D. Milam

| Date    | Diagnosis    | Chest Xray | Taken. |
|---------|--------------|------------|--------|
| 1-26-48 | Milam T.B.C. |            |        |

When Charlie Yazzie brought his dying baby to the sanatorium for treatment, the beds were full. The Reservation hospitals are generally well equipped but are too few in number and located too far from most Navaho hogans.



Charlie Yazzie makes a small wooden coffin.







The Yazzies' dead baby lies in his mother's arms as she washes his body for burial. Convinced by the white doctors that the baby could not live, she placed him outside the cabin shortly before he died, since according to Navaho belief death contaminates a home.





Annie Yazzie dresses the body of her baby for burial.





Charlie carries the coffin to a distant spot in the brush where the mother has been preparing the body for burial.





The baby's body is placed in the crude coffin.







As Annie watches sadly, Charlie nails down the coffin's lid.



The coffin is carried through the snow to the spot where the grave will be dug.





As Charlie finishes digging the grave, Father Silver, the priest from Keams Canyon, holds the coffin.





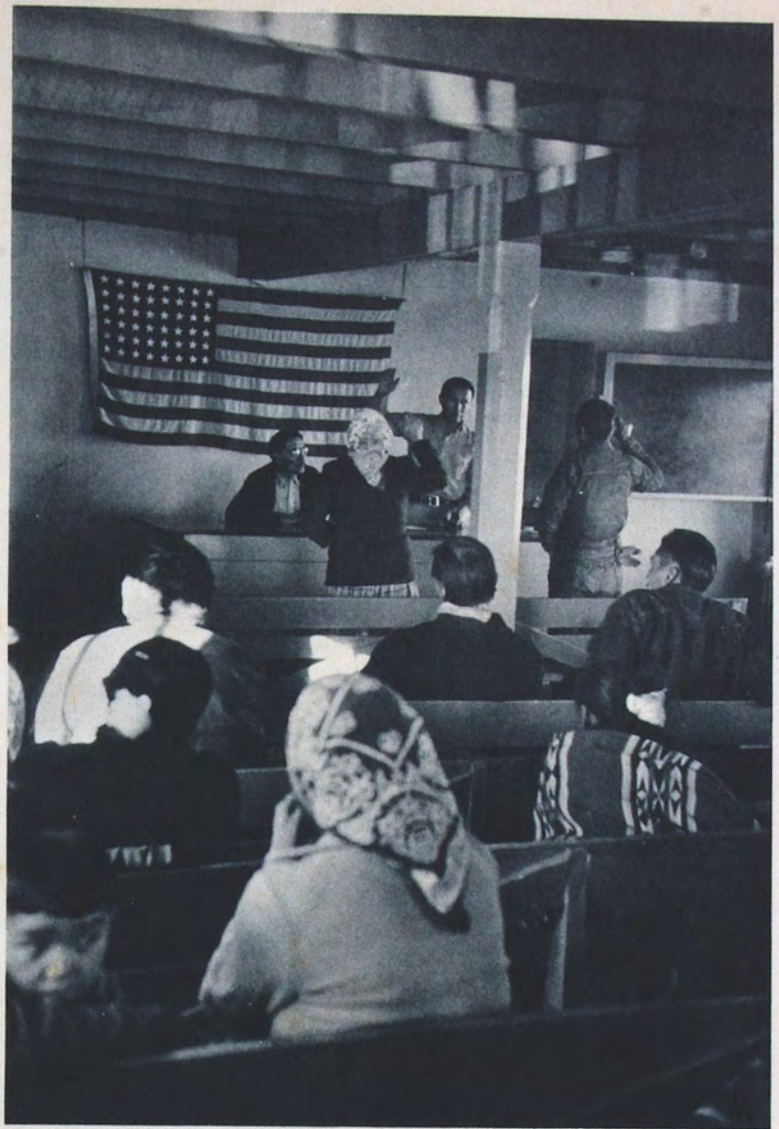
Cold statistics about the infant mortality rate among the Navahos are a bitter fact in the lives of Charlie and Annie Yazzie.







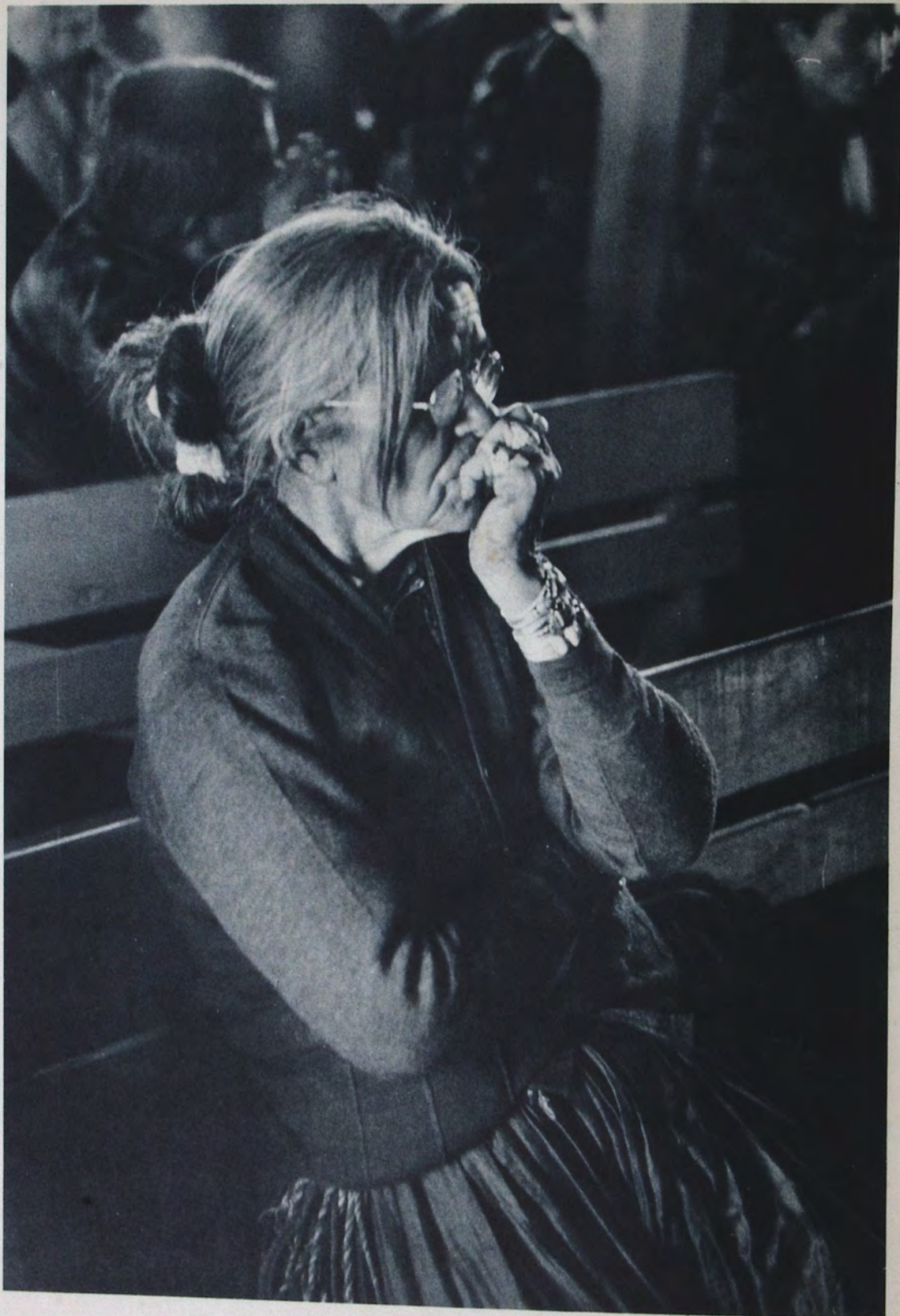




The Navaho Tribal Court tries cases on the basis of a tribal code of law which takes Navaho custom into account. The judges are elected by referendum vote.

Mrs. Yazzie returns sadly to her cabin after the burial.





In Tribal Court an old woman anxiously awaits the outcome of a case.





A young Navaho listens intently to proceedings in Tribal Court, which are mainly concerned with family matters.







Self-styled as "The Indian Capital of the World," Gallup, New Mexico, is an important center for trade, amusement, and wagework for the Navahos.



Working in the white man's world. Young Navaho (at right) has a welding job in a garage.







Crowded, low-standard living conditions prevail among Indians who live in white towns. Many are reluctant to leave the Reservation and work in towns when they discover they are relegated to lowest social and economic status.





Mother and small daughter while away the time in their small shack while the father is off working.



Some Navaho women who live in town continue to weave rugs.



Day off is spent reading Gene Autry comic book.







Navaho children play at edge of Indian "shanty town."



The young English-speaking Navahos are caught between two worlds. Unlike the older folk, whose lack of formal education forces them to continue in the old Navaho way, the young people must choose between their own culture and that of the white man.



Navaho convicts eat a meal in a white restaurant. A white policeman (reflected in mirror) is keeping his eye on them.





A federal law prohibiting sale of liquor to Indians has been in force since 1802. The law has now become a focus for widespread resentment, especially among Navaho veterans who were drafted to fight for democracy but who cannot buy a drink when they return home.







Since law prohibits sale of liquor to Indians, they buy it from bootleggers, usually try to gulp it down before the police take it away.





Another Navaho lies drunk on the sidewalk of a white town.

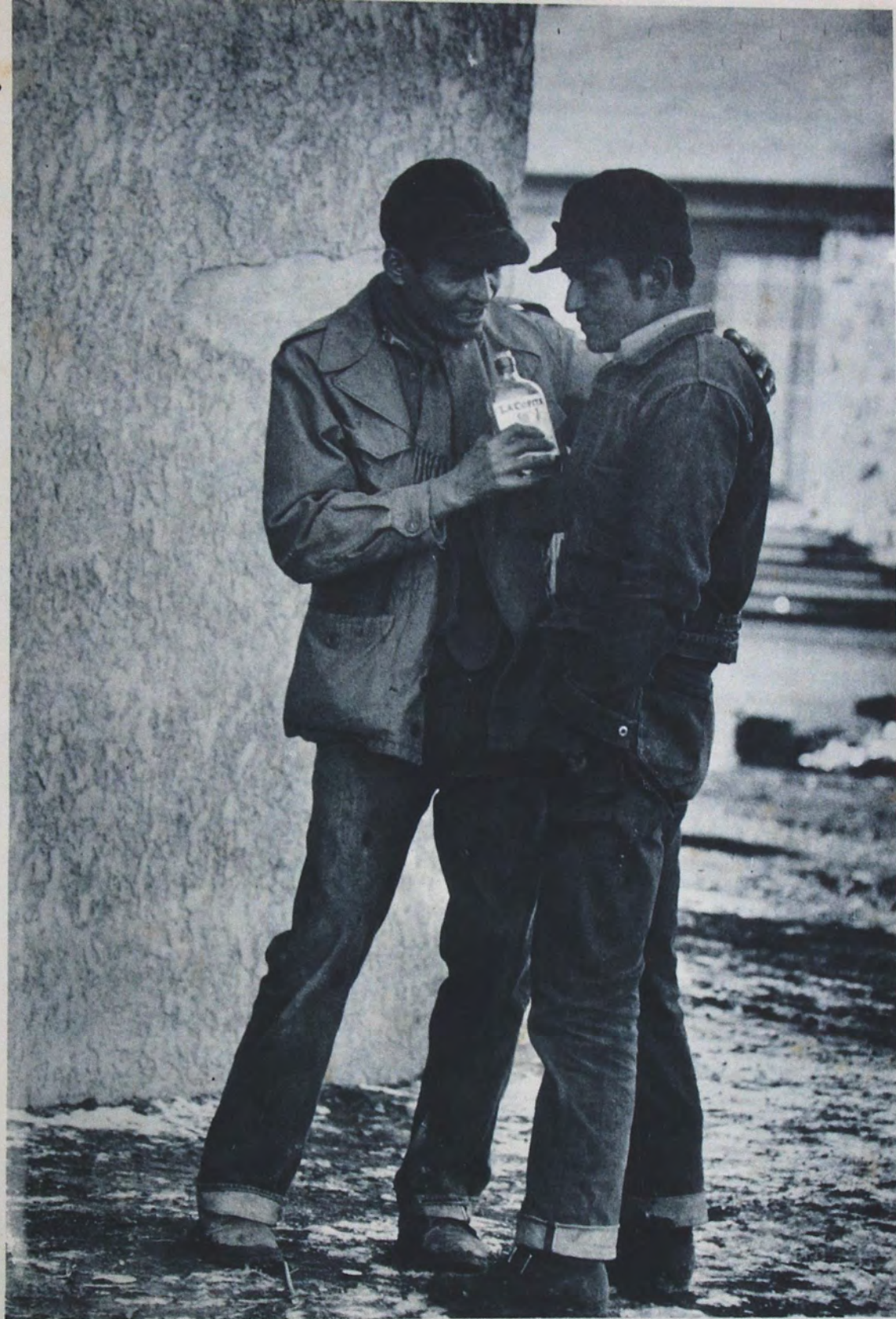






Ex-GI describes location of his bootlegger to his buddy. . .





... And discusses the merits of "La Copita" wine.







Common practice for "illegal" drinking is to take the liquor to the edge of town and have a drinking party out of sight of the police. The woman drinking from bottle (below) is nursing her baby.





A Navaho woman finds her husband, who has had too much liquor.





Police search a drunken Navaho who has been involved in a street brawl.





A white policeman questions a Navaho boy who has been arrested for drinking and disorderly conduct; a local judge looks on.





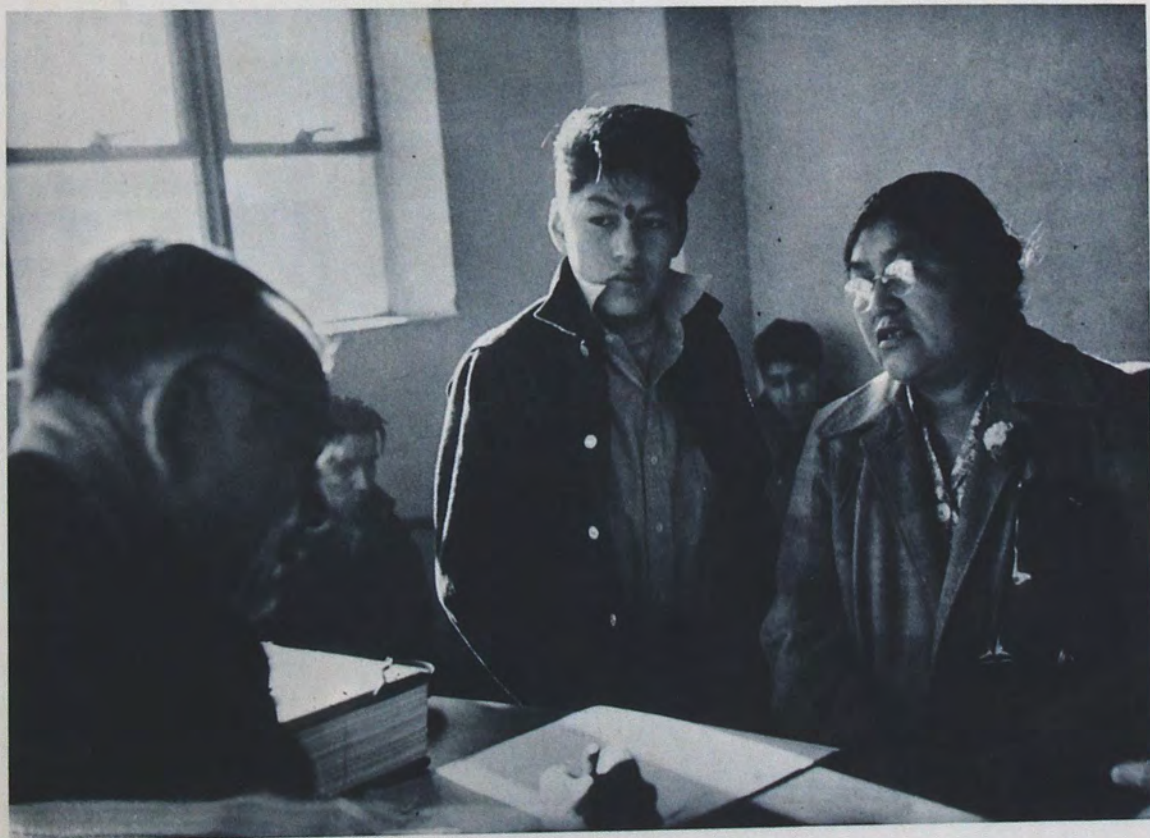


A Navaho under arrest for drinking shows Air Force jacket to police to indicate he is a veteran.



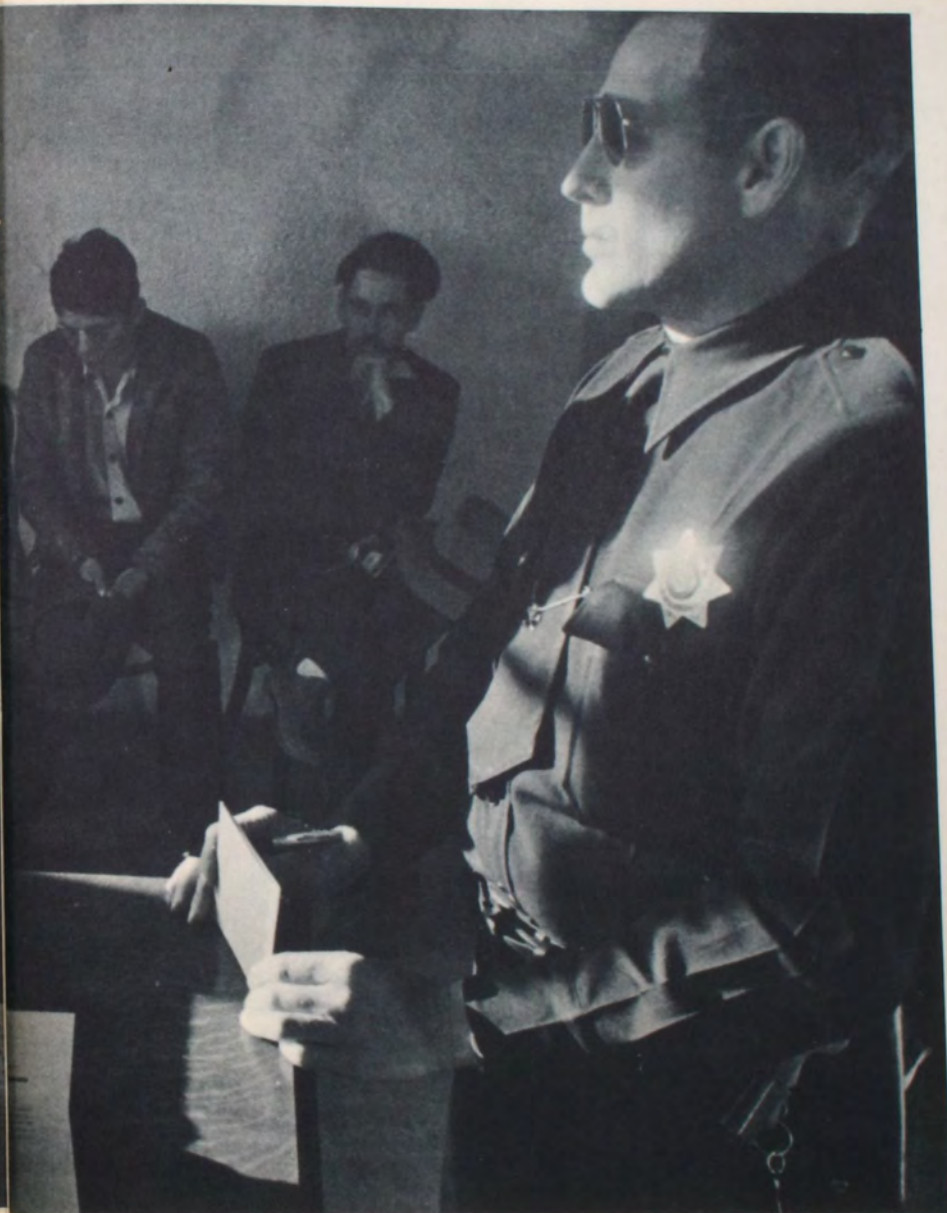
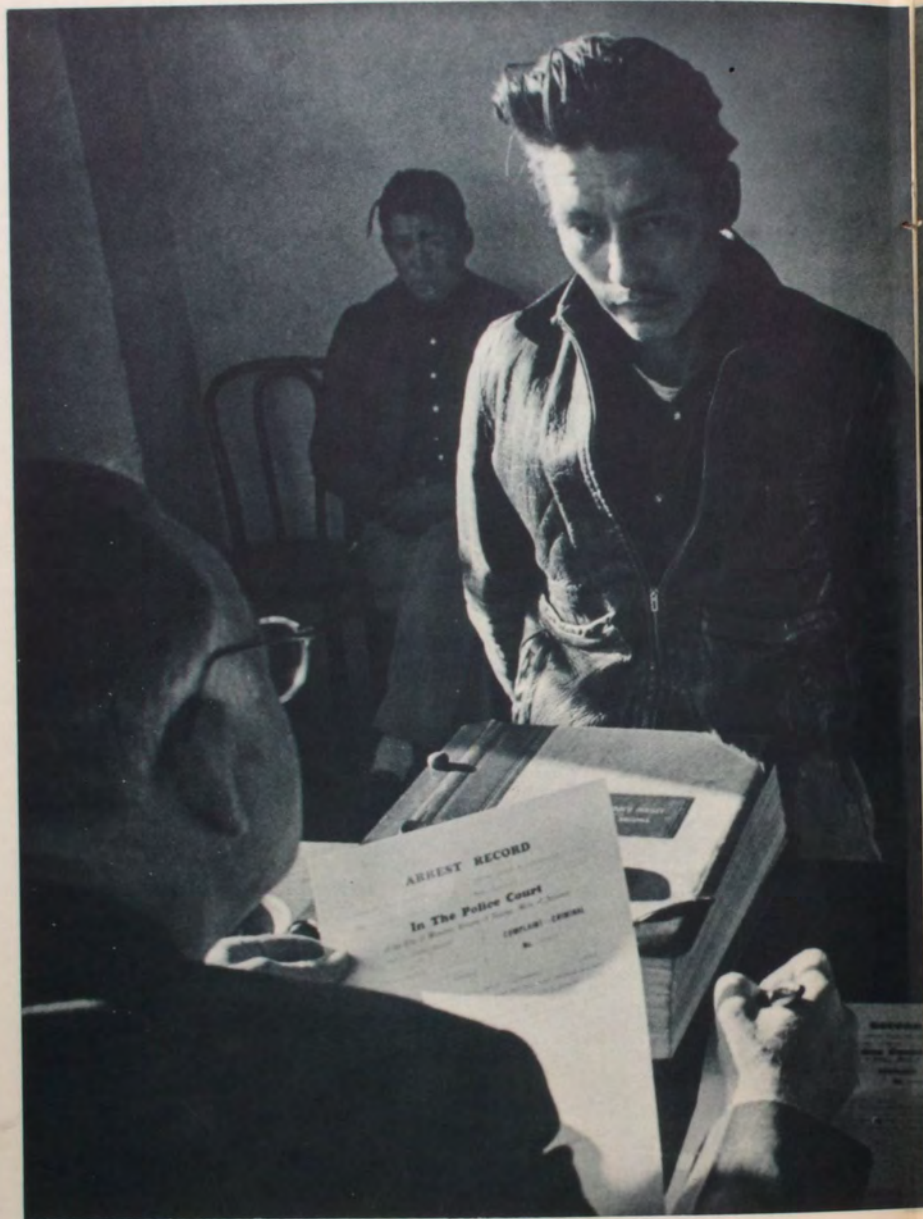


The veteran is fined \$10 for being drunk. The typical sentence is a \$10 fine or ten days in jail.



A Navaho mother pleads for clemency for her son, who has been arrested for drinking and fighting.





Arrest record is filed on another Navaho who was charged with drinking and disorderly conduct. Others await their turn.





Most Navahos arrested for drunkenness do not have money to pay the fine and must spend ten days in the city jail.





These two attractive Navaho girls have bobbed their hair and adopted the use of cosmetics, but still retain the dress styles (including the Pendleton blanket) of the older generations.







Many Navahos prefer to stay on the Reservation despite economic pressures, because they still find emotional support in their old ways of life.



Navahos feel secure in their arid land where one of their sacred mountains (which are homes for the Holy People) can be seen in the distance.





In the Navaho way, human relations are predominantly warm and comforting.



In the world of the hogans Navahos find positive values in the relatively free and leisurely pursuits of herding, farming, and weaving.







"When I was five my mother gave me a kid," is the opening line of the famous autobiography of "Old Mexican" (A **Nayaho Autobiography**, recorded by Walter Dyk).

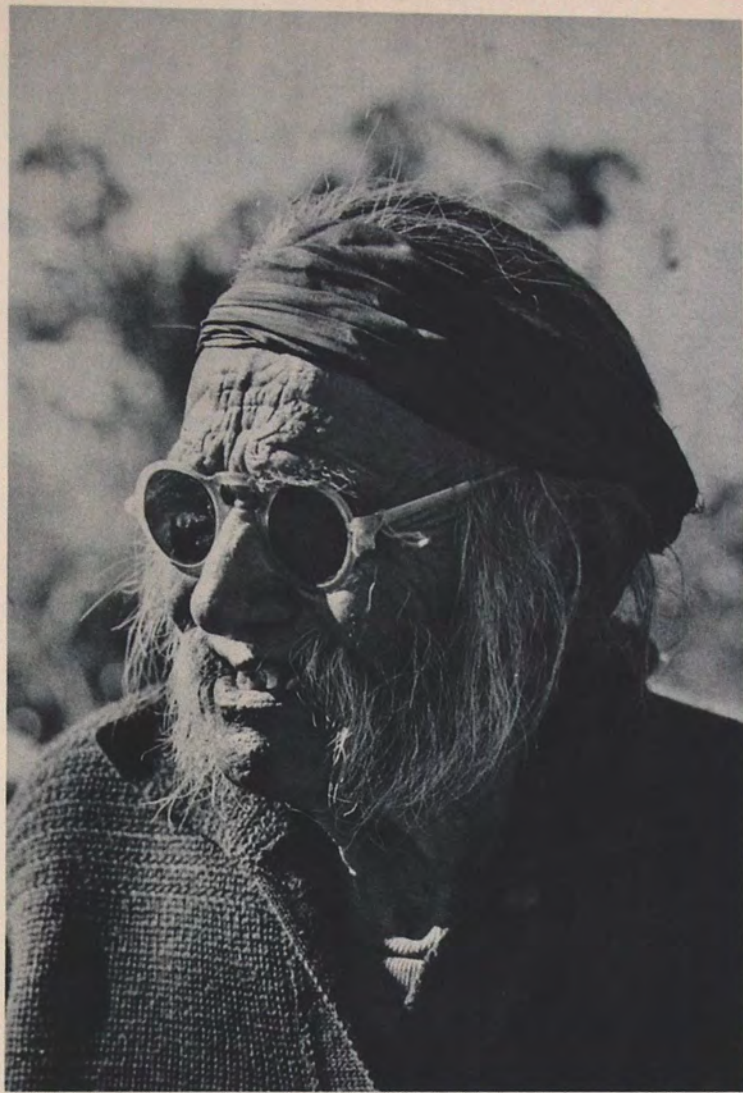




Native Navaho life contains a vitality and a set of human values that are likely to be crushed as Navahos are forced to take over white ways to adjust to their economic problems. The solution to the "Navaho problem" must extend beyond mere technical assistance and take account of the human values and resources present in the Navaho way of life.







## THE PAST OF THE PEOPLE

Photographs on pages 29-30

According to their own legends, the Navahos — "The People" as they call themselves — originated below the surface of the earth and came up to the present world through a reed in a lake that lies to the north of the present Navaho Reservation. That they did, in fact, probably come from the north is indicated by certain words and phrases in their language which suggest a more northern environment. Linguistic analysis places the Navaho tongue with the Athabascan languages spoken also by a group of tribes in the interior of northwestern Canada and Alaska.

When and how the Navaho arrived in the Southwest are still matters of speculation. The date may be as early as about A.D. 1000; it may be later, or even earlier. The earliest hogan site to be dated by the tree-ring method indicates that the Navaho were definitely living in north central New Mexico by 1540. At



any rate, students of Navaho history agree that The People arrived in the Southwest with a comparatively simple way of life in which hunting and the gathering of wild plants were the principal means of making a living and in which there were no complex ceremonials such as the Navaho have today. This culture was "enriched" during the prehistoric period by contact with the town-dwelling Indians of the Southwest.

Later the Navaho came into contact with the Spanish settlers in the Southwest — the first known reference to them in a European document occurred in 1626. From this time until the United States took possession of this territory in 1846 there is a long record of Navaho raids and Spanish reprisals. It should be noted, however, that the Navahos were primarily raiders, rather than fighters. They were interested chiefly in taking food, women, horses, or other booty, and they waged war chiefly in reprisal. Theirs was not a military culture like that of Plains Indians, such as the Sioux and Comanches.

The extent to which European ideas reached and were accepted by the Navaho during the Spanish-Mexican period cannot be determined with certainty. But it is certain that major changes in the Navaho way of life occurred between 1626 and 1846. By the time the English-speaking Americans had their first dealings with The People, the Navaho were herders and weavers as well as agriculturalists. They had firearms and other objects of metal, and they were just beginning to work silver. The acquisition of the horse had greatly increased the mobility of the Navaho for raiding and trading, but did not make the Navahos into "nomads." Navaho "nomadism" — at least during any historical period — is a myth. The horse made the Navahos mobile, to be sure, but the shiftings were confined, in most cases, to well-defined areas. Once a family had moved into a new region, one or more dwellings would be built in places which became fixed centers of family life for many years.

Sheep and goats brought into the Southwest by the Spaniards provided a larger and more dependable food supply — a fundamental condition of Navaho population increase. When the United States took possession of the southwestern territories acquired from Mexico, the government promised protection against the raids of marauding Indian tribes. The winter of 1846 marked the first American military expedition against the Navahos. The history of the next fifteen years is a record of numerous military operations, with the establishment of army posts within Navaho territory, the arrival of the first civilian agents to the Navahos, and of unsuccessful attempts to bring peace and stability by negotiation.

During 1862 the Navahos and Apaches took advantage of the Army's preoccupation with the Civil War to increase their raids upon white towns. An alarmed government ordered Colonel Kit Carson into Navaho country in June 1863 with specific instructions to destroy all crops and livestock. The land was systematically pillaged; fleeing bands of Navahos were pursued; some Indians were killed in various engagements, and others were taken prisoner. Word was sent out that all The People were to surrender. Eventually eight thousand Navahos — the majority of the tribe — were imprisoned at Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Fort Sumner was a major calamity to The People. Even today it seems impossible



for any Navaho of the older generation to talk for more than a few minutes on any subject without speaking of the horrors of Fort Sumner. One can no more understand Navaho attitudes—particularly toward white people—without knowing of Fort Sumner than he can comprehend southern attitudes without knowing of the Civil War.

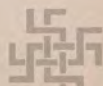
When The People were released and went "home" in 1868, there were more privations and hardships to undergo. They had to start all over again in their struggle to make a living. Eventually homes and flocks were rebuilt and in the next half century the tribe doubled and redoubled. But the Navaho country was now a reservation hemmed in by increasingly land-hungry white people. The treaty of 1868 set aside a total of about 3,500,000 acres — much less than the area which had been occupied by The People for generations. This reservation has been extended from time to time until it now includes about 14,500,000 acres, but the added areas were notably less desirable than the land originally held by the Navaho. Another 1,000,000 acres are controlled by the Navaho in the form of individually owned allotments, tribal purchases, and leases.

The most important events in Navaho history since 1868 concern relationships with white Americans: traders, missionaries of many different denominations, ranchers and others living on the borders of the Reservation, employers for off-Reservation work, and government officials. Most crucial have been relations with the government, particularly the Indian Service.

At first the Army was concerned almost exclusively with maintaining order, but in 1870 a day school was opened at Fort Defiance. The first boarding school was opened at the same site in 1883 after administration had been turned over to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. By 1926 there were several boarding schools for Navahos, and a considerable number of Navaho children were also sent to other Indian Service schools distant from the Navaho country. During the fifty years between 1880 and 1930 there was also a gradual expansion of medical facilities and extension services in farming, water supply, and livestock breeding. Government administration of the Navaho was not centralized but rather carried out through local agencies, each with its own superintendent and staff. By 1930 there were five such agencies.

The years following 1934 were a time of turmoil, confusion, and violent opposition of many Navahos to the program instituted at that time. In 1934 a centralized administration had been established at Window Rock, Arizona; the Reservation was divided into eighteen land-management districts, each with a supervisor directly responsible to the General Superintendent at Window Rock. This arrangement was largely stimulated by the need to meet a long-term economic problem.

Various surveys between 1910 and 1933 had indicated extreme erosion in the Navaho country. And the range was declared 100 per cent overgrazed as of 1933. In 1934, with specially appropriated WPA funds, the government bought nearly 400,000 sheep and goats from the Navahos. After 1937 grazing permits for a fixed number of livestock were issued in accord with the estimated carrying capacity of the range in each district. In 1939 a program for sharp reduction in





the number of horses on the Reservation was carried out. These measures, which were undoubtedly justified from a rational viewpoint, were badly explained to the Navahos and not well understood by them. They evoked tremendous resentments which were generalized far beyond the soil conservation program. The war program, after 1940, tended both to divert the attention of the Navahos and to improve the economic situation.

During World War II there were 3,600 Navaho servicemen, of whom almost 800 enlisted. Navahos proved to be very good soldiers and many performed specialized work in the Marine Signal Corps in which the Navaho language was used to send messages in code. During the war some 15,000 Navahos also engaged in defense work in various parts of the West.

The postwar period has seen more sophisticated administration of the Navaho Service, particularly during the past two years. The tribe's participation in its own government has been greatly increased. Nevertheless at the present time the picture Navahos have of white men can be described, at best, as mixed. Suspicious pathological rumors, exaggerated compliance, chronic apathy, and shiftlessness — these are some of the types of response made by various Navahos to what seem to them the capricious authority, the inconsistencies, the abrupt reversals in policy of the Indian Service. On their own ground, the Indians will sometimes express hostility by truculent behavior. But when the situation is "white" and whites are clearly in control, Navahos usually manifest their discomfort and resistance passively. They withdraw; they scatter like a covey of quail.

Those who argue that the solution of "the Navaho problem" is immediate absorption into the white world overlook the tremendous adjustments which The People must make, and the time required for such adjustments, before any considerable number can take their places as permanent members of the white economic system. The language difficulty will be decisive for a time, but more important is the fact that Navahos simply do not understand the rules for competing in the white world. These rules cannot be learned by rote in school — in fact, the white man's way of "getting ahead" in some situations is the reverse of what he teaches in his schools. Our competitive methods can be learned only by experience and over a period of time. Otherwise, 68,000 people will sink to the level of "poor whites" and alternate between migratory labor in good times and public relief in bad.

## LAND AND LIVELIHOOD

Photographs on pages 30-33

Set a stretch of sagebrush interspersed with groves of small evergreens (pinyon and juniper) against a background of highly colored mesas, canyons, buttes, and mountain masses clothed in deep green, roofed over with a brilliant blue sky, and you will have a generalized picture of the Navaho landscape. But within the Reservation there are other natural settings: splendid yellow-pine forests, treeless wastes, canyons cut deep into red or orange or red-and-white-banded sandstone mesas.



Beautiful as this land may be, it does not favor the survival of large numbers of people who have limited technologies and remain isolated from the main arteries of commerce. A railway and major automobile highways fringe the Navaho country but do not run through it. To gauge correctly the difficulties of travel, distances must be measured in terms of bad roads and intervening canyons or other obstacles, rather than in terms of miles on a map. Flowing water is rare and rainfall is scant in most parts of the Reservation. In nearly half of the land of The People, rainfall averages eight inches per year. High temperatures during summer and subzero weather during winter, high winds, and frequent sand storms are characteristic. These liabilities also affect the higher steppe regions, where annual average rainfall is over twelve inches. In the mountains rainfall averages twenty-two inches, but the brief growing season of ninety days is often interrupted by killing frosts.

In this isolated and precarious environment the Navahos have developed an economic system based upon agriculture, livestock, wagework, weaving, and silversmithing. Of these activities livestock has provided in recent years most of the Navaho income which is derived from their home industries, but the livestock tends to be concentrated in a small number of families. Agriculture, with maize and squash as the staple crops, is important in the subsistence economy, as it has been for at least three hundred years. Almost every family raises some of its food, and many families live for weeks at a time chiefly from the produce of their gardens and fields. There is considerable variation between parts of the Reservation in the amount of income from agriculture — in one district it is estimated at 40 per cent — but throughout the Reservation agriculture and wagework are the mainstays of life for all but the most prosperous families.

In recent years wagework for the government, for white ranchers around the borders of the Reservation, and for outside white enterprises (such as railroads) has become an increasingly important part of Navaho livelihood. In 1949, more than 13,000 were doing seasonal wagework off the Reservation. In one district where the facts are known (Kayenta) 28 per cent of the total income in 1950 was derived from off-Reservation wagework. Contrary to the impression of many easterners, Navahos, except for a relatively few fulltime silversmiths, do not earn great amounts of money by weaving rugs or making silver jewelry for sale to tourists. Arts and crafts remain as supplements to other economic pursuits. The hunting of wild animals and gathering of wild plants have almost disappeared as important economic activities. The one exception is the gathering of pinyon nuts, which are consumed locally by The People and also placed on the market and sold in large quantities in the East, especially to the Italian-American population of New York City.

No description of Navaho economic life would be complete without a discussion of the trading post. For it is via the trader that the material products of our national economy pour into Navaho country, and it is via the trader that Navaho products reach the outside world. The first trading post was established in the land of The People in the early 1870's; today there are about 175 traders operating on or adjacent to the Reservation. The trading post has been well



characterized as "the best remaining example of frontier commerce." One can buy there anything from a bottle of pop to a farm wagon. The posts serve the same social functions as the general store in rural white society.

The storekeeper is banker as well as merchant. The seasonal nature of the livestock economy and the fluctuations in other sources of cash income mean that even well-to-do families need credit during some months of the year and often advances in money as well. Poor and rich alike get minor credit through pawning jewelry, saddles, guns, or any article which has a resale value. Jewelry, in particular, is a Navaho substitute for a bank. Reserve capital is invested in silver and turquoise which can always be pawned or sold when need arises.



## SOCIAL LIFE AND RELIGION

Photographs on pages 33-59

In the long record of contacts with white people in the Southwest, The People have shown an astonishing capacity to learn about and use the tools and other technological products of our culture. Perhaps the most dramatic recent example of this Navaho disposition to absorb our technology was the Tribal Council's appropriation of \$10,000 for rainmaking with an airplane and dry ice or silver iodide during a severe drought in the summer of 1950. On the whole, The People have been less willing to change the social and religious patterns of their culture. The influence of the essential features is still very much present everywhere, and



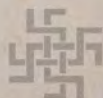
in the more remote areas these social and religious customs continue to regulate daily life and to give meaning and value to the Navaho way of life.

On the other hand, a rapidly increasing number of the younger generation no longer adhere to these patterns or do so only in part and halfheartedly. In many cases they simply do not know the old rules; in other cases they do not fully understand them. Yet neither do they understand the comparable white system. When a Navaho exchanges a wooden digging stick for a metal plough he gets a better instrument to perform the same function. Religious beliefs and social customs are not interchanged so easily. For example, in the past the clan was an important agency of social control. All clansmen were responsible for the crimes and debts of other members of their clan; hence it was in their own interests to prevent rape, murder, and theft on the part of any and all clan relatives. Since any person, moreover, was dependent for emotional and economic support upon the goodwill of his relatives, he was usually responsive to their pressures. Government imposition of a law-and-order organization based on our system has tended to destroy this aspect of the native social system. Such controls as at present exist are, therefore, matters of external force. The internal supports for good conduct have weakened tremendously.

Even though the old social organization and religion are still fully operative only in the regions where white influence has been least, portions of them remain a part of ordinary behavior everywhere, and the attitudes associated with these ancient habits continue to color the thinking even of the most iconoclastic violators of the traditional patterns. Hence we must sketch the aboriginal Navaho system.

The importance of his relatives to the Navaho can scarcely be exaggerated. The worst that one may say of another person is, "He acts as if he didn't have any relatives." Conversely, the ideal of behavior often enunciated by headmen is, "Act as if everybody were related to you." The basic unit of economic and social cooperation is the biological family, consisting of husband, wife, and unmarried children. When the husband has more than one wife, each wife with her children usually occupies a separate hogan. Joint wives are most often sisters; the Navahos say they get along better that way. It is seldom that a man has more than two wives, but a few cases of as many as four are known. Since missionaries, and formerly the government, have combated these plural marriages, an attempt is made to conceal them from whites and it is difficult to estimate their frequency. In one area where the facts are definitely established, seven out of about one hundred married men have more than one wife.

Contrary to the impressions of superficial white observers, Navaho women usually enjoy a position of considerable prestige and influence within the family. They own property; descent is traced through the mother rather than the father; and they have a continual source of extra income through their weaving. When a man marries in Navaho country, he usually goes to live with the wife's relatives. Hence, two or more biological families are combined into extended families which usually consist of an older woman with her husband and unmarried children, together with her married daughters and their husbands and children. This





larger family grouping lives in two or three adjacent hogans and cooperates closely in agriculture and the care of livestock. Under this system of residing with the wife's people, a man commonly participates in the activities of two extended families: his wife's family and his mother's family. Frequently the demands of the two families are conflicting and become a source of strain in Navaho social life. Another source of strain (which is also common in our society) between the son and his mother-in-law is neatly handled by the Navaho by making it taboo for the two to see each other.

Besides these family groupings the circle of kinfolk is extended to the people in the "outfit" and in the "clan." The "outfit" is a group of relatives (larger than the extended family) who regularly cooperate on certain occasions — such as planting and harvesting or giving an important ceremonial. Each Navaho belongs to the "clan" of his mother, but he is also "born for" the clan of his father. These clan groupings are not united in one local area but are spread widely over the Reservation. In the contemporary life of The People the principal importance of clan is that of limiting marriage choices: one may never marry within one's own clan or one's father's. But clan is also important in establishing the larger circle of one's relatives; they bind together Navahos who are not biologically related, who have not grown up in the same locality, who may indeed never see each other, or may do so but once in a lifetime. This sentimental bond gives rise to occasional economic and other reciprocities. A Navaho will always go out of his way to do a favor for or show preference for a clan relative. Clan members are called "brothers," "sisters," "fathers," or "mothers" depending upon the sex and relative ages of the two speakers.

The largest effective unit of social and political cooperation in Navaho land is the "local group" or "community." There are no real "villages" in Navaho country that are comparable to our towns; indeed, one of the outstanding facts about Navaho settlement on the land is the extent to which the small hogan groups are scattered — sometimes five miles or more apart. But throughout the Reservation there are local geographical areas occupied by groups of Navahos who occasionally come together for large political meetings and who cooperate in the giving of a large ceremonial such as a "squaw dance." Many of these communities have names and have "headmen" who serve as informal leaders for many years at a time. Up to a point, the communities tend to be the same as the "chapters" established by the Indian Service. From each of these chapters a "dèlegate" is selected by the people to represent them in the meetings of the Tribal Council at Window Rock — the headquarters of the Navaho Service. But it is still surprising how little the decisions reached at the Tribal Council meant, until very recently, to the people in the hogans.

It is doubtful whether there was ever a Navaho "tribe" in the sense of an organized, centralized "political" entity. There were Navaho bands, each with its own leader. Whatever tribal feeling The People have today rests upon the following factors: a common language; a common designation for themselves as The People as distinct from all others; a cultural heritage which is, in general, the same; a territory with a certain topographical unity; the fact that almost all The



People constitute a single governmental administrative unit with a single elected council for the whole tribe. The Navaho are only beginning to have what may accurately be described as a "tribal" or "national" consciousness.

If white people know anything about Navaho religion, they know that The People have "sings" performed by "medicine men." These sings, which to the inexperienced observer seem to be merely bizarre pagan rituals, become meaningful parts of the total life-way when they are seen in the context of Navaho beliefs about the nature of the universe. To the Navaho the universe contains two classes of personal forces. There are the Earth Surface People, living and dead; these are ordinary human beings. Then there are the Holy People who belong to the sacred, supernatural world and travel about on sunbeams, on the rainbow, on the lightning. They have great powers to aid or to harm the Earth Surface People.

As described in the Navaho origin myth, the Holy People lived first below the surface of the earth. They moved from one lower world to another and finally a great flood drove them to ascend to the present world through a reed. In the course of all these events, the Holy People developed ways of doing things which were partly practical and partly magical. When they decided to leave for their permanent homes at the east, south, west, north, the zenith, and the nadir, they had a great meeting at which they created the Earth Surface people and taught them all the methods they had developed, so that The People could build houses, obtain food, marry, travel, and trade and could also protect themselves against disease, hunger, and war.

Today man is not at the capricious will of these Holy People, but is an integral part of this orderly universe and must do his part to maintain harmony or balance among the parts of the cosmos. One result of disorder in these relationships is human illness, and the general purpose of most Navaho ceremonials is to restore harmony (between man and the Holy People, between man and nature, and between man and man) and thereby cure the illness. A breach in these harmonious relationships may be caused by the violation of a taboo, or by an attack by one of the Holy People, a ghost, or a witch. A ghost is the malignant part of a dead person. It returns to avenge some neglect or offense. If a corpse has not been buried properly, the ghost will return to the burial place or to the former dwelling. These ghosts appear in human form or as coyotes, owls, mice, whirlwinds, or spots of fire. They may chase people, jump upon them, tug their clothes, or throw dirt on them. When a Navaho thinks he has seen a ghost or one appears in his dreams, he is sure that he or a relative will die unless the proper ceremonial treatment is applied.

The Navahos also believe strongly in witches. These evil men or women, acting separately or in a group, can obtain property and cause illness or death. Like ghosts, these malevolent people are active mainly at night. They often wear the hide of a coyote, a wolf, or some other animal and are called "human wolves" by English-speaking Navahos. They are ghouls, and they practice incest.

Since there are many causes of illness, how does the individual Navaho find out what is wrong with him when he falls sick? The cause is determined by





divination which is carried out by "hand-trembling," "star-gazing," or "listening." The most common type of diviner is the hand-trembler, who acquires his skill by "divine stroke" rather than learning it from an older member of the profession, and who goes through a simple rite in which his hand "shakes" over the person who is ill and from the way in which his hand trembles the cause and needed ceremonial cure is specified.

The hand-trembler selects the proper treatment from the elaborate set of more than fifty distinct song-ceremonials which are performed by specialists known as "Singers." The Singers (medicine men) have devoted many years of their lives to learning the songs and complicated rituals from older members of the profession. Instead of scheduling ceremonials on a calendar basis (as in our society), Navaho Singers usually perform when an individual becomes ill, and the ritual is focused upon this person as "patient." Some kinds of ceremonials should be given four times during the patient's lifetime, regardless of whether the same illness recurs or not.

Navaho ceremonials fall into a number of groups which are classified on the basis of mythological association, common rituals, and the type of trouble the "sing" is believed to remedy. Thus the Holy Way group of chants deals with troubles that the diagnostician has traced to lightning, thunder, the winds, snakes, various animals, and Holy People. Mountain Top Way (in which the famous "fire dance" takes place) is the treatment par excellence for troubles that are believed to have arisen from contact with bears. Life Way chants are employed in the case of bodily injuries, and Evil Ways are used in curing "ghost sickness." Sickness caused by Navaho ghosts is treated by one type of Evil Way chant (often one of the Shooting Ways), and sickness arising from molestation by the ghosts of foreigners is treated by Enemy Way (in which the familiar "squaw dance" takes place). Upon their return to the Reservation many of the Navaho veterans were "patients" in the Enemy Way because of their contact with dead German or Japanese soldiers during the war.

Then there is the ceremonial called Blessing Way, which is, as English-speaking Navahos are wont to say, "for good hope." This ritual places the Navahos in tune with the Holy People and so ensures health, prosperity, and general well-being. The expectant mother will have Blessing Way sung over her a short time before birth is anticipated. Navahos were given a Blessing Way by their families before they left for the Army or when they returned on furlough during World War II. Blessing Way is also often given for Navahos who go off to do wage-work. The songs sung in the girl's puberty rite and in marriage ceremonies are from Blessing Way. In other words, Blessing Way is the one important Navaho ceremonial which is precautionary and protecting, rather than a cure for illness which has already set in.

Although each ceremonial has certain songs, prayers, and rituals which are distinctive, most parts of any ceremonial are shared with other sings. One feature which occurs in most Holy and Evil Way chants is the drypainting (or sand-painting) — a ritual that has captured the imagination of many visitors among the Navaho. The drypaintings are made of charcoal, pulverized minerals of dif-



ferent colors, or of corn meal, pollen, and dried flower petals. The designs represent the stories of the Holy People or abstractions of sacred powers. When the drypainting is finished, the patient sits upon it and thereby comes into close communion with the Holy People.

In all chants there is great stress upon the idea of purification. The patient, the Singer, and all the important participants must preserve sexual continence. There are restrictions on sleeping and an insistence on "clean thinking." The suds bath, the sweat bath, the use of emetics are all based upon this idea of purification, which is one of the most central notions in Navaho thinking.

Why is Navaho religion so preoccupied with the curing and prevention of illness? There is a realistic basis. With an uncertain food supply, drafty hogans, and the general hardships which prevail, there is actually a great deal of illness among The People. It is also easy to see how illness in one member of a small family group, which lives many miles from the next hogan and which depends upon the entire membership of the group for the successful operation of the small farm and herd of livestock, would threaten the survival of the entire group. But, over and above these realistic conditions of life, the evidence from much intensive research into Navaho psychology suggests that anxiety about illness has become a focus in Navaho life for a whole set of psychological adjustment problems. For example, a Navaho who does not get along with his relatives but is forced to live and cooperate with them is placed in a situation of strain that may result in psychosomatic disorders. He begins to "feel sick all over." The hand-trembler is summoned and traces his trouble to the violation of some taboo or to the activities of a ghost. A ceremonial then takes place in which the whole family rallies to help the patient, and a situation is set up in which interpersonal difficulties are resolved. In short, it would seem that difficulties in getting along with the relatives, deprivations from the natural environment, threats from the all-powerful whites can (and are) channeled into anxiety about illness. This being the case, it is not difficult to understand how the native Navaho religion has an important and delicately balanced relationship to the central problems of living in Navaho country.

To Navahos who have been more than casually exposed to missions and to schools, a conflict is posed. The white man does not understand a Navaho's referring to a host of individuals as "brothers" and "sisters." The white ridicules such a practice as well as being confused and irritated by it. He refers to Navaho religious beliefs as "ignorant superstitions."

Many Navahos live today in a world which is neither white nor Navaho in the traditional sense, a world where values are shifting and where rules of conduct are in a state of flux. The Navaho girl who has been at a boarding school for many years has no desire to live in a hogan when she marries. But to have a house with a wooden floor, running water, and other conveniences to which she has become accustomed, she and her husband must move to a white town or an agency settlement, where they are cut off from their kindred and generally isolated. Whichever alternative they choose, they are subject to criticism from either Navahos or white men. Their middle position is extremely difficult.





Individual Navahos are showing different major responses to the insecurities, deprivations, and frustration of this "between two worlds" situation. Some try to be as like white people as possible. Some find relief in becoming followers of Navaho demagogues. Others dissipate much hostility in factional quarrels or scatter their aggression in family fights, in fantasies about witchcraft or in attacking "witches," in verbal and other indirect hostilities toward whites; or they turn their aggression inward with resultant fits of depression. The central response of some individuals is in flight — either in actual physical withdrawal or in the escape of alcohol. Still others turn to intensified participation in rites of the native religion or in the peyote cult.

## THE NAVAHO VIEW OF LIFE

When one probes a little deeper into the way of life of a people, one finds that there is more to it than the techniques they have for making a living, the ways they organize their families and communities, and the ceremonies they carry out to adjust themselves to the universe. There are always more pervasive values and goals which color their entire way of life and enter crucially into the problem of adjustment with other societies. Some of these things are made very explicit by The People. Thus health, strength, and industry are all good things of life for the Navaho. There is also a valuing of personal excellence, but the important white American value of personal "success" is foreign to the Navaho view of life. A white man will continue striving for greater wealth even after he becomes a millionaire, while a Navaho, though also interested in accumulating possessions, will stop when he is comfortably off, or even sooner. Furthermore, riches are not identified so much with a single individual as with the whole extended family and "outfit." Indeed, the social pressure to support and share with relatives has a strong leveling effect. The members of a well-off family must also spend freely, somewhat in the white pattern of "conspicuous consumption."

That individual success is not a Navaho value is reflected in the avoidance of the types of leadership which are familiar in white society. To The People it is fundamentally indecent for a single individual to presume to make decisions for a group. The emphasis, alike in formal exhortations and in casual conversation, is on peaceful working together. The specific behaviors which are advocated center on affectionate duty to relatives, pleasant manners to all, generosity, self-control, minding one's own business. One must keep one's temper; one must warmly and cheerfully do one's part in the system of reciprocal rights and obligations, especially those which prevail between kinfolk.

But to understand fully the Navaho "philosophy of life" one must dig even deeper. Many characteristically Navaho doings and sayings make sense only if they are related to certain basic convictions about the nature of human life and experience, convictions so deep-seated that no Navaho bothers to put them into





words. One of these important convictions is that life is very, very dangerous. All sensible human beings of course realize that there are many hazards in living, but The People have a more overwhelming preoccupation than white men with the uncertainty of life and the many threats to personal security. A second Navaho conviction is that nature is more powerful than man. Many white people have the opposite view: that nature is a force with useful aspects that must be harnessed and useless, harmful ones that must be shorn of their power. They spend their energies adapting nature to their purposes, instead of adapting themselves to her demands. Navahos do not even hope to master nature; instead they feel that nature will take care of them if they behave as they should and perform the proper rituals.

The People also view the personality as a whole. This assumption must be made explicit because white people so generally think of "mind" and "body" as separable units. The whole Navaho system of curing takes it for granted that you cannot treat a man's body without treating his mind, and vice versa. To the Navaho basic human nature is neither good nor evil — both qualities are blended in all persons from birth. The notion of original sin which still exists in white thinking is lacking in the Navaho thought. They assume that no amount of knowledge and no amount of "religious" zeal can do more than alter somewhat the relative proportions of "good" and "bad" in any given individual.

Finally, The People have no sense whatsoever that life on earth is a "preparation" for another existence. For the Navaho this life is what counts and there is no belief that the way one lives on earth has anything to do with his fate after death. Even the best man may return after death as a horrible ghost to harm the living.

## ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Photographs on pages 60-70

What is happening to this group of 68,000 Indians with their alien ways of life in the contemporary American scene? What are the central problems with which serious Americans should be concerned? What can be done about these problems?

The basic economic problem which confronts the Navahos and the Indian Service today is that of making self-support possible in an overpopulated region with relatively unproductive, deteriorated lands. To an American from Boston or New York City it comes as a surprise to learn that the present Navaho Reservation is as large as the combined areas of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. But whereas these New England states support a population of some seven to eight million, the Navaho Reservation cannot support its population of a mere 68,000. Indeed, the Indian Service estimates that the average Navaho family income is less than \$1,200 a year, and that if the Navahos are to live on the Reservation with anywhere near a decent standard of living,





Reservation resources will provide means of support for only 35,000 people. The remaining 33,000 will have to find other means of support. Furthermore, the problem is becoming more critical because The People are increasing at the rate of 1,500 or more each year.

A solution to the problem, many whites would say, is: since there are jobs available in the United States at large, the surplus Navahos should simply leave the Reservation, find a job in some town, and settle there. That this is a patently naive answer to the basic Navaho problem will shortly be pointed out.

But first let us consider why the Navaho tribe suffers from such critical economic conditions. It should be made clear that the Navaho economic problem is nothing new. The fact is that except for a few families, The People have never enjoyed more than a bare subsistence living. When they first migrated to the Southwest, they were hunters and gatherers; later they shifted to food-producing with agriculture and livestock. But at no point in this long historical record were their standards of living comparable to those enjoyed by the average American. Since the early 1930's the government has known that the Reservation could not support The People. But it was only in the winter of 1947-48 that the American people "discovered" the plight of the Navahos. At that time the nation's press\* published heart-rending reports of starvation and disease and demanded immediate relief. Even during this "critical" winter there were thousands of Navahos who did not realize that they were in any worse condition than the winter before or dozens of winters before that. The problem is long-range and the suggested solutions must be long-range as well.

Given the Navaho ways of making a living, the expansion of the resource base has not kept pace with the rapidly expanding population. Many white people also attribute the problems to the government's livestock reduction program and think, again naively, that if the "long-haired theorists from Washington" had left the Navaho livestock industry alone, all Navahos would now be well-off. But there is little doubt that the Reservation **was** overgrazed and becoming badly eroded, and that something needed to be done in the 1930's to preserve and build up the range. It is also a fact that the reduction program (although parts of it were admittedly carried out in ruthless fashion and with less attention to the features of Navaho culture than would have been desirable) has in the long run resulted in larger over-all returns from livestock. But in 1933, when stock reduction began, there were only 41,000 Navahos. Today the population is one-third greater, so that although total income from the stock industry has increased (even when measured in 1935 dollars), it has not kept pace with the growth of population.

Several solutions to these basic economic problems have been proposed: the development of irrigation projects on the Reservation; stock improvement and sensible land and stock management; the establishment of small industries on

\* The story of this "chain reaction" in the American press and radio is itself an amusing saga in culture-contact. Certain newspapers, trying at that time to discredit the Marshall Plan, discovered the Navaho situation; this gave them the theme, "Why help Europeans when first-Americans are starving within our own borders?" The Navaho found it difficult indeed to understand the tremendous attention they suddenly got from a wide public.



the Reservation; the resettlement of Navaho families on irrigated land along the lower Colorado River; and off-Reservation employment in various white enterprises. Whereas the Indian Service and others concerned with the Navaho problem have in the past thought of one or two of these solutions as the answer, it seems certain in 1951 that to provide sound economic support for The People there must be action on all these fronts at the same time. For there is not only the expanding population to face, but changing conceptions on the part of the Navaho as to what constitutes a decent standard of living. Partly as a result of higher income during World War II and partly owing to increased contacts with white towns in recent years, Navahos are increasingly demanding and expecting to obtain a greater share of the nation's wealth.

The Indian Service has recently proposed an \$88,570,000, ten-year program for Navaho and Hopi rehabilitation. Though the program has received congressional approval, full funds have yet to be appropriated for its implementation. The program includes plans for the improvement of the range, the extension of existing small irrigation projects, the development of coal and timber resources, increased production of Navaho arts and crafts, and the establishment of enterprises and industries such as canning, weaving, tourist courts, and tribal stores on the Reservation. If the Indian Service estimates are correct, all of these developments, if successful, will provide means of support for only about half the Navahos. It is therefore further planned to resettle 1,000 families on irrigated land along the lower Colorado River, and to develop a new and large irrigation project in the Shiprock-San Juan area which would absorb another 2,600 families. This would still leave 1,450 families (about 7,300 persons) who would have to seek permanent off-Reservation employment.

The execution of this long-range program will obviously require an enormous amount of economic planning and readjustment, to say nothing of the human readjustment involved. The task would be difficult enough were one dealing with robots; it becomes immensely more complicated when one is working with human beings, and especially human beings of whom more than two-thirds speak no English and whose patterns of life and sets of values differ so markedly from those of the white men who designed and will be carrying out the program.

In the past the Navahos have too often played passive roles in a succession of government plans initiated and executed by the white administrators. And despite the fact that the long-range plan calls for drastic rearrangements in Navaho living, both economically and socially, and that this new program is the most important one to be initiated to date, it is disheartening to discover that most Navahos have only the vaguest notions of what it is all about. Clearly, the Indian Service will have to do a thorough job of explaining the program to The People and educating them toward it before the program can be carried out with the approval and understanding of the average Navaho. Some genuine progress toward this end has been achieved during the past two years.

The development of the irrigation and industrial projects will require both a shift in technology and a shift in social and political organization. To a people accustomed to the operation of small fields and flocks of sheep on a familial





basis, the development of the patterns of organization and cooperation necessary for the successful management of an irrigation project (with problems of the care of the network of ditches, the allocation of water, and so forth) or a small industry (with problems of steady work, time scheduling, and so on) will make great demands for change in Navaho life. The resettlement of families on the Colorado River project will make even greater demands, for it will remove many of The People entirely from their native surroundings. If a family decides to stay (after a trial of three years), they will have to renounce their membership in the Navaho tribe and apply for membership in the Colorado River tribes.

Motivating The People to take permanent off-Reservation jobs in large numbers opens other problems. At the present time 85 per cent of off-Reservation wagework is on a seasonal basis. Normally agricultural workers stay for the duration of the job and are brought back by the employer when it is finished. Railroad workers return to the Reservation when the gang is dismissed. Navahos familiar with white towns keenly sense the fact that were they to move permanently into the larger American society, they would inevitably be placed in the lowest socio-economic classes. Many explicitly prefer a life on the Reservation where there is less to eat but where they are respected members of their own society. Furthermore, life in town fails to provide the familiar patterns and emotional support of extended family living and of ceremonial participation which individual Navahos need to maintain personal happiness and equilibrium.





## EDUCATION

Photographs on pages 71-85

The economic problem of the Navaho shades into a serious educational problem. Today there are 24,000 Navaho children of school age on the Reservation and in the immediate area, and this number increases by more than 1,000 each year. In 1949 only some 10,000 Navaho children were enrolled in school, including federal and mission schools both on and off the Reservation. The government has plans for providing school facilities for an additional 5,000 or 6,000 children, but this will still leave 8,000 or 9,000 for whom no school facilities exist. Contrast these figures with the promise the United States made in the 1868 treaty with the Navaho tribe — to provide a schoolhouse and teacher for each thirty Navaho children who could be "induced or compelled to attend school" — and it is not difficult to understand one aspect of the educational problem for The People. A second striking fact is that about 40,000 of the 68,000 Navahos can neither speak nor understand English effectively.





However, it should be made clear that until very recently Navaho families resisted sending their children to school, and the children hid in the woods to avoid going. This attitude stemmed from a number of social and economic factors. In most Navaho families the job of herding the sheep falls upon the small children of school age, so by sending their children to school they were losing their shepherders and losing their opportunity to train the children in a way of life that has leaned principally on a livestock economy. For a generation or more the older Navaho had observed that the graduates of government schools usually returned to the Reservation untrained for a life in the hogans and generally became dissatisfied troublemakers. As part of their techniques of child-training the Navaho parents warned their children that "if you don't behave, the whites will come along, take you off to school, and you'll never come back home" — a technique that helps create a basic fear of whites in many Navahos. The whole tone of Navaho life was to preserve their native patterns and values.

During the past decade observers have detected a marked shift in this attitude toward education. The change is the result partly of government reduction of the livestock, which lessened the need for shepherders and threatened to eliminate livestock as the basis of the economy and the principal symbol of economic security; partly of markedly increased white pressure on The People and greater contacts of Navahos with white people and white ways (especially during the war); and partly of Navaho realization of their own economic crisis. Education is now visualized by many as a panacea, as a way of shifting to the white man's basis for economic security — that is, making money — and replacing the security The People once had in their herds of sheep. Even the most conservative Navaho leaders are now talking about education for their children. Some of the same families who formerly refused to send their children to school are now clamoring for more schools and citing the Treaty of 1868 to back up their demands. In particular, there is now almost unanimous recognition that a knowledge of the English language is essential for survival in the white world.

But even when adequate school facilities are provided, a fundamental issue remains: what are the Navaho children to be taught? Do we attempt to inculcate our American culture and system of values as rapidly and as systematically as possible? Or do we teach them to speak English, to do arithmetic, and other basic subjects, train them to be good mechanics or farmers, and then allow them to work out their own more basic patterns of social and religious life in their own way and at their own pace? Clearly, a very crucial problem for the world today is at stake here, for it might be maintained that it is more "democratic" to allow the "backward" peoples of the world to work out their own destinies — after they have reached an acceptable material standard of living — than it is to "cram" our particular forms of social and religious life and our value system down their throats. On this particular issue, opinion varies from that found in the missionary group\* with their schools — which, by and large, attempt to make the Navahos into white Americans (in culture and in values) as fast as possible — to the posi-

\* It should be emphasized that we are speaking in general terms here and that there is some difference between the various denominations on this problem.



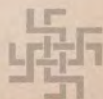
tion taken by certain "romanticists" that the Navahos should stay as they are and maintain their interesting and "quaint" customs. Probably the soundest position — from the point of view of both the practical necessities of current economic problems and of broad humanitarian interests — lies somewhere between these two extremes. Considering the forces for and resistance to change in the Navaho case, the missionaries find it impossible to "Americanize and Christianize" large numbers of Navahos rapidly; but neither are the Navahos going to stay as they are. The educational program needs to be adjusted to the economic crisis (in that Navahos be taught the necessary English and economic skills to compete with whites in the outside world), but room should be left for The People to adjust their social and religious life to the American scene at a pace that will not wholly disrupt the delicate balance of their culture.

## THE PROBLEM OF HEALTH

Photographs on pages 86-102

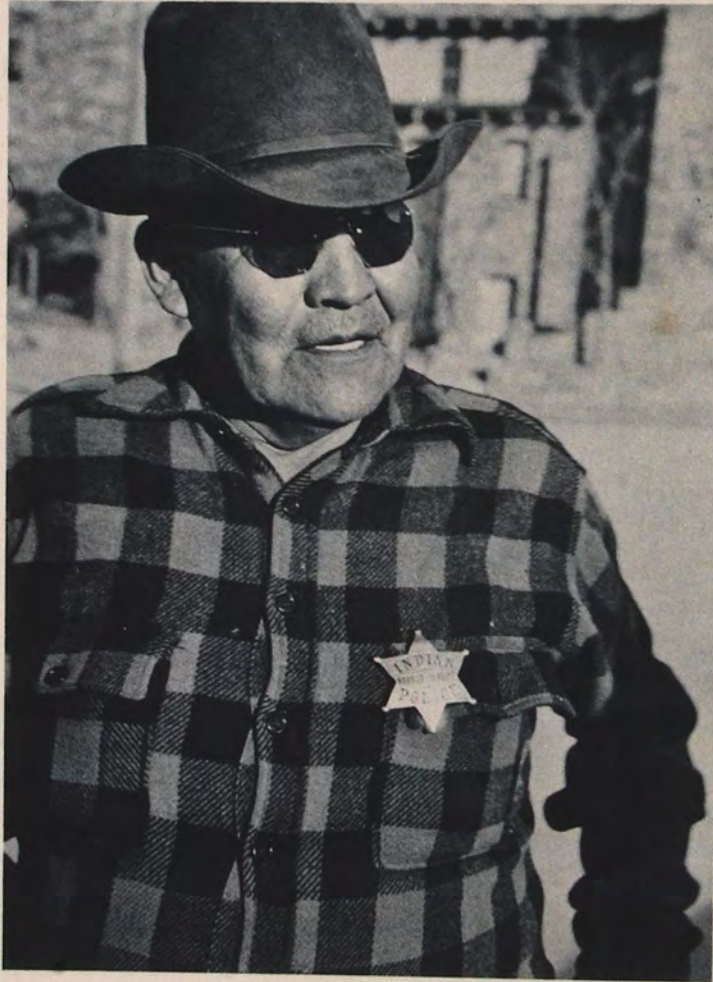
**A**lthough much progress has been made in recent years on the problem of health and medical care for the Navahos, much remains to be accomplished. The infant mortality rate in 1948 was 227.2 per 1,000 live births, compared to the United States rate of 31.8. More than half of all recorded Navaho deaths occurred among children under five. The leading causes of death are tuberculosis, pneumonia, diarrhea, and enteritis. Preventable and controllable diseases account for more than 50 per cent of Navaho hospital patients. Interestingly enough, some of the leading causes of death among white Americans (heart disease and cancer and other malignant tumors) have a very low incidence among Navahos. Whereas these diseases account for almost 50 per cent of the white American deaths, they account for only 3.2 per cent of Navaho deaths.

At present there are six Indian Service hospitals and three mission hospitals serving the Navaho. These facilities will be expanded under the new rehabilitation program, which will add to some of the existing hospitals as well as establish health centers and field clinics at scattered points on the Reservation. Since the treatment of illness is a focal point for Navaho religion and ceremonials, it might be assumed that Navahos would resist going to white doctors for treatment. Actually the Navahos are practical people in this respect and the common pattern is to try a Navaho "sing," then try medical treatment in a hospital if the sing doesn't work, then try another sing if the white doctor does not effect a satisfactory cure. It is clear that some ailments (such as tuberculosis or pneumonia) are best treated in a hospital, but it is equally clear that if the difficulties are psychosomatic, then the Navaho Singer may actually accomplish a more satisfactory cure — at least until the hospitals have on their staffs competent psychiatrists who are familiar with Navaho psychology. For, if a given Navaho "feels sick all over" and interprets his trouble as "ghost sickness," there is little a white doctor can do. As the Navahos say, "if I am being bothered by a ghost, and I go to the hospital, that white doctor can't do anything about it — it takes a Navaho medicine man to drive that ghost away."





What is of course the major difficulty at the present time is that Navahos who are dying of tuberculosis, pneumonia, and other controllable diseases continue to interpret the trouble in terms of ghosts, witches, or the violation of some religious taboo, and proceed to have a Navaho ceremonial, or series of ceremonials, performed over them. This often delays adequate hospital treatment until it is too late. Many lives will be saved when the Navahos acquire sufficient knowledge about white ways and enough confidence in our medical treatment to reverse the present procedure — that is, to go to the hospital first and try the Singer later, if they do not have one of the common controllable diseases.



## ADMINISTRATION AND POLITICS

Photographs on pages 103-124

**A**t the present time The People have a measure of self-government in the Navaho Council and are largely responsible for the administration of the tribal code of law. The history of tribal "self-government" among the Navahos has been marked with zigzags of official policy, misunderstandings, and confusion that have stemmed from ignorance on the part of white administrators of



the original patterns of Navaho authority, and from their attempts to superimpose white patterns only partially understood by the Navahos.

Army officers and the first civilian agents tried to work through the supposed "chiefs" and headmen. When these men failed to obtain the desired cooperation, new heads were created by government fiat. Such ersatz leaders had little or no control over their people. In 1925 "chapters" were established for various local groups, and it was hoped that these could be made into responsible local units. But such groupings corresponded to nothing in Navaho experience, and the techniques of operation which were laid down (the election of a president, vice-president, and secretary and the use of parliamentary procedure) were even more foreign. Despite this fact many of the chapters continue to function today because The People found they needed them to deal with contemporary conditions. The discovery of oil on Navaho lands in 1923 made urgent the creation of some body which could speak, at least in form, for the tribe as a whole; this led to the organization of a Navaho Council.

The powers of the Council derive from the inherent powers of Indian tribes, the Navaho treaty with the United States in 1868, and the policies of the current Indian Service administration. The Council authorizes expenditure of tribal funds; it passes on mineral leases, traders' licenses, and grants of land for mission use, subject to approval by the administration. Conditions of tribal membership are defined by the Council, and it regulates the domestic relations of the Navahos, including marriage, divorce, and inheritance. It enacts sumptuary ordinances and others dealing with livestock, range, and resources, subject to approval by the administration. Until quite recently most of the action the Council took was initiated by the government, and its functions were mainly to approve or disapprove government proposals or to advise with administrators, rather than to initiate policy or pass laws. Furthermore, any actions which it took that were deemed not in the best interests of The People could be disapproved by the Secretary of the Interior. These limitations stemmed primarily from the tribal rejection of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934, and they will be offset in large part by the provisions for a new tribal constitution in the long-range Rehabilitation Act.

Most "educated" Navahos have found it difficult, if not impossible, to understand the apparent inconsistency between ambitious talk about democracy on the one hand and the limited powers of their Council on the other. Yet it should be said that much of the furor comes from a lack of comprehension of the total situation. The Secretary of the Interior, on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, has approved a number of the Council's ordinances which the Indian Service actually felt to be unwise. Such facts have too often been forgotten by vocal Navahos who claim no self-government has been granted to The People. To the dispassionate observer who knows the facts and who believes in the eventual capacity of The People for full self-government, it is clear that there had to be a transitional period. And there is much evidence today that substantial gains in the direction of greater self-government are being made in cooperative efforts between The People and the present Navaho Service staff. The Council has taken over more responsibility in the past few years than it prob-





ably has had in the whole course of its existence, and it is hoped that the next few years will see the development of a more thoroughly democratic government which will reach down into the local communities and be based upon the participation of a majority of Navahos rather than an articulate minority.

A recent development which has been of importance in providing closer and continuing communication between the Indian Service and the Navahos is the establishment of an advisory committee of the Council. Whereas the full Council meets infrequently during the year, the advisory committee — consisting of nine members and the chairman and vice-chairman of the Council — meets at least monthly, and frequently every other week, and exercises such powers as the Council delegates to it.

Navahos, like other Indians, are subject to state criminal laws when they are off the Reservation, but when they are within the Reservation they are answerable only to federal or tribal courts. The Federal District Court has jurisdiction in cases involving murder, manslaughter, rape, and other major crimes. All other offenses are tried in the Tribal Court on the basis of a tribal code of law, adopted in 1937, which takes Navaho customs into account. The most common convictions are for disorderly conduct and liquor violations. Nearly all the disorderly conduct is associated with the use of liquor. Sentences consist of fines, or, alternatively, of a day in jail for each dollar of the fine. Prisoners do useful work while serving their sentences.

Enforcement of the law and maintenance of order are in the hands of the Law and Order Division of the Navaho Service. The Chief of Police and all Law and Order personnel are Navahos, but they have great difficulties in carrying out their jobs, because their fellow tribesmen resent their enforcing white-made law, particularly that which forbids the sale of liquor to Indians.

In the years since World War II there have been two legal problems which have caused widespread resentment among Navahos. By the act of June 2, 1924, the Navahos and all other Indians born within the United States became citizens. During World War II the Navahos were drafted into the armed forces as were any other American citizens. But until 1948 Indians were not permitted to vote in Arizona and New Mexico. In that year the Arizona Supreme Court reversed an older decision which had denied Reservation Indians the voting privilege, and a federal court declared unconstitutional a New Mexico constitutional provision depriving Reservation Indians (not taxed) of the vote. Arizona requires all voters to give evidence of literacy, so that of the total Arizona Navaho population probably less than five thousand possess the necessary state qualifications to vote. However, the extending of the franchise to the Navahos has been a major step in the direction of self-government, and there is good evidence that (in contrast to the Zuni and other Pueblo tribes in the Southwest) the Navahos are beginning to exercise their voting rights. It has been estimated that in McKinley County, New Mexico, over a thousand Navahos voted in the 1948 elections. By contrast only two Indians in Zuni voted in the 1948 elections, and they were fined by the Zuni Tribal Council for doing so.

The second legal problem, which has become a focus for perhaps even more



resentment among the Navahos and for widespread discussion among white Americans, is the federal liquor law which has been in force since 1802 and which forbids the sale of liquor to Indians. During the war Navaho servicemen were permitted to purchase and drink liquor at post exchanges, and they further discovered that in the East and abroad they could walk into any bar and be served liquor the same as could their white buddies. When these veterans returned to the Southwest where the federal liquor law was still enforced, they soon realized that they were "second-rate" citizens in this respect. Although the veterans are perhaps the most vocal leaders in demanding a change in this law, there are many other Navahos who feel the same way. At the present time it would seem that most Navahos do not want liquor sold on the Reservation, but favor annulment of the law off the Reservation.

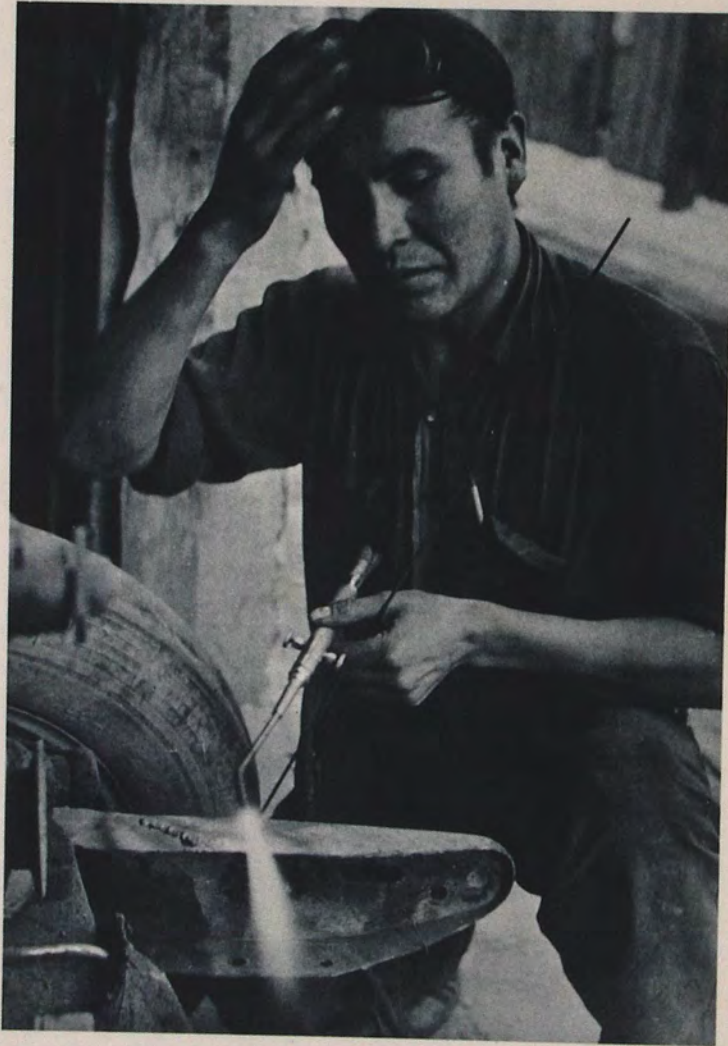
The white Americans who are most vocal about the danger of giving liquor to the Indians are missionaries (many of whom would like to see liquor outlawed for whites as well) and people who are still convinced that Indians are somehow "biologically" different and will always get "crazy drunk" when they drink. There is no biological evidence that Indians become more intoxicated and get any "crazier" than whites. The problem is really more one of cultural tradition and legal situation: if drinking is merely part of a family gathering or a social party, the controls against excessive intoxication are present; but if a Navaho goes into Gallup or Winslow, buys a quart of wine from a bootlegger, and gulps it down before the police find him and take it away from him, the result is excessive intoxication which probably eventually lands him in the city jail. "For being caught drunk by the Gallup city police, a Navaho gets 10 days or is fined \$10. Usually he has no money and must spend over a week in an ugly, filthy cell at the local city hall" (**Gallup Independent**, August 8, 1950). It seems clear that the time has come for a frank reappraisal of the federal liquor law on the part of Congress and the American people.

## PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Those Navahos who have set themselves to follow the white man's trail find themselves — as have representatives of other minority groups — in a (rationally) odd dilemma. While as youngsters they are rewarded by school teachers and others for behaving like whites, as adults they are punished for having acquired skills that make them competitors of their white contemporaries. The more intelligent ones had, by early maturity, realized that their education would bring them into conflict with or isolation from their own unschooled relatives, but the experience of being turned on by their white mentors comes as a painful surprise. They find they are seldom received on terms of social equality, even by those whose standards of living, dress, and manners they have succeeded in copying almost perfectly. They learn that they must usually (save within the Indian Service) expect to work for a salary at least one grade lower than that which a white person of comparable training and experience receives. They overhear remarks



by those same groups of whites who had goaded them to give up "those ignorant Indian ways": "You can never trust these 'school boys.'" "Give me a 'long-hair' every time. They may be dumb but they are honest and they work hard." "Educated Indians are neither fish nor fowl. They give me the creeps." Rejected by the white world they have made so many emotional sacrifices to enter, some attempt a bitter retreat to the Navaho world. Others, in sour disillusionment, abandon all moral codes. Still others achieve a working (but flat and empty) adjustment.



## THE IMPACT OF AN ALIEN IDEOLOGY

Personal and social disorganization is rampant among the Navaho people today. In part this is the consequence of objective facts. Navaho country is overpopulated, and the range is overgrazed. Few Navahos have the occupational skills to compete with white people in the near-by towns and cities. But that Navaho culture is becoming an ugly patchwork of meaningless and unrelated pieces instead of a patterned mosaic is due at least as much to the power of foreign



ideas. The Navaho recognize and respect the strength of white American culture. Many Navahos are saying frankly that their tribe's salvation rests in mastering the language and the way of life of the dominant group. The lack of selective blending and constructive fusion is not due to low intelligence. Navahos are perfectly capable of learning white skills and white customs. But when the traits of another culture are learned externally and one by one, without the underlying concepts and premises of that culture, the learners feel uncomfortable. They sense the absence of the fitness of things, of a support which is nonetheless real although difficult to verbalize.

The adoption of our ideas is not, of course, due solely to choice on the part of Navahos. Missionaries, government officials, and traders are consciously and systematically trying to redeem the Navaho from "savagery." Some programs have conscientiously endeavored to take account of individual Navaho customs and even of the more external patterns of Navaho life. But because they have taken no account of underlying Navaho philosophy, they have often produced results regarded as unfortunate by Navahos and whites alike. The rationally desirable innovations have failed to configure correctly with the unconscious system of meanings characteristic of Navaho implicit culture.

This is no new experience in planned culture change. Many attempts at acculturating on the part of missionary groups have had (to the planners) the unexpected consequences of contributing to the reinvigoration of basically aboriginal religions. Education in white values in government schools has promoted "rugged individualism" without the limiting and integrating controls which the white American absorbs in the home as part of his largely un verbalized philosophy. It is as if there were forces "behind" the explicit culture which made for acceptance of one foreign idea but for rejection of the associated ideas that contribute to discipline and control of behavior. Certainly ideas are retailed with subtle distortion of borrowed patterns of thought and behavior to swing them into line with remarkably tenacious underlying ideas.

There is not space to trace in detail the ways in which Western conceptions have disturbed or destroyed the relative smoothness of Navaho social life. Let us look merely at some aspects of the effects of white premises and categories with respect to individualism, government, economic institutions, and sex. It will be easier to follow out the course of events in these rather concrete realms than to trace, at this time, the effects of ideas from Western culture upon Navaho ideas. The less tangible, more implicit aspects of Navaho philosophy have undoubtedly been altered by the impact of Christianity, for example, but the underlying premises and concepts change more slowly than does behavior. Nevertheless, it is clear that many contemporary deviations make sense only if understood in terms of the influence of Christian notions of individualism, personal responsibility, sex code, and the like.

The category "government," something fixed and powerful to white people, is foreign to Navaho thinking. Authority, to their minds, extends only indefinitely and transitorily beyond the established rules of behavior between sex groups, age groups, and especially, classes of relatives. There are headmen, but the



sphere of their influence widens and narrows with the passage of time, the emergence of a new leader, the rise of a new faction. The prestige of some headmen often spreads beyond their own local region. Through channels excessively informal they can sometimes "swing" most of the members of a number of local groups to a given course of action. By and large, however, control of individual actions rests in the group and not in any authoritative individual or body.

The whole mechanism of Navaho social control is too fluid, too informal, too vague to be readily understood by white people who think of authority in terms of courts, police, and legislative assemblies. But Navaho social controls are extremely effective for those who remain within their own group. Never to be lost sight of is the fact that the basis of the system was and still is the family. To live at all in this barren region the individual must have the economic cooperation of others, and such cooperation is hardly likely to come to those who deviate from the "right way of doing things" as the Navaho see it. Thus the major threat which restrains the potential offender is the withdrawal of the support and the good will of his neighbors, most of whom are "family" to the Navaho. Gossip and criticism were and are major means of social control throughout Navaho society. These diffuse sanctions are less effective today than in former times because, by taking up wagework for whites, the offender can escape both the need for economic cooperation by the group and the criticism aimed at deviators.

The introduction of the white idea of individualism without the checks and balances that accompany it leads to the failure of collective or cooperative action of every sort. The substitution of paid labor for reciprocal services is not in itself a bad thing. But there is not a commensurate growth of the white idea of individual responsibility. There tends to be a distortion of the whole cultural structure, and this makes it difficult to preserve harmonious personal relationships and satisfying emotional adjustments. Widespread exercise of escape mechanisms, especially alcohol, is the principal symptom of the resultant friction and decay. Human groups that have different cultures and social structures have moral systems that differ in important respects. The linkage is so great that when a social organization goes to pieces morality also disintegrates.

A typical cause for confusion, distrust, and hostility arising out of a difference in the system of categories is the fact that Navahos are today dependent upon a distant and mysterious white institution called "the market." In the days of bartering raw materials, a sheep or sack of wool maintained a rather constant value. At present, when both are sold to the trader, the Navaho never know in advance whether the lamb will bring ten cents a pound or only five cents, and they see no sense in these variations. They share the common distrust of farmer folk for those who buy and resell the products of their hard labors, but they are at a greater disadvantage than the white farmer because they are unfamiliar with white marketing customs and have no means of understanding the reasons for the apparently senseless fluctuations in price and demand. Moreover, this lack of understanding makes the Navaho feel uncertain about improving their products. Why should they invest money, labor, and time simply to benefit the trader? Similar confusion and irritation resulted from the government's program of killing



"excess" livestock. From the Navaho point of view only production is ethical. Destruction — except to satisfy immediate hunger — is unethical.

The Navaho have only "object taboos" as regards sex, none of the "aim taboos" which are so marked a development of Western culture. That is, Navahos do feel that sexual activity is improper or dangerous under particular circumstances or with certain persons. But they never regard sexual desires in themselves as "nasty" or evil. In school and elsewhere whites have tended to operate upon the premise that "any decent Navaho" will feel guilty about the sexual act which takes place outside of marriage. This attitude simply bewilders Navahos and predisposes them to withdrawal of cooperation in all spheres. To them sex is natural, necessary, and no more or no less concerned with morals than is eating.

The Navaho and the white administrator may see the same objective facts, and communication may be sufficiently well established so that each is sure the other sees them. Naturally, there is mutual irritation when the same conclusions are not reached. What neither realizes is that all discourse proceeds from premises and that premises (unfortunately taken for granted by both) are likely, in fact, to be very divergent. The pressure of such double standards is highly disruptive. Just as rats that have been trained to associate a circle with food and a rectangle with an electric shock become neurotic when the circle is changed by almost imperceptible gradations into an ellipse, so human beings faced with a conflicting set of rewards and punishments tend to cut loose from all moorings, to float adrift, and become irresponsible. The younger generation of the Navaho are more and more coming to laugh at the old or pay them only lip service. The young escape the control of their elders, not to accept white controls but to revel in newly found patterns of unrestraint.

The Navaho are torn between their own ancient standards and those which are urged upon them by teachers, missionaries, and other whites. An appreciable number of Navahos are so confused by the conflicting precepts of their elders and their white models that they tend, in effect, to reject the whole problem of morality (in the widest sense) as meaningless or insoluble. For longer or shorter periods in their lives their only guide is the expediency of the immediate situation. The incipient breakdown of any culture brings a loss of predictability and hence of dependability in personal relations. The absence of generally accepted standards of behavior among individuals constitutes, in fact, a definition of social disorganization.

A stable social structure prevails only so long as the majority of individuals in the society find enough satisfaction both in the goals socially approved and in the means of attainment to compensate them for the constraints which ordered social life inevitably imposes upon uninhibited response to impulse. In any way of life there is much that to an outside observer appears haphazard, disorderly, more or less chaotic. But unless most participants feel that the ends and means of their culture make sense, in terms of a unifying philosophy, disorientation and amorality become rampant. Some major Navaho premises are incompatible with some major premises of our culture. A resolution must be sought in terms of wider assumptions.









# THE PROBLEM OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Photographs on pages 125-129

To return to a critical problem posed earlier, we may ask: after we have assisted the "backward" or "underdeveloped" areas of the world to obtain what we call a "decent standard of living" by helping their people to establish improved technologies and by creating in them a desire for the manufactured products of our own industrial system, what then? Do we allow them to refashion their own social structures and value systems to meet the changing conditions of economic life? Or do we attempt to inculcate them with our own particular version of social and political forms? Or do we supply the material goods and improved technology and allow the communists to supply them with a new "religion" and set of values? These are certainly far from merely academic questions in the modern world.

If we consider the Navaho case to be a small instance of the crucial problems in the Point IV program, there are certain lessons to be learned for broader application. The Navaho case is not unlike many of the problems in Southeast Asia, Africa, or Latin America where large populations live on limited resource bases that support them only in relative poverty. Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned is that sheer technical assistance and economic help is not enough. It may solve some of the food, clothing, and shelter problems, but it also disrupts the dynamic equilibrium in the whole way of life of a people and sets up a train of changes in family, community, and religious life. Similarly, we perceive how the preaching of Christianity or Democracy on the part of missionaries, educators, or others also leads to changes in the economic system.

One important consequence of either type of assault, if carried out too rapidly upon a "backward" people, is a period of social and political disorganization in which individuals are caught "between two worlds" and are chronically dissatisfied. But human beings will not tolerate such a state of affairs for long. If solutions are not found in the development of new coherent sets of values, they are sought by nativistic returns to the old values, or by a psychological flight from the realities of the intolerable situation by using alcohol or peyote.

What is needed in the Navaho case (as well as in other "underdeveloped" areas of the world) is an approach which extends beyond mere technical assistance and sees the problems in their full social and cultural complexity.





