

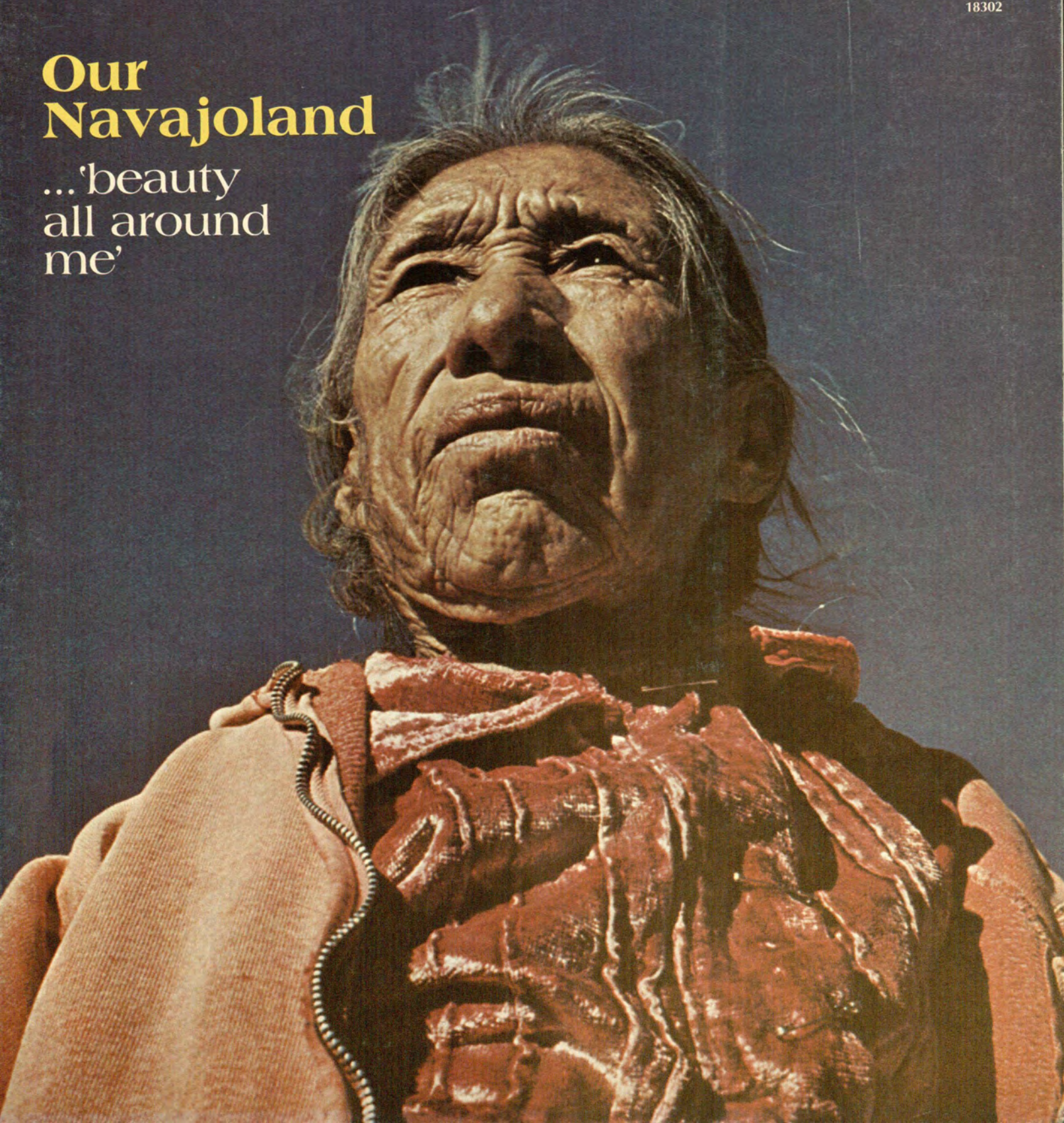
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March/April 1973 75 cents

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Our Navajoland

... 'beauty
all around
me'



new mexico

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Cover—The cares and wisdom of the ages—are they not
embodied in this Navajo matriarch photographed by
Johnnie S. Martinez?

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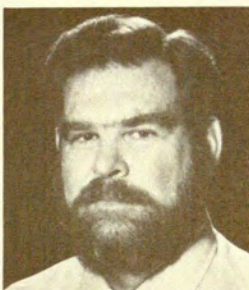
from your editors . . .



Buddy Mays, who both wrote and photo-
graphed our article on beavers, is a free-
lancer who specializes in wildlife. Albu-
querque-born, Buddy spent four years in
the Coast Guard, two of them on a square-
rigger. He then studied vertebrate zoology
at New Mexico State University.

Buddy, 29, has worked for the Albuquer-
que *Tribune* and taught mountaineering at
Philmont Scout Ranch, up in northeastern
New Mexico. He recently visited Europe on

a photographing safari. His numerous credits include *Time*, *Ford Times*, *Boys' Life* and *Field and Stream*.



One rugged man meets another in
Jess Price's *A Window on Western Skies*,
a sensitive profile of Albuquerque artist
Wilson Hurley.

Jess, public information director at UNM,
was born in Barrancabermeja, Colombia,
attended high school in Pennsylvania and
graduated from St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) Col-
lege. He worked as a newspaper reporter
and radio news director in Jamestown, N.Y.,
then, coming to New Mexico in 1954, was

editor of the *Tucumcari Daily News*, city editor of the *New Mexican*
and managing editor of *New Mexico Farm and Ranch* magazine.

He is married, has 14—that's right, fourteen—children and is
working on a doctorate in Latin American History.



Taking you by camera into the very heart
of Navajoland for 'The Very Heart of Our
Country' is **Johnnie S. Martinez**. A native of
northern New Mexico, Johnnie is Española
bureau chief for the *Santa Fe New Mexican*.
Though only 24, Johnnie has some definite
ideas about what can be done with a lens.

"Successful photography does more than
merely show what something looks like.
Just as smells and sounds can revive nos-
talgic memories or create vivid scenes in

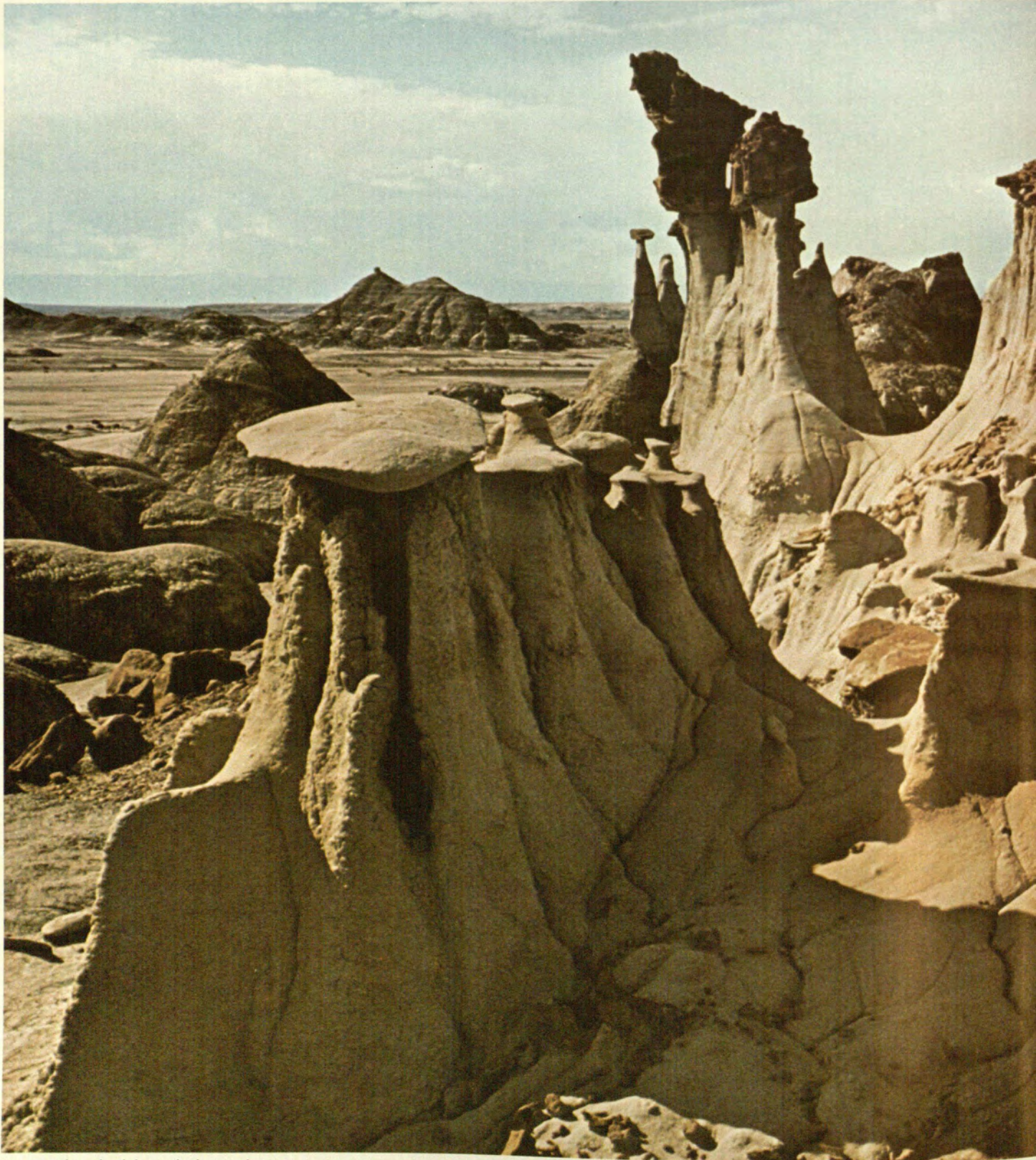
one's mind, a photograph can evoke emotions not restricted to vision.

"Interpreting what I find among subjects in order to convey more
than appearance is a constant challenge and, occasionally, a source
of pride."

We trust you'll agree that Johnnie can take pride in the emotions
he has evoked with his photographs from Navajoland.

By the same token, writer **Tony Hillerman** has drawn upon legend
to arouse your feeling for the Navajos. Incidentally, Hillerman,
Journalism Department chief at the University of New Mexico,
recently produced his third book in three years for Harper & Row—
this one not a suspense novel but a juvenile tale from Zuni Pueblo:
The Boy Who Made Dragonfly.

Walter Briggs 5



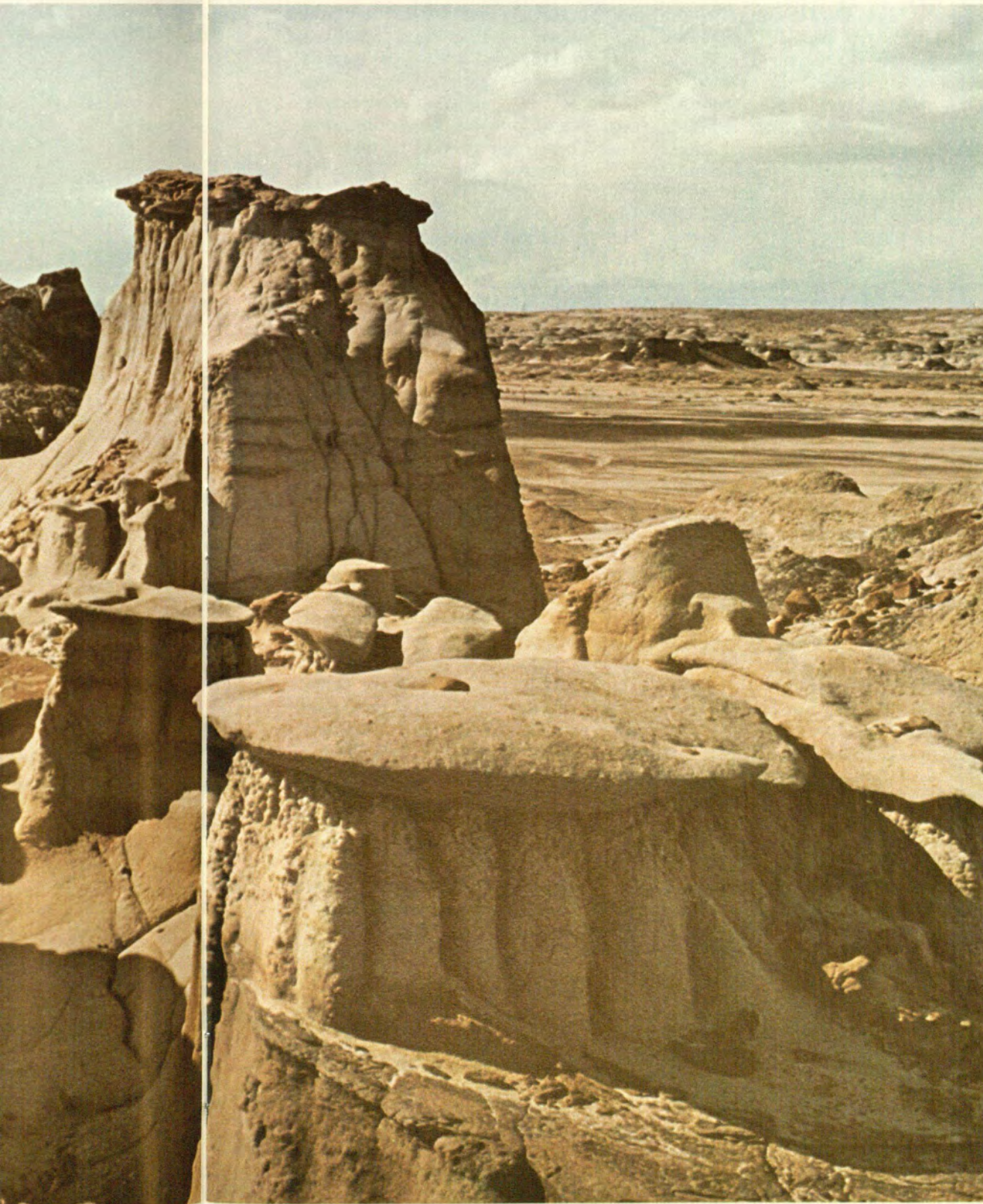
6 Deep within the labyrinth that is the Navajo Reservation lies this preserve of geologic toadstools—resistant rock atop eroded grey-white limestone. Also found here are large petrified logs and fossil dinosaur bones stemming from the Cretaceous Age that began 135 million years ago.

New Mexico's Navajoland

'The Very Heart of Our Country'

By Tony Hillerman

Photos by Johnnie S. Martinez



We are standing, Alex Atcitty and I, on the slope under that great rampart of red rock which walls the south end of Navajo Country from Thoreau almost to Gallup. To the east, Mount Taylor rises snowcapped and serene above the blunt shapes of Mesa Redonda and Little Haystack Mountain. To the left the landscape features eroded sandstone, broken slate and a half-dead piñon whose branches have been collecting tumbleweeds from the wind. It is November of a year of almost unbroken drouth. The air smells of dust, pine resin and empty places. The only living things in sight are a disconsolate white-faced cow and a sparrow hawk. The hawk is scouting the rim of the mesa for incautious rodents. The cow, resting from its search for something to eat, is staring moodily in the direction of Gallup.

"You know," Atcitty says, "they gave us our choice. A bunch of rich Arkansas River bottomland over in Oklahoma, or this." He waves his arm—including erosion, brush, cow, and an infinity of gaudy sunset sky in the gesture—and grins at me. "When you understand why we picked this instead of that thousand-dollar-an-acre cotton land, then you understand Navajos."

The Navajos made this historic choice on May 28, 1868. It had been offered the day before by General William Tecumseh Sherman to Barboncita, Manuelito, Ganado Mucho and other clan leaders. In return for a pledge never again to bear arms,

the U.S. government would give them a choice of reservations. They could remain at Fort Sumner, in east-central New Mexico, where most of them had been unhappily penned since 1864, or the government would transport them to a well-watered, well-timbered, game-rich reservation in the Arkansas River Valley of Indian Territory. As a third alternative, they could return to that arid expanse of canyons and mesas from which the Army had starved them by a three-year campaign of hogan-burning, cattle-killing and general earth-scorching. In his report to President Andrew Johnson, General Sherman made it clear the land involved in this third choice was worthless. (It was, as Sherman put it, "as far from our future possible wants as was possible to discover.") Worthless or not, the Navajos chose to go home.

"If we are taken back to our own country," Barboncita told Sherman, "we will call you our father and mother. If there was only a single goat there, we would all live off of it."

Remember, Barboncita was a warrior, not an orator. But listen to his words:

"I hope to God you will not ask us to go to any country but our own. When the Navajos were first created, four mountains and four rivers were pointed out to us, inside of which we should live, and that was to be Dinétah. Changing Woman gave us this land. Our God created it specially for us . . ."

The tribe voted unanimously the next day to return to Dinétah. A reservation including part of the San Juan Valley and the Chuska and Carrizo mountains was drawn. It was far less than the Navajos had occupied before 1864 and included none of the four sacred mountains which hold their world together. But Barboncita was pleased.

"It is the very heart of our country," he said.

Taylor: Turquoise Mountain

One of those four mountains is Mount Taylor. Much later, Manuelito recalled that when the Navajos were making their famous Long Walk home without waiting for the treaty to be ratified, they saw its peak outlined against the Western horizon after they crossed the Rio Grande. He said his men—hard-bitten survivors of three years of desperate, hopeless combat—wept for joy. This is Tso

Dzil, the Turquoise Mountain. Here rests the head of the great Yei whose spirit-body circles across Mount Blanca in the Sangre de Cristos and Mount Hesperus in the La Platas to the San Francisco Peaks above Flagstaff, surrounding the Dinétah with harmony. The Holy People built this mountain with earth brought from the Third World, decorated it with turquoise, blue cloud and female rain, pinned it to earth with a magic stone knife and left Tliish Tsoh (Big Snake) to guard it. It was here the Hero Twins opened their campaign to make Dinétah safe for The People by killing the first of the monsters. (The blood of One Walking Giant forms the great lava flows across which Interstate 40 cuts a five-mile swath east of Grants.) And here Turquoise Girl lives, forever guarding the heart of Barboncita's country.

Much of this original Dinétah can be seen on an easy drive up N.M. 44 to the Farmington-Shiprock area, and then down U.S. 666 to Gallup, which is in fact as well as claim the Indian Capitol of the U.S.A. With a few appropriate side trips, this route will take you through the Holy Land of the Navajo religion. And if the light is right, the cloud formations suitably dramatic, the sunsets as flamboyant as usual, you may glimpse why the Navajos chose to keep this arid land Changing Woman gave to them, and why Alex Atcitty left a good job in Los Angeles to come home.

Out of an underworld

Navajos arrived in Dinétah not much later than the year 1,000. They were hunters and seed-gatherers. They spoke an Athabascan language, as do their Apache cousins and many tribes of Western Canada. (I'm told that Navajos who listened to a tape recording made by a Carrier Indian in Canada could understand nearly every word.) Anthropologists believe they drifted in from the north in small clan-groups. Navajo mythology is more specific.

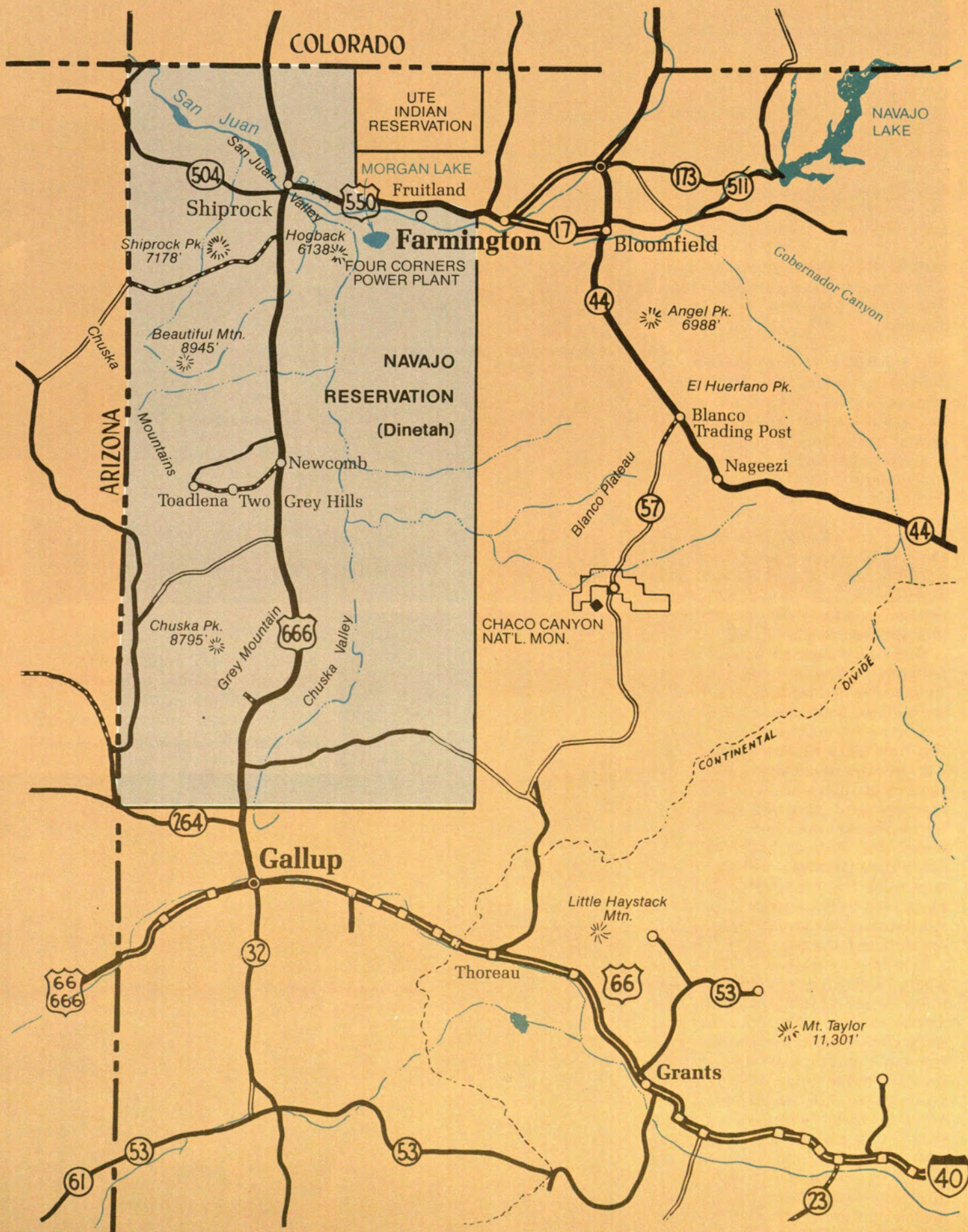
The Holy People climbed into the Dinétah from an underworld, emerging from the flooding Third World through a hollow reed. These Holy People included First Man and First Woman and most of the insect, bird and animal people. The exact point of emergence is as hard to locate as is the Garden of Eden. However, we know that First Man lived at Huerfano Mountain, and that he found the

infant Changing Woman crying on top of Gobernador Knob, less than 30 miles away across the Rio Arriba County border. In this same area, Black God helped First Man and First Woman hang the stars in the sky. (Coyote, always mischievous, flipped a star-filled blanket and created the Milky Way.) It was near here where Changing Woman created the first human Navajos out of fragments of skin rubbed from her body. (Atcitty's clan, the Bitter Water, was formed from her right amput.) And it was here that most of the great poetic curing and blessing ceremonials of The People seem to have taken form.

As you drive up N.M. 44 with Nageezi Trading Post behind and Bloomfield 22 miles ahead, you pass Huerfano Mountain on your right. As the Spanish suggests (Huerfano means *orphan*, or *alone*) it's all by itself—a rectangular monolith of stone which rises to 7,470 feet out of the chamisa and creosote brush expanse of the Blanco Plateau. And, just eight miles beyond Huerfano, there's the entry to the Angel Peak Recreation site, where the sun slanting against several hundred million years of fantastic, multicolored erosion creates memorable beauty. The Holy People called this The Glittering World. Standing on an overlook at Angel Peak one sees why.

The northwestern landmark of Dinétah is Shiprock—reached through Farmington, the San Juan Valley and the town of Shiprock. The town is a major administrative center for this part of the reservation and, as Huerfano represents the Navajo past, it represents the tribal future. Here is a miniboom of lookalike public housing, the pickup-crowded parking lots of Fairchild Semiconductor, the bustle of the oil and gas industry, the beginnings of a tourist industry. On the mesa above Fruitland to the east looms the controversial Four Corners power plant and feeding it is Navajo Coal Mine, already the world's largest and growing fast. Here soon will be the 110,000-acre Navajo Irrigation Project, and here is where El Paso Natural is asking the Interior Department for permission to open a \$400 million operation to convert coal into gas. (A 40,000-acre lease with an estimated yield of 700 million tons of coal is available.)

Whatever position you take on the air pollution controversy surrounding it, the power complex is worth seeing.



The entry road climbs less than a mile out of the lush irrigation of Fruitland into a surreal world. The mine, tied to the plant with broad paved coal roads, beggars description. Its mountainous waste piles stretch 10 miles—so incredibly huge that, in landscape of grotesque exaggerations, they almost manage to look natural. The power plant, too, is vast enough to overpower a less dramatic setting. But across the blue water of Morgan Lake are the great mottled hump of Hogback Mountain and the cathedral spire of Shiprock rising 20 miles away—blue against a brewing snowstorm. The man-made plant is properly dwarfed.

Shiprock, enduring serenity

From as far south as Grey Mountain, as far north as Colorado and as far west as Yazzi in the Arizona Lukachukai Mountains, Shiprock juts like a great thumb into the sky. It's a strange formation, the plaster cast of the inside of a volcano. The volcano cone has been worn away by millions of years of wind and rain leaving only the tough igneous rock which once bubbled and boiled in its throat. This core towers 1,450 vertical feet above the grassy plain—20 stories taller than the Empire State Building.

Shiprock is hard to describe. One remembers how it looked the last time he saw it, and how it looked in the hundred photographs he has seen. But when he approaches it again—this time on a November afternoon with a snow squall sliding down the sky out of Utah—he finds that both memory and pictures have lied. Under the sun and against the blue desert sky, Shiprock had provided a foreboding contrast—its ragged bulk suggesting the cataclysmic violence of its birth. But against this day's stormy, troubled cloudscape it soars timeless and serene.

One way to reach it is via Navajo Route 13, which leaves U.S. 666 seven miles south of Shiprock-town and ambles westward. The gravel has long since vanished and the first half mile is rough. But after that, it's a pleasant drive. From the junction the angle of vision merges Rol-Hay Rock and Table Mesa (six miles south) into a single shape. It suggests the ultimate aircraft carrier 20 stories tall and three miles long anchored in a sea of grama grass. Eight miles from 666 this road passes through a break in the most dramatic of those volcanic walls



Man and dog—inseparable companions throughout Navajoland.



A sensitive face from northwestern New Mexico that could be found in Mongolia, home of her forebears . . . but she lives in a hogan rather than a yurt.

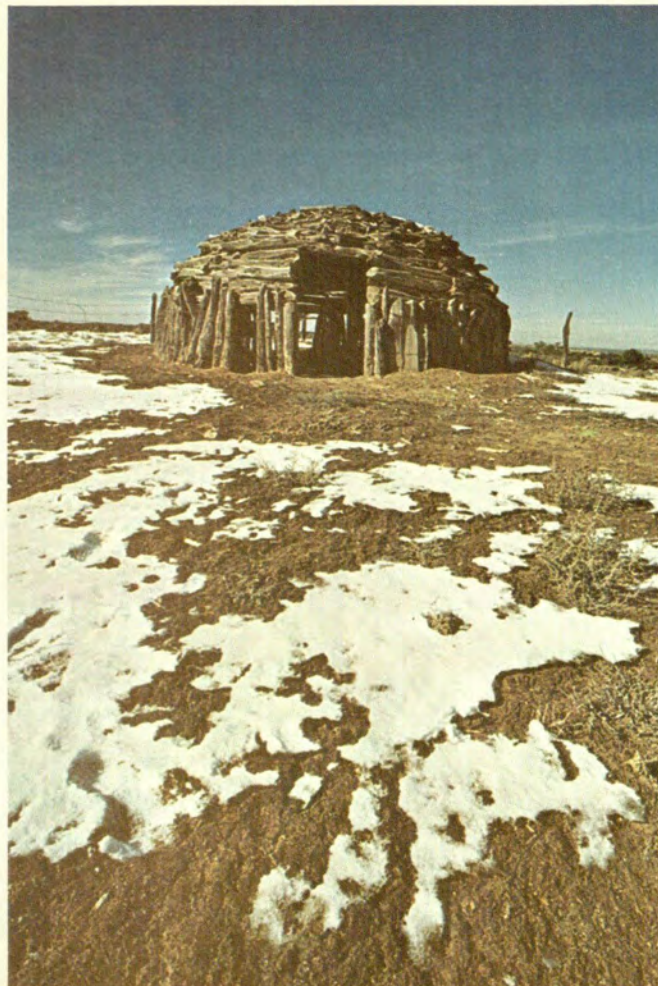




which radiate from Shiprock. I find this wall hard to believe.

It probably formed during the great Neogene volcanic period which thrust Mount Taylor 11,389 feet into the sky, caused the mind-boggling Valle Grande explosion over near Los Alamos, and scattered ashes from Utah to Kansas. The stone crust of the earth cracked open here—the cracks radiating out from the base of Shiprock volcano miles long but only three or four feet wide. Red-hot plastic rock squeezed up through these cracks and through the heavy ash above like toothpaste from a tube. On this day, perhaps 15 million years later, only a sloping buttress of earth remains of the ash. The great wall stands exposed.

It is snowing now on Beautiful Mountain 10 miles to the southwest and the breeze is gusty, cool and damp. In places holes have been eroded through the wall and through these holes the breeze funnels and becomes wind enough to set up a muted howling. The wall wanders almost due north toward Shiprock and from the buttress of earth the immensity of this monolith makes it



Horses are a way of life for the once-nomadic Navajo.

Winter comes howling down upon the Navajo Reservation from the northwest.

seem only a few hundred yards away. It is almost four miles.

Shiprock is rarely visited. The old tracks following the wall are almost erased. Once one walks a few hundred yards from the road, the only clue that others share this planet is the corpse of a car abandoned here years ago. West of the wall, a mile or so away, is the homestead of a Navajo family—small house, sheds, corrals and hogan. The Navajo cooperates with the mystique of this place by using his grazing permit to raise

horses. They range on the landscape below, a mixed bag of colors and types with enough pintos and paints included to satisfy a movie casting director.

Spider Woman's craft

In mythic times the Navajo would not have been safe here. Tse Ninahaleeh, the Winged Monster, nested in the cliffs of this Rock With Wings. Like other monsters inhabiting the Glittering World, it ate people. But somewhere north of Huerfano,

Changing Woman had slept beside a waterfall, and had become pregnant, and had borne twin sons, and their names were Monster Slayer and Child Born of Water. Their father was the errant sun, and around these twins Navajo mythology has woven an Odyssey which rivals the tales of Homer.

Monster Slayer tricked Winged Monster into dropping him into the monster's nest atop Shiprock. There he killed the beast. He persuaded the monster's offspring to foreswear mon-



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Shiprock. There
persuaded the
preswear mon-

sterhood and become instead the eagle and the owl. And then he persuaded Spider Woman to rescue him from his impossible perch by lowering him in a basket.

Tribal mythology also credits Spider Woman with teaching the Navajos to weave—a craft which The People have made an art. And while the myths assign no particular home to this Holy Person, a logical place would be Two Grey Hills, the site of the finest flowering of her teaching.

One reaches this old trading post

by turning off U.S. 666 at Newcomb junction, 30 miles south of Shiprock. The dirt road goes 12 miles westward to the Toadlena boarding school in the Chuska Mountains. Halfway there, looking exactly the way a trading post should look, is Two Grey Hills. The road winds out of a wash and here to your right are a barn with attached cattle and sheep pens and a long, low building with a single gasoline pump and a line of pickups in front.

For one raised, as I was, at a rural crossroads, Two Grey Hills is undiluted nostalgia. Like the defunct general store, the trading post stocks everything—groceries, kerosene for hogan stove, clothing, school supplies, veterinary medicine, sheep salt, graduation presents. And, like my father's store, this one is as much social center as shopping center. As a stranger where strangers are rare I represent a welcome diversion. The dozen men and women inside eye me with polite interest. Three men wearing the inevitable big-hat-denims-mackinaw-and-boots uniform of cattle country discuss my cumbersome camera in Navajo. One is wearing a black sweatshirt emblazoned "Sigma Alpha Epsilon" over the legend "University of Michigan." This incongruity strikes me as funny and we catch ourselves—SAE and I—grinning at each other in friendly mutual amusement.

On this day Derald Stock's supply of rugs is down to a couple of dozen. The prices range from a low of \$65 to a high of \$900. Each pattern is different, produced from a design which exists in the weaver's imagination. Each is formed from hand-carded natural wool—black, white, grey and brown—untouched by dye. (In some parts of the reservation weavers use natural dyes, but not here.) Stock notes that two things are happening to the Navajo rug business. Since about 1967, prices have been soaring. The value of average rugs has doubled and increased 500 or 600 per cent for the finer ones. And the art is dying out.

"I sold a really fine tapestry yesterday—a little smaller than three by five feet—to a collector for \$3,500," Stock said. "A really good weaver can make one like that with a year's work, and maybe two or three little ones. Out of that money you buy

your own materials. It's demanding work for low pay and the young women just aren't bothering to learn it."

The value of eternal beauty

It is sundown when you leave Two Grey Hills and you drive down the Chuska Valley toward Gallup through the gathering darkness. To your right, a dot of yellow light appears at the base of Grey Mountain—one hogan in an infinity of night. With 126,265 people occupying over 16 million acres, Navajo country has a population of less than one family per square mile. And yet for its farming-livestock economy, the reservation is terribly overcrowded. A million and a half acres are "wild lands," mesa and desert useless for grazing. Only five per cent will support as many as 40 sheep per square mile. Nearly half of the tribe's pastures require up to 65 acres to feed a single animal. Rainfall averages less than 10 inches a year and, typical of desert climate, much of it arrives in quick, violent "male rain" storms. In the winter, blizzards kill cattle and sometimes The People as well. In the summer water is scarce. Materially, it offers little. (As Atcitty once said, "Saying Rich Navajo is like saying Tiny Giant.")

But there are other things to remember. In the Emergence Myth, the name the Holy People put on evil was "The Way to Make Money." And the Hero Twins decided to spare the lives of the final monsters so The People would learn from living with them. Those monsters were named Fatigue, Old Age, Hunger and Poverty. Poverty, one suspects, is as much a permanent resident of Dinetah as is enduring Shiprock. But there is also the stark, austere, everlasting beauty of the land.

In the Nightway ceremonial, the singer chants:

*In the house made of dawn,
in the house made of sunset light
in the house made of rain cloud
with beauty before me, I walk,
with beauty behind me, I walk,
with beauty all around me, I walk.*

If the landmarks of Dinetah have helped form the Navajo religion, it seems equally certain that its beauty has helped form the Navajo character.



es this girl on her



Some Facts About the Navajo Reservation

- The reservation proper includes 14,450,369 acres—slightly larger than West Virginia.
- In addition to the reservation proper another 1,255,154 acres of land is occupied by the tribe through purchase, allotment and exchanges.
- Rainfall averages range from less than 5 inches a year in the 3,000-foot level desert areas up to 25 inches a year in the timbered Chuska Mountains where elevation reaches 10,416 feet.
- The tribal population as of 1970 was 126,265. It is by far the largest and fastest-growing Indian tribe.
- The tribe is governed by an elected Tribal Council which consists of the chairman, vice-chairman and 74 delegates.
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs operates 64 boarding and day schools on the reservation. Tribal children also attend 12 public schools, 26 mission schools, seven bordertown dormitory schools and one reservation dormitory school.
- There are some 1,100 miles of paved roads on the reservation.
- Local government is conducted by 100 chapter organizations, each of which elects its own president and which conduct frequent (often weekly) meetings to settle local problems and decide on local projects.
- The chapter houses, usually located near road junctions or trading posts, are also community service centers. They offer bathing, laundry, health and recreation facilities as well as supplies of water for hauling.
- The Tribal Scholarship Fund provides money for college education for more than 500 students.

Gallup, just off the reservation to the south, is home each August of the four-day Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, which draws Indian artists, dancers and other performers and rodeo participants from many tribes and attracts visitors from around the world.



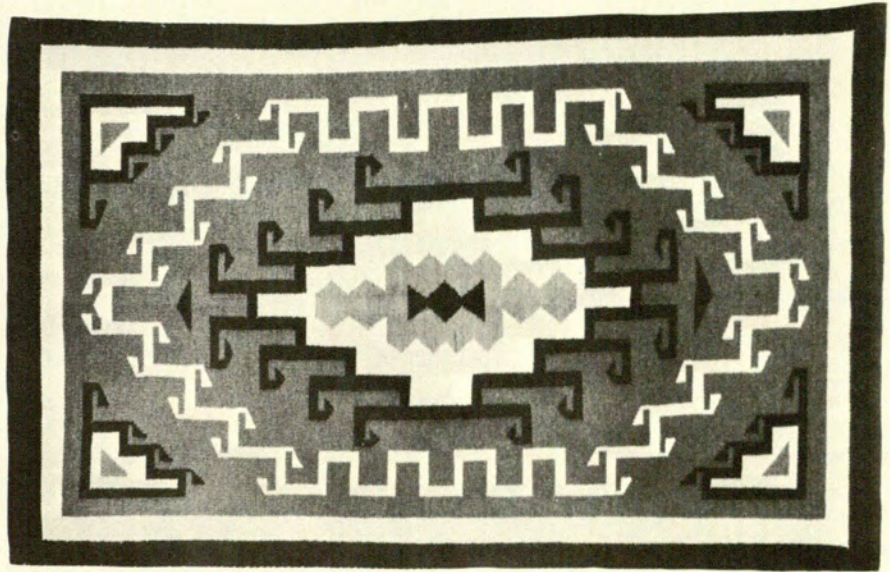
Petroleum concessions also bring income to the Navajos.



Looking across Morgan Lake to the Navajos' sacred Shiprock, with Hogback Mountain to the right.



LEN BOUCHE



Chaparral Trading Post, Santa Fe. A prized Navajo rug from Two Grey Hills.

