

Tape #326
NAVAJO
Joe Brown
Recorded by Tom Ration
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Side One

STORIES FROM GRANDPARENTS,
LONG WALK, PERSONAL
HISTORY, LIFE OF EARLY
NAVAJO.

We have here with us, Mr. Joe Brown who is 70 years old to talk about the story of his great grandfather and mother of what the father has told him. Most of these stories that I'm getting from the people, I have to get it right off the bat; some of them don't want to tell their story in Navajo because they, some of them are religious and so I have to pick it up right off the mouth as they go along. And here is Mr. Joe Brown telling about his great grandfather, how he came about on the early days. This is the story about the Fort Summers days:

My name is Joe Brown. I now about 70 years of age, old and I have been around this country for, I think it's 70 years now. During the time of my earliest days my father says that he was born right after the Fort Summers time. So, I think that he didn't went to Fort Summers, his father, my grandfather, my great grandfather, has went to Fort Summers, during his earliest days and he was the one that tell most of the story of how things came about. My great grandfather says that he was born near Tohatchi, New Mexico and my father says that he was born just east of Coyote Canyon. Most of these stories that he has told was about how they went about in the earliest days. Mr.

Joe Brown is my name, is Brown. I never did thought of telling story like this before. This is the first time I have been asked about my life. Some people are religious about their story about their life. In the earliest days our old people says, you must not tell any story about your life because if you do, you wouldn't live too long. So, nowadays we dont' hardly live anything like that so that's why I am now telling you a little about what I think of myself.

My father says during the earliest days of my life that in the birth of our first birth, when we were a baby, babies, we never do start in nursing at that same hour of our birth. My father said they used to wait for half a day till we start nursing, so that's why, that was what it was and our father used to give us a prayer as we been born, this is the way we have to start our living before we start to be nursed by our mother we have to have a prayer...so, that is the way I have been brought up. He said that I was born east of Coyote Canyon. My father used to live around that part of the country and he said that when I was born, my father was on a hunt, jackrabbit hunt and while they were hunting I was born and they have to wait. They went word to my father and it took about a half a day for him to reach me. So, that evening, that afternoon my father took me out of the door side, right

out the door. Most of these hogans were built facing east, everyone of them. You never have seen any hogan that is facing south or west or north, always facing east. So, this was the time thst I was being prayed for. My father have took me outside the door and he says, my great old world, my earth mother...the wind and the great sun and the great moon and the great night and the great cloud, the great world of ours to bring my son. The great mountains and then the big ocean around us and all the holy spirit that is upon the earth and through the universe, the great stars... Today I must have faith on my son; that from this day he shall live in happy life; he shall see the world. He must be a great leader of it's people. Today I pray thee that to the east he shall stretch his leg out, to the west, to the south he shall stretch his leg out, to the west he shall stretch his leg out, to the north he shall stretch his leg out... All four ways his leg shall give him happiness. To the east, to the east he shall stretch his arm out, to the south he shall stretch his arm out... All round us he shall use his arm out, to the north he shall stretch his arm out... All round us he shall use his arm as a great weapon. This he shall stand guard for himself. His leg and his arm must help him along. Oh great spirit, which we are now living on, I shall pray that my son shall be greater than

all. I've asked this in the name of our great spirit that we are living by. I thank you. This is the way the story always been prayed when a little baby was born. His father must take him out if he is a boy, and if he is a girl his grandma can take him out to pray for her. This is the way the earliest people used to do, but nowadays we don't do it. When a baby is being born the mother can be taken to the hospital and the baby can be born over there. Maybe that is the only one reason why our younger generation don't listen to us, they don't have sense enough to go around, but in earliest days our younger generation always have good sense and good mind of its living life. As I say that we have all kinds of stories from the beginning of Navajo life, Navajo time. All these stories that we now have doesn't even, doesn't even help it looks like because like I say our younger generation, our children, don't even, don't even listen to us. We can say all we want to them, tell them how a man can live and how they can live...they just laugh at us. Early in the morning you feed them the next minute they are off some place. This is the way most children are in through the reservation. They don't listen to their parents; they don't even think about their life, where can they get food, where can they get clothes. They make their poor mother and poor father work the hell out of themself to

give them food, to get food for them and to get clothes for them. At the same time they beg their mother and father for money to go places. So, all these things that we have got today don't seem to work out among our people. We have alot of trouble with our children today as we all know that some places what I heard of the younger generation that some places they have beaten their father and beaten their mother just because they ask for money and the mother and father don't give them money. They have to take it away from them somehow and sometimes if they have sheep or horse or cattle they can go ahead and sell it. The mother and father are afraid of them nowadays. This is the way most of the Navajo people are throughout the reservation and when they go to school they don't even listen to you. You can talk all you want to, but nobody listen to you. You can talk the hell out of yourself, they don't know what you are talking about and you don't know who you are talking to. This is the way all over the Navajo Reservation today...we don't control our people, control our children nowadays. So, this is part of my story that I like to tell you and the worse part is the liquor part. Our younger generation from 16 on, they start to be drinking, right now the juvenile police and juvenile judge won't even control them at all. They can throw them in jail and keep them for months. About the

end of the months' time they get out, the next 2 or 3 days they will be back in jail. This is the way things are going all through the Navajo Reservation today. So, that's why I say that the great old prayer that we used to have in the earliest days when our children has been born at home, the grandfather used to or the father used to pray for their children so they can live right, throughout their life. This is one of the story that we are forgetting all over and that is why. Most of the Navajo people thinks that is one reason that our children don't listen to us. We have forgotten our great culture, our great religious that we are all joined the white people's way as most of our Navajo people joined the church religious and there is another kind of religious they have joined, is what they call a Peyote Religious. There are just a very few people that are still on their own way of doing. So, this is what I know about my people today. As I went along from 70 years ago they were all different, people were all following one religious, but today it is all broken up and been branching out in different ways. Now we just don't know what to say and what to do. All we are is just staying put, just like a scared chicken or a scared crow. We can't even move our neck around or head around to look at somebody else. Before we know there will be somebody giving us a good sock in the eye just because we are looking

at them or just because we laugh about something. This is the way things are going throughout our Navajo Reservation and that is the bad part of our time today. We have been sending our children to high schools and quite a few of them over to see if they can do something if we can educate them good, but education doesn't really help. Some of the graduate children are wandering around about here and there all over through the country and so... that's why I say that I don't think we'll ever get into our old, old road but we are all trying our best to see what we can do about our children so this is one of the story that I have in mind to tell you, and as we went along from time to time we have been enjoying mostly good life. In my days all these things that I have just told you, they just started recently about, say about 5 or 6 years ago, it started, our younger generation don't even listen to us.

In the earliest days we have what we call sweatbath. This we have forgot also. This was place way back in from beginning of our Navajo time. We have all kinds of different chant about it, prayers about the sweatbath and that was one of our great religious leading things that we ever had before.

And then we have a story with us according to the two twins that went to the great sun once as we have reached

a moon not too long ago. Something like a story like that...there was two good twins that went to the sun. You know how the sun is, it is burning hot, it is a story like that. So, now we like to say that the story that has been done just recently by the white people that went to the moon is just something similar to that. So, I do hope that most of the story that we believe today has connected with our story of older days in ancient time. All these stories we have is a story that our people have done in the earliest days, so that is why I'm telling you about some of these people might not know nothing about it. As we go along we follow most of the older time that our great forefather and great grandfather has done in the past time. And some of us are still keeping the story that they have told us many, many, many year ago, or some might say many, many moons ago...it's the same thing, but year is more longer than the moon. So, this is the way things seem to have came about. We have more stories about lot of tother more things in the past, but as I say that we have to go find our cattle and have it pays for our stocks to stay (?).

As our Navajo generation has been through in the past time of ancient time, even then before over a thousand years back they claim this was a story that started that the great grandpas and our forefather has been telling

since around 1400. Before that there was a story came out less than over 2,000 years back. These ancient people from there back in 2,000 years it has been telling some other stories before that this legend was going on. So, we know that as we have been going through our story as a white man's way in the church religious, they have the same kind of story, nobody knows where they have started. It's the same way in the Navajo story. As the story went along years by years it has been changing and there is more story has been left out as we went along. This is the way I know about most of our life. As we now look at from 1969 looking back as far as 100 years back and take it around the Fort Summer's time, our Navajo people that was just gradually picking up most thing that they could find to learn what to wear. As they went along they had more skin hides that they were wearing as they went along. So, thinking about that, we people that are living on this earth hasn't started not too long ago as we know. Same way with the white fellows when they went across the sea in Europe. They were just scared gradually inventing things as they went along like Columbus. Columbus knew that the world was round, a round world so he studied that, that's because he came across the United States of America and during the time of his arrival the Navajo and different other Indians; Indians that was just barely

picking up the same kind of invention that white fellow had. In these days the Indians don't even know nothing about guns, they were just in the way of ammunition and protection they got was mostly arrows and spears, the time when Columbus arrived. As they went along from time to time the Indian was just barely knowing things what to do. They have a time to learn how to make a good shoe out of skin, buckskin and hides. So, as we went along we knew that it was not too long ago since man started. Before that, take it back to about 5,000 years back or less than that. The Navajo people used to tell stories about that far back. They said that they went naked, wearing no clothes. They were mostly living in these bark trees like cedar barks. Cedar bark was the only thing to be wearing and some of the, but they said that weeds, grasses, they don't last long, but cedar bark they said that we can make it up and freeze (?) it with wild animal fats that it will last quite a while, as you use it for a britches (?) or a diaper or something of a kind like that just to be learning how to dress right. Before that people went around naked, they don't feel bashful about that stuff. This is the way the Navajo people story has been told back from the ancient time. They keep on coming years after years and trying to find a way of better way of living, so that's why I say that we people that's now

living on this earth, this old world didn't start too long ago. But the scientists and the geologists say the world has been going millions of years ago. I think it's truth too, but then on top of that, human nation and livestock and some other things also started not too long ago. Some places you could see things that are formed back into rock like trees, these pine trees, formed back into petrified, things like of that kind. They trace it and they tell you that the world was going on longer than, longer than man's life. As we went along we had the same story from the Navajo people. They have some very good stories about our ancient time. Some of them are religious; they are superstitious about telling such a story in the living way also. So, nowadays according to most of our young generation has turned into a church religion which they don't care of anymore of the religious way and the... So, as we went along we Navajo people thinks that we have forgotten alot of things as we used to have in the earliest days like we have, we used to have some various good arrows in the time of the beginning of our Navajo people. Take it for some of these arrowheads... they been found in different places as they been fighting among themselves with other Indians or else monsters or something like that. So, as the story has been told by our great forefathers and their forefathers as we know or

think that some of these stories are very true stories which what they have told us. As a way of some of our old people, our grandfathers and forefathers have passed on some of the stories that has happened way back in the ancient time. They said that most things were only wild life which they have lived by and most of the wild herbs and weeds which grows in the mountain, these are some of the tigers, they were used as food and wild grapes and wild herbs of many kinds that has been known and find out a way that it can be used for human nation. As we went along our great medicine man has found out most things as they went along they have geologies and science to trace things around as they went along. They have many other, other things in the line of food in these days, like some of the wild animals and wild creatures are suppose not to be aten (?) as like snakes and rattlesnakes and some other kinds of animals. They were not suppose to be eaten. As we went along we have a whole line of stories, that it is a very good story. The people of the ancient time said that in wild life, bear was good to eat and lion was good to eat, mountain lion and the porcupine was good to eat and prairie dog, rabbits, jack-rabbits and some other animal, some other animals like rats, they were good to eat. There are some other creature like snakes and skunks and other things like frogs. The

Navajo was superstitious on that to eat frogs, they said when you start eating it you go, you can't walk at all and same way with snakes. If you happen to eat snakes you didn't walk at all. There are alot of things that is in the line of crawling like lizard and I could name a whole lot they are not good to eat. This is the way the Navajo people have found out alot of things and ways of making a living. As we went along people has to learn about many things that they have to keep away from. Same way with herbs and weeds, there are alot of weeds that you can't touch; they are poison. As soon as you touch some kind of weed it gives you itches...and swells, that's the way alot of weeds are being found. Today they have different kind of name as the Navajo Indian medicine man has named them of which kind that we shouldn't eat. During the summer time some of our folks, the fathers and mothers or grandfather show us not to touch this kind of weeds and lot of younger generation, they don't know about it so we got to teach them to keep away from a numbers of weeds that we don't want them to touch. Time went on from years after years. Things is gradually knocking off, maybe some good things, good kinds of weeds that had to vitamin. We had some weeds and herbs that had vitamins which keep you strong. As we went along these things that

most of the Navajo people have been treated when they were young.

As I been telling you that we people have not started too long ago and were just getting into where that we can get more smarter every year, especially the white people. Now, as the story went years by years the Navajo people knew that some of these days some of the human nation would reach the world, so that's what we have with us today that man has put foot on the moon. And there are alot of stories about the moon from the start from the beginning of the time which we always been, been talking about as the story went along. For centuries the Navajo people knew that some of our human nation is going to travel in space. They knew that the space trip would some time come. In their stories they don't know how they could reach the moon, but still they knew way before time. They thought that they could reach the moon by sunrail as there is such things in the world. They claim that some of these days people will be going through spaces in sun-rail and it's going to be happen again some of these days. Today we have different kinds of invention that we have on hand that the people has told from the beginning of time. We have done that we have reached the moon and according most of these legends and religious that the Navajo peoples got, I think most of them are truth by the

ways of stories that they tell.

There is the story about the Navajo legend, where it started. The story started from which they called the underworld as the people knew that part of the Navajo nation has grew up its life where they call the underworld. We don't know where the underworld is, but that's one of their great stories that they have still on hand that they believe. As those story went along there's where came the story that branches out that some of these days people will be going through spaces and will reach the moon, so that was what happened today. As we been going along we have as I told you that lot of story has branched out through life as time went on. These legend stories and legend chant that the Navajo got, claims that from the beginning of time as I told you about the underworld. Most of these stories has different kind of story that starts with on each sounds. We have here with us today, as what we call falling log chant and the mountain chant, the square dance, the evil way and more other kinds of different dances that we have still remembers in the Navajo legend. As we went, as we go along today most of these things or most of the Navajo people has gone along on it. As we went along from up to Fort Summer's there was alot of good things that was still remembers at the Fort Summer's time. Since people has moved back from

Fort Summers, there was just very few was left and when they came back to Fort Defiance there was most of them are still remembers. After that about 10 years later there was where the school started, where the square school started. Here and all through the Navajo Reservation as we have most of them have been told to you and from there on this school was the one that best branched us throughout the Navajo country. It stopped most of our chants, it stopped most of our religious because of the church religious has moved in on each year. They had Catholic and Protestant and Mormon and alot of other different church came in. Here is the time it start to branch out as we went along. Most of our young generation don't even care to learn anything about their old ways of religions of doing medicine ways. It is not just only medicine chant, it is some of them were what you call good luck, good luck chant and richness. These has been forgotten throughout the Navajo Reservation. As today I have told you that we have just a very little left of what we still believe and it was truth too. We have now over 13,000 Navajo on the reservation which we have now overgrown our reservation. As we have find out that most of our, most of the religions that have done all these things as we went along, that's what most of our people have believe in today, even so, as our livestock is getting

down to where most of the Navajo people does hardly nothing to their name on the sheep side. These, we have chants of making sheep and praying for sheep and goats, horses, mostly all animals that we use so that is the reason why I have told you that we have lost mostly all of our religious way of our legend. As we went along most of these are being forgotten, today it's just about gone. So, that's the reason most of the Navajo people thinks and says that we are going to run out of stock and we've never hardly had anymore stock on hand. So, I think it is truth about most of the story that we have here and same way with the horses. What other stock that we have there is just about out of it. We lost most of it just because of chant of doing. I think we'll probably have nothing in the next 10 or 15 years of now. That's what the Navajo people has brought it up that we lost all of it. We will lose and forget all of it as we have been told. So, I just don't know what else to tell you in the line of story, but most of these stories that I'm telling you...it looks kind of sad story. They claim that some of these days that we will be as poor as ever, I mean on the Navajo side; but I don't know. The white people has been helping us along...as we and that is the one reason that we have a few sheep left, a few horses left and a few jewelries left that we're forgetting most of our luck

chant ways in the past...that's what they believe. So, I think it is truth what most of the story the Navajo's telling in the way of a story of earlier days that the great grandpa and great grandma has told us that we was going to be ruled under some kind of nation, so that is truth that we are being ruled under the white people's way, we have a United States President. So, my friend, I have told you enough stories that how Navajo people has ever a legend belief today; and I don't know what else to tell you so I think, I think I have told you enough stories.

So, I go on through the time of Fort Summer's time as my grandmother, my great grandmother and my grandpa has told me most of the story about his life as they wander around. My great grandfather and my great grandmother says that in the earlier days they never thought that they would be chasing around the country. They said that they were living down around, down around the other side of state line, Lupton, Arizona. In the time while they were living over there they were jumped on, were attacked by a bunch of horsemen. In the first place, they didn't know what it was until finally they found out that it was the Mexican that jump on them, a band of Mexican soldiers. And then most of them been captured and some of them were shot down and some of them ran away and they were the ones

that got away in the dark. This was happened just before dark. So, they were saved that night. They were walking all night long until the next morning at sunrise. They said that they just about reach Grand Canyon one night, but the old folks knew that if they ever find their track they might be tracked down. So, there was a bunch of Indian, Navajo Indian people got away that night and some of them were catch up together the next morning. But they been keep walking, even it was daylight. About something around noon they went down in the Grand Canyon and they spread out, they hide out different places and that's the way they been saved at that time. For one whole week they were watching out for themselves in the canyon. The menfolks was the only ones that was looking for food; the womenfolks stayed hidden all day long until about a week's time. They have scout, Navajo scout to look back for as far as they can and there was nothing, nothing following. So, here they were in the Grand Canyon for just about 1 year or so.

They said that they still remember the place where they used to live. They had the little village and during the night time nobody has kept the fire going, just in the daytime. But there have been quite a few caves that they know of that they can build a fire and cook something they need. This is the way they came along until about a

year later they were told that there was a red coat and a blue coat was rounding up quite a few Navajos, so during that time in the Grand Canyon there was nothing to find to eat. Sometimes the menfolks goes out hunting for weeks and never find nothing at all. So, they kept on thinking that and talking to each other, let us join the red coat the blue coat. Whenever you see any more Navajo being surrender again, we like to join them. So, they have sent scouts to scare over the country each morning...each day and then finally one the scout has run across a band of people, band of soldiers which they think it would be best for them to join, so they have joined the red coat near Tuba City. The scout was the one that brought the red coat up the Grand Canyon. He was captured and told the red coat that there was a band of Navajo people that wants to join, there a red coat to take them down to safe. So, that's the time my grandmother and the grandfather joined the army. It took them over about 2 or 3 weeks or just pretty near a month until they came back and reached to Fort Wingate. This was the headquarter of the red coat and blue coat. They had to stay at Fort Wingate for about a couple of weeks after they joined, they joined the red coats. And then they went on to be moved to Fort Summers. They were told that there was another fort on the way that they would want to camp which they didn't know where it

was. So, one morning they started from Fort Wingate... In these days they had different kinds of wagons which was made out of wooden wheel. You could hear the wooden wheel about 5 miles away going along the road. There were great big oxes for pulling the wagon along and they had some of the older folks and young children was to be piled on the wagon part of the way. And some of the ox was pulling food as they went along. It took them 3 days to reach, it took them about 3 days to reach Mt. Taylor. Near Mt. Taylor on the south side where they call San Rafael, was the next fort to stop going to Fort Summers. They found some Navajo people there was waiting to get on the bus or get on the wagon. There when they arrived at south of Grants, south of Mt. Taylor, they have run across some of their relations that they have missed about a year ago or 2 years ago, here they met again. It was a whole bunch of their own relation, says my grandmother and my grandfather. They were happy then together as they went along to on to start on their trip to Fort Summers. There was a whole band of Navajo people, most of them walking, walking along. There was a bunch of armies that was following the crew. In about several night about 2 weeks later they ran into a big river which Rio Grande River. Here they had to stay about a day till they start across, across the river. The soldier built some boat, flat boat.

There was all kinds of boats, but they were built to take them across to the other side of the river. They been working on moving across for another day. We stayed about 3 days at Rio Grande. The next following day we started out again and then we have walked it over the Manzano Mountain or around the foot of the mountain. We didn't went right across, or right over 'cause it was too rough. We have to walk all the way around until we meet or reach the other side. And here we have camping on the way, just on the foot of the Manzano Mountain on the south side. We camped there two days as most of the people was tired out. So we had to camp and we was there for two days. From there on we move on eastward. About one weeks' time we have reached Fort Summers.. It was a little valley, no trees at all; there was barely nothing on around us, no trees, nothing to look at all, no mountains; we just see meadows, miles away. Here, when we got there most of the Navajos people was crying for their own homeland. They thought that they were way down from around the other side of the world, which was just a little ways today, we can reach one day in a car today. In these days it took weeks and months to reach that far. This way the people had to stay at least 4 years. They keep coming, weeks after weeks. Finally, most of the people was fed. Each day there were wagonloads of food coming in every day, every

day from the East. In that time the train track was already in around Santa Fe. Most of the, most of the food came in from Las Vegas which was the nearest railroad station there, and some of the Navajo used to haul stuff everyday. They went along with white people, the soldiers. Each, every, each week they had about 10 wagons to come in with food. There were been beef, meat butchered five at a time every day. This was going for at least 4 years. Finally, I think the government was kind of tired of them or I don't know why it was. So the people had to talk about peace. As they were talking with the government it took them about at least 2 weeks to discuss this over. Letters was to be sent to Washington. When the letters went out to Washington to the President, it takes about pretty near a month for one letter to come back from Washington, to see or say what they want for us to do and the letter came back and the letter said that we Navajo people have to be sent to Oklahoma. There, they think that it would be best for us to live, but most of our people don't want to move that way. They want to move back to their own homeland, back to Fort Defiance area where we are now living today. The Navajo people have fight about that, discuss it and in time finally the general of the army says that we will discuss this soon in about another week. I want about 5 Navajo representatives

as chief. These people will take the lead so that it was told in Navajo what the general wants. In these days they had one of the Navajo band that can interpret between the government and the Indian.

There was a man named by Jesus Arviso, he was a full blooded Mexican and he was captured by the Navajo, bought by the Navajo people and he was raised among tribe where he talks pretty good Navajo. From the Navajo on there was Mexican was in the army. So, this Jesus Arviso had to interpret on the thing that they were talking about to be moved back to their home on the reservation which is now the reservation. It was good way of interpreting. They had a Mexican army which can talk English. The 2 Mexican talk together, one know how to talk English and one know how to talk Navajo which was Jesus Arviso. And they, in that way the interpretation was being forward to between the government and the Navajo Indian Tribe. From here on it went along fine as they have the meeting. For about 1 week the treaty was just about settled. At least 5 days they were discussing and planning what it could be done and finally, the general got to the point that if the Navajo people would promise to send their children to school he said I will make agreement, if they promise. We will give them school education, at the same time we will teach them in any way that we can help.

This is what he brought out. His name was Captain Sherman and he was the one that made the agreement with the Indian people. Here the interpretation between Jesus Arviso went on time. Finally the treaty was signed. The 5 head leader of Navajo was the one that signed the treaty. The real head signer was Parecito. He was named in Mexican and Manuelito. The statue that you see in Gallup, he was one of the man that made the treaty in 1868. This is the way most of the story went and then finally, when the treaty was made they had a big pow-wow. And the pow-wow was made and the next day the people had to move back into Arizona. Here, they are now happy today living on their good old land. On this returning they had learned alot of ways of good ways and they had better sense. Up to date, all the Navajos are doing fine on their reservation. We have still lot of more other stories about the Navajo people. We will be keep continuing on to tell you most of the stories that we know about our people which I'm now telling you has came out of my great grandfather and my father's story, and I am not telling you. Maybe I wouldn't say that I don't know if it was done or not but this had happened with my great grandfather and great grandmother. This is the story that they had in their earliest days. We always tell the stories to each other. In the winter time is the time we usually tell

story. So, I think I will come to a conclusion and I thank you very much for the information and time I have here with you about the story of the Navajo life. I thank you.

END OF TAPE