

Tape #383 (side 1)
NAVAJO
Oakee James (73 yr.)
April, 1969
Recorded by Tom Ration

Story of his forefather
in early years
Story of early people

This is a story of the old, the latest people that how they think it is that they had been originated into the Navajo tribe. This is a long story, it will take about 10 or 15 tapes to work on. So, mostly of these things that are being worked on they are be continuing on from time after time till they would all finish the story. It goes by the songs of chant and sand painting through what they know that they have followed from time after time. It is still secret through the Navajo country, so we will be keeping continue on with the story of a man named by Oakee James. He has a well known mind as remembers of what they think that he is today. So, we will be keeping on continue. Some of regulars round the heart were probably a baskets. So some Navajo makes a little basket today in some Apache group makes a great deal all of the kind that is containing in the southwest but not in the north. So we gather that the wandering people saw a new art suit to their new way of life and beginning to use it. Perhaps some Navajo woman learns to make boards of bottles. The most necessary kind of containing perhaps as they pass. Some Navajo man marries (?) woman which started in the arts. Perhaps they monopolize trade for what they need. In any case it seems likely that there

was basket girls in these early Navajo homes as there have been ever since the white have known the Navajos. The continuous of the music both of these are ancient type in the southwest, where the ancestors of the pueblos made all their kitchen wares and baskets before pottery came in. The bowls is of a type you may see in old basket maker cave. Much was eaten from each bowl until a short time ago by the missionary Indian of southwest, southern California and the plateau of the Navajo, eastern Nevada. We can imagine a finding seeds on the ground around this old types of pottery and reach. We can enter it for handful of mush made of wild seeds. Today the Navajo bowl is usually mostly used at wedding ceremonial where the bride and groom eat handful of cornmeal mush as their first meal together. Also the Navajo medicine man or (?) use a bowl in his ceremony trying it upside down for use as a drum. He is very careful that each of these made according to contain religious rule and before most Navajo women today are unwilling to undertake the test. They prefer to get bowls from the potters(?) but even so one rule always be observed. There must be a broken in the poppings as shown in the install of potteries. Some Indians call this the spirit line and says it is left as in some pueblo pot so that the makers spirit shall not be shot in. Navajo women near the (?) still makes the basket containing which we have a matching before. We have already spoken about

Navajo pottery. These tall grey jars with the round bottom shows they will not stand up alone and look as they they were need to be placed among stones as the campfires or carry on a woman's back slightly by the yaki rope. Often there is a rope like directors around the neck of the jar against which the loop will fit. Such jars are still made by the Navajo and Apaches and by the other, no other tribes in the southwest. Did the Navajos start making these after they got to the southwest as we suggest in the last chapter or did they learn somewhere farther north and bring the art with them. Perhaps the next few years will tell. Clothing, there were only a few new slights of clothing for any Indian in early days unless they were woven like the pueblos or feather workers like some Indian of Mexico. The difference was in the mineral they would get and the shells keep or (?) till they found the elements and the cause in the way they paint or toasted their face and dress their hair. That was where they use their time and their imagination and where the difference comes in. Man usually wore a breech cloth that is the stripe of (?) which presses between the leg and the behind over the belt front and back. Woman had a short skirt or a material was scarce too little opening, one in front and one behind they were; then there was some sorts of rough ripping for the feet and the cold weather amounting of skin are trailing in the north and the people nevertheless

make clothing of his self out of skin. For the woods where the land of elk and deers as they wander south, some claims left the elk behind and some got into the land where there were few deers or none. So they noticed what was beginning warm by the people around them, learned where to get the material and did likewise. That most have been how some claims came to where the yaki is in the desert of Utah and Nevada there are few forests and therefore few deers. The chief plant is the yaki with its touch sword like leaf and its tall stock crowned with fruit like flat little strange bananas. The native Indian of that desert country from the ancient basket makers to the modern (?) have always known and used the yaki. They ate its fruit both fresh and dry. They (?) its leaf into (?) and from this they made malts, bag and clothes. The Navajo did the same; almost they pull out the strange brown shell from the (?) barks of the juniper tree. This is often called cedar barks (?) really there are no cedar in American. There are many cedar like trees however the most have this soft and useful lining in the bark. The same thing is used in the northern, in the northwest and perhaps the people had heard of it before. There are some places you could see pictures of it, some of the clothing is described by an old Navajo for those early days. The skirt is mostly fringed and so were the ends of the breech cloth. The (?) is that the ancient pueblo people who also use yaki,

but it seems to answer the description given by old Navajos, perhaps they learn how to make these rough yakis right from the natives of the country. They may have learned too, how to make the mountains which was slightly in oblong mounts of sheltered yakis held in places by twisting a grass or yaki string. Almost the only skin to be had in that desert land was that a little rabbit which hop among the sage brush. Modern whites sewed rabbit skins together to make coats, but the Indians of these days had no needle still they work out a way to make coats, to use a rabbit skin. They cut them into strips they tie these together to form a long furry rope. This they twisted together with yaki string, just as they twisted their (?). It makes a beautiful, soft and light (?) and was especially properly for whipping the baby on white day, winter days. Winter days when the people would get in the clothing they did so. There is a expanding description in the deeds, claimed about how one party came together in from the west and got to a place which sounds like Monument Valley. There they killed a herd of antelope and immediately sat down and began to make clothing. They shook so many hides says the story that they thought became known as the place or wool and hair. Today, white calls it their Captian. The skin clothing worn by the early people in the southwest was very rough and simple at first, not the fine sewing we see in museum. The breech cloth

was the strip pieces cut out of a deer skin with a stone knife. The skirt was a wider piece which the woman wraps around her waist with one opening at one side. She held it in place with a belt made of a straight of deer skin or yaki leaves or perhaps braided human hair. Sometimes woman had the whole dress made of two deer skin fastened together at the shoulder so that one hand in front and one in the back. There were no needles for sewing them together. A few holes were made along the edge of the skin with the bone awl then strips of skin were tied to them. Man might have a shirt made of deer skin, one or two tied down the sides. Two deer skin with a hole in the middle of the head and one or two tied down the sides. Notice this like of shirt for in later years they had blankets with a hole in the middle of the wear. Then in some ways for (?) they often wore a whole deer skin or if they were lucky a buffalo hide. The people want skin moccasins even if the rest of their clothing had to be yaki or rabbit fur. However, moccasin were not the soft, well sewed shoe of today. The skin used for them were usually for a begger or a wild cat. Sometimes this may have been just for (?) roughly tied together with sewn or with pieces of leather. Sometimes the sole were made out of the neck of a deer or badger. Since the neck is good, tough leather (?) were fastened together with sewn from a (?) rock or badger. Sometimes the shoe maker slightly used yaki or yucca root.

One specially they have which was not known to yaki or rabbit fur; however, moccasin made of (?) the old Navajo says..... sewing on the heel. This describes and the warriors tracks so he would not be followed easily. Man needed protection around their ^{ca}lake as they traveled among rocks and bushes. They wrap a strange piece of hide around their legs, stove pipe shape poked inside the moccasin at the bottom and tied it at the (?) with a strip of leather. Other garments were for dress up or for war. A man wore a patch type of leather around his left waist to protect it from the slope of a bow string. Sometimes this was discovered with a porcupine quill or with shells got in trade. On his head he might wear a cap with feathers. This was not the long feather bonnet now so popular among all Indians. For such war bonnet were used ordinarily only by some of the buffalo hunters. The Navajo cap was something like a round scalp cap of deer skin with a few feathers tied in the bunch of the top. The opposite page picture... a number of these caps some of the deer skin, some of the wild cat or badger. The bunch of feathers may stand up or hand down and sometimes the cap has a little horn made of the skin. Navajo man probably wore necklace even in these early days, for most Indians did. So perhaps necklaces were made of animal piece and called like these of modern or northern Indian or they may have been to be of birds down and cedar birds like these

of the south. We can picture our early people with their clothing of skin or yaki turned brown with the dust of travel. The man walked ahead carrying bows and arrows. Perhaps the special (?) backed bow of the north described in chapter (?) Some claims we know that arrows case made of badger or wild cat fur (?).... make war must have looked very first with the animal tail (?) formed from these case as description and perhaps more animal tail on their fur caps. The woman coming behind carrying babies on their back and probably they use the cradle board as many Navajo do still today. Each great hunter had several wives while that was the way with hunting people of early days, both among Indians and in the old world. Men were killed off rapidly by war so there would not be a husband for each woman, yet the woman with no one to hunt for her was a burden to the tribe. So it was thought well that each man should take as many wives as he could support. He like his wife to be sisters since they had learned to get along together. We have no way of telling whether Navajo were divided into clans. In these early days as they are now if they were the clans were probably of the same sort they have today where the clans name belong to woman and each person belong to his mother clan, not his father. Probably when a couple married and a man went to live with his wife's family as he does today. Sometime before they got to the southwest the Navajo and Apache

must have adopted the custom which forbid a man to speak to his mother-in-law or even to see her sister, a very wise custom. Old Navajos says for its, from the trouble when a young, a new young man comes into the family many people all over the world have felt of something and the custom is the wide spreading not in the southwest,... However, Navajo and Apache are the only southwestern Indian who reported it; so they have brought the idea with them perhaps learned from the other Indians. This is all guess work, even the Navajo have forgotten what their earliest customs were. Still we know that the custom of many wives and the mother-in-law rules were not learned from the pueblo. So, problem the Navajo from the pueblos, the Navajo did these things before reaching the southwest. Here is a fine chance for young Navajo to help with tribe history. Let them listen to the old people, let each one learn his own clan story which is all or hunt as it is to what the people wore and did. Someday these can be put together into a more complete Navajo history. This is a half history of the Navajo people, what they have weared in the past time and what they claim that they ate of. Most of these stories has been told by our old people that has passed away and we have printed some of these stories as for our history culture. There are many other more that we have written through the past year and written among old people so many times that we knew mostly all the story that has come

about in the earliest days. This is another story of a plant, wild and crucial which many years ago was happen when monster stated the war god kills the evil creature who had made the world useful. He made their remains into something useful. Old story tells how he scared their furs or feathers to the wind to become small birds or animals and as he did so he says earth people shall use you, the earth people of early Navajo days did indeed use every seed and roots, every food animal of their dry country. Down to the wood rats and the cattails pull them, it means work for everyday in the year. The men had to be off hunting for months at a time. Boys were busy setting traps for rats and grasshoppers. Women were breaking their backs to dig roots or shake the tiny seed from the wild plant. We do not need earning just enough to keep alive. A living means buying clothes, shoes, many new things for the house. Perhaps the radio and a car. To the early Navajo, however, a living means simple food, they make their house and clothing from the mineral found nearby and they (?) need to wash, point or prepare a museum that cost nothing. This story that I'm about to tell you mostly is during the monster time which the Navajo thinks that evil has tramped the world during the monster days and here we got a little story of what we might try to tell a little by using the songs and culture and sand painting of the old times. So, I will pronounce it again when the

monsters stay the war gods killed the evil creature who had made the world unsafe. He made their remains into something useful. The moon had to be off hunting for months at a time. Boys were.....cost for nothing for they got their pleasure from singing, story telling or playing games with equipment made from bones and sticks. Now and then they have a simple ceremonial for this was long before the day of the great sing. The whole family put in its time from day to day, simple in getting enough to eat. They have to travel long distance and had to wait many months for the different kinds of food. Berries might be ripe in one place and what we call July. Then seeds in a very different place in August. Animals were fat in the (?) so that was the only good time for big gaming exploring, of course the (?) the meat and dry the food but there was rapidly enough to last all winter. (?) story sometimes speaks of people dying of starvation, wild plants it is hard for modern people to imagine what plant root would be found before New Mexico had engaged orchard. Before the trains and trucks came along and bringing orange from California, potato from Colorado, the corn goods from all over the country. Even the Navajo today go to the trader for their canned peaches and to maintain their coffee, sugar, tobacco and chewing gum. What they found in that they found something to take the place of most our vegetables and fruits even of sweet and flavoring old people will

tell you of the plant they call wild potatoes, wild onions or wild spinach. (?) and chewing gum, pueblo people often use their same plant, and we can imagine how eagerly the news of anything fit to eat was passed around among all earlier Indians. Today many of the plants have disappeared and some can still be found and old people remember the entirely ways to which they could cook and preserve. Unless we might list quite a few herbs that has been used in the past century but they are different kinds of roots that is very hard to pronounce in Navajo but we have.... we might have names in English but most of our Navajo herbs of medicine are different ways of calling as we might give them on different pages these we know so far mostly from the works of different herbs, young Navajo would make an entirely project of adding to this list also getting more description and more description about how the plants were used. Navajo food plant roots in New Mexico is not good root country for root grows large in rich moisture soil. Still there were wet places were (?) and cattails would be found and in the spring the Navajo like to pick these and eat them raw. Other roots like wild onion or queen ann were worth keeping for the winter. They would be baked on hot stove, stone. They dried in the hot sun then they were to be eaten. They were cooked like a modern dry food now being sold. Then they were added to the meat, stew or eaten along with a flavor of good tasting

or some other herbs. The most entirely roots was the wild potatoes, much used by both pueblos and Navajos. White travelers were (?) or (?) Indian takes a mouthful of this roots, baked or boiled, from the mouthful of white clay actually the cave was a (?) Indian had found, that the strong taste of the roots makes their taste like a good fat meat. Indian has found that the strong taste of the root makes them fat and that would make them peppy would provide this sometimes. The roots cause stomach pain and they were helped by the handful of other kinds of clay. This it has been found containing manganese which is soil in modern drug stores as a reading of description. Our roots list Indian include (?) that it can hardly be chewed. This the Navajo put with numbers of other cuts and tasteless plants as things you should chew when you were starving. Below is..... below there are different types of listen plant known to have been used by the Navajos. There are alot of different kinds of poison weeds that has been known among the Navajos that are not suppose to be touch or taste but this has been learned among the Navajo people themself which kind of herbs and weeds are not suppose to be used. It has known to have been used by the Navajos. Name of each is given since that providing the only sure means of different kinds for English speaking readers. Next comes the Navajo name as report usefully by Gallup.....

Last and the name as was written in the rising and habit used by the Indian service. There are alot of drugs of different kinds of herbs that are not suppose to be used today. It is known by heart in the family. There are alot of early weeds that comes in the spring are better than the ones that comes late. These are the ones that we, that is used to be picked first in the spring. The better word rubbers and hot ashes to sing and remove the strong taste that they would be eaten now or dried before the winter. Then dried onions were to be eaten. There were put in ashes to cook and then boil it while onions and potatoes so they could last. Sometime it is boil and then dried out day and night, we added for these flavor. However this has been passed on from time to time and from generation to generation throughout the Navajo tribe. The thick roots were peeled, baked and then ground into flours. Wild potatoes has been done the same way being boiled and then dried out and be smash in. These were eaten raw, boiled and baked; cattails were eaten raw. There are alot of different other plants that are being eaten raw without cooking, because when the gum touch roots was not properly but people choose it when they want, they are starving. Wild buck weeds are very good to eat early earth weeds which we call earth or ground medicine roots boil and eaten. Green leaves good to eat were almost as raw as roots. Still when the first rain comes side of plant

must out terminate shoot which the Indian ate now, ate raw. These were good too if boiled like spinach or placed in a (?) with meat, the flavor was wild. There are many ways to find out which roots are not to be used because most of them could be found poison so the medicine man has to be very carefully look into these weeds. These were good to eat if boiled like spinach or placed in a stew with meat. The flavor was wild flavor used by all Indians in the southwest. The Spanish learn of it from the Indians and still makes much of it calling... calling it a (?) they use it for black dyes while another taste green. Pueblos and the Navajo both preserve it for the winter by peeling it dry. First they boil the plant, then press them dry and roll them into balls. These were dried in the sun then went soaked in water and boiled in deer fat. While Ute bears and different kinds of bears were picked sometimes they are used raw without cooking. The Navajo has many ways of making foods and dry roll of baked and then on hot stones; greased is one of what they call grass seed. All kinds of wild seeds that are being used. This was one of the most useful plant both for seeds and greens. The Navajo boils the soft like spinach or they used them for flavoring with other foods. Pig weeds was also being used; grass with hopper seeds is another one. Another important plant used all over the southwest for greens and seeds, be weeds were a very important food among

Indians. When the plant first comes up the (?) were boiled like spinach or they were stews with bits of meat and some wild earlier plants for flavorings or the boiling plants would be pressed out dry from rolling into boil. These were dried in the sun, they kept from the winter and wanted they were soaked in water then boiled with some deer fat. Boiled cactus, fish hooks is another, fish hook cactus is another food which is used like spinach. The soft peppery inside of these cactus were eaten raw, milk weeds is another weeds in Navajo they call (NAVAJO). It's very good food that will last for days. Sometimes it is also eaten raw or boiled. There are other things which was called grey leaf used as food and fruit and other fruit berries. Fruit and berries were the only sweet things since there was no sugar or honey. The fruit of dry southwest were often properly and stone. Still Indians ate them raw whenever they would and dry some for winter. Cactus fruit were picked off carefully from the spring plant with wooden stalks that of the pack of the cactus fruit were so large that it was cut in half and dried in the sun as the Navajo today dry peaches. The pressed root, however, was the yaki fruit like a short fat banana filled with black seeds. Even today the Navajo loves this root, in the former time they packed it and stored it in a quietly dried place. The fruit is soft and taste sweet so if it was to be kept it had to be roasted and restored. The

heart which is found is throwed away which finally comes out with the (?) like (?) or soap and water to make a thick slight up of eating with other food. Southwestern berries often had more stones than fruit. The best way to taste the hard little service berry, hoot berries, squaw berries and bucks thorn was to grind them between two rocks, grind them between two rocks. Seeds and all they were dried in the sun into the sweet (?) which would be aten like raisins or they might be soaked in water to form the fruit. Wild strawberries, root berries and plums were sweet enough to be a real treat even the tiny hips of wild rose were eaten now. The fruits was scarce in England during the war. These same rose berries were given to the school children and found in each part of their diet. Navajos eating with feather in their scarce of food. Then nothing else would be had, they ate the bitter berries of the junipers and the tasteless fruit of different kinds of berries. Juniper was a very delicious during the time of the earliest days. It was one of the best food that has ever been tasted. The touch little berries were eaten raw, then no other food would be had, (?) berried were called (NAVAJO). The last restored like juniper up baskets, hoop berries which we call (NAVAJO). In Navajo you can trade for long time, it will be the same placesness and there is another cactus which is called (NAVAJO.) These were eaten raw and dried up and ground up seed and all, service berry

is another one. There are all different kinds of berries, mostly are being used to eat berries of both were eaten raw. These were being known during the war in Europe were brought worth drying for winter use, wood strawberries is another one. These tiny fruits were a great delicious fruit, wild plums or wild cherries. These wild rose and rosey (?) which it is called that we could find in the mountain. The tiny humps were eaten raw, wild raspberries was another one, they mostly grow anywhere. There are all kinds of berries which is been known in the earliest days. So there are these like hump berries that are ground up and dried and ground up berries might be mixed with corn meal to give its flavor. Bucks thrown is another one which was named not too long ago. It is what you call in a Navajo is (NAVAJO). In the earliest days the god's food was named so that we could use it up today. God foods because it was, offering to the spirit. This too was brought raw with saying for winter. The bears were boiled and then spread on the rock to dry. Later they would be eaten in the forms are made into a soup. Barrels of cactus were being found different places, most places were eaten by animals, they are great for animals also. It protects your heart twice as much as you eat other foods, since it cause pain sometime but it wouldn't hurt you, it is a medicine for heart. All these early wild plant are even found all over the world. There are very little different from

each country but they are all the same. They grow and have different kinds of weeds, that's what the Navajo people says it is good to eat. The Indian medicine man has known most of the weeds and herbs how to be used. He is the only protection that we have among us today if we want to pick wild grapefruit or wild roots of different kinds that we want we like to eat. We always go and see the medicine man, see which one is good to eat. This is the way of Navajo life still going on throughout the Navajo reservation. The spinach fruits are gathered with waiting thorns. They can be eaten fresh or boiled or dry in the sun as the Navajo lady dries peaches, yeaki is another one and its sprayed leaf is used to eat. Spanish people has known this for many centuries. This was the tops of which the (?) were stored for winter's use, but the (?) fruit requires thorough roasting it was to be kept. The first step was to cut the fruit in half and dry them on stone whether in the sun or by the fire. The dry leaf were growing as big as a rabbit ear it is cut and dried out. It is used for two or three different food. The what they call a place leaf is baked into cakes and reroasted. The cakes were breaking up in pieces which were again dried in the sun. Then they were grounded and soaked with water and it thickened up into sweetness. This was also we had on hand to eat and then when it's dried the cake was broken up into pieces which were again dried in the sun.

Then they were packed into tight covering which will stand the winter long and then before it's eaten you have to soak it in the water and the thickness runs through a number of them making holes which would let the air in. They perform that of gathering things were then stored away for the winter. When wanted they were mixed with water to make a thick syrup eaten with other food. Seeds are the specialty of a dry country. Indians from Nevada and Utah down to the Mexican border had always made much of seed gathering and perhaps the traveling Navajo had learned from them about the many plants that they know is available. These are the plants which today are called weeds, and the root from our garden. They shoot their seeds among the vegetable in the days before corn was known. However, Indian before corn was known however Indian woman looked for packs of pig weeds and rose foot, made by long journey to reach them just when the seeds were ripe. We wondering how would, how they would have had the thing to be packed or to be shipped down off the tin bark seeds and then grind them between two stones to make flour. However this seed flour was reforming of bread and mush before corn was known. Nevada has many of the old seeds ground a flat stones with a sugarly hollow in which a round flat of stone was rubbed around and around. Some old Navajo women still keeps such things on hand before grinding the seeds or tasted before it is used. To make them taste good it should

be taken into water, such taste (?) to make them often this was done by the placing them, in shallow basket along with some (?) from the fire. If seeds and remember was taken and shook quickly and basket did not burn before the basket is not burned, flour might be mixed with water, then pressed in to keep between the (?) and the cake baked on a hot stone. More often it was made into mush. Some Navajos says that it is very ancient days they used to cook much in a basket as California's Indians did. The basket was so closely woven it was weather tight in it flowers was mixed with cold water. Then hot stones from the camp fire were dropping into the liquid until it boils. The yearly plentiful crop in a way of seeds, nuts was the pinon. This draft pinon tree which covers the rocky hills of the New Mexico. There is a big crop every 2 or 3 years. The corns are like tightly closed wooden flowers and under each (?) lays a seed and a size of a large grain of wheat in a tin closing. In a year then pinon crop is good. Indian from the Rio Grande to the Sierra gathers up the tree to swamp up falling seed by the bagful. These pinon nuts are the Indian what peanuts are to the whites. In fact the Navajo name for powerful is the fact the name Indians often ate this weed only nuts raw, cracking the tin covering with their teeth as they do sunflower seeds. The nuts are even better roasted as peanuts are and little berries of roasted pinons are now throughout the southwest. Ancient

Navajo used to collect them in deer skin and kept the roasted nuts for winter evening..... (?) is called also is a good seed tasting. The Navajo name comes from the way of removing the seed by holding (?) of a grass cover the fire so that a seed dropped out against the sterling stone. Wheat grass is also being found good to eat, seed ground into the flour. Root foot(?) has been found mostly in the early spring.... Plants which is spread out the seed this is used for bread or mush, pig weeds. There are alot of other different types of wya of making foods which are wild, used like goose foot, sugar was being used today by chewing handful of the.....

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