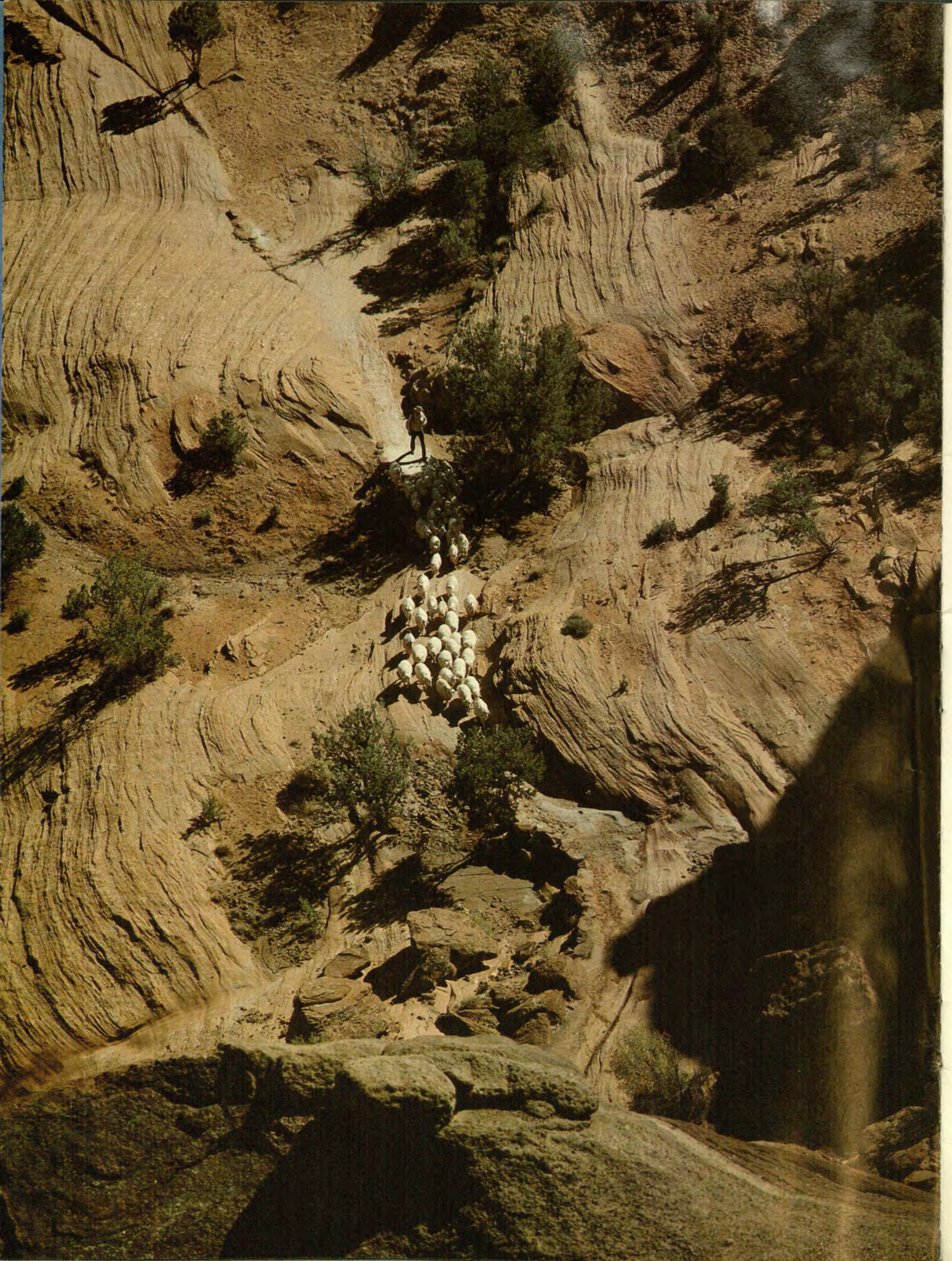


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Touring the Navajo Nation*

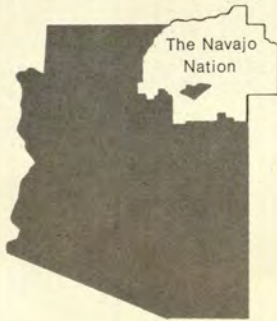


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Welcome to the Land of Red Earth and Blue Sky

From the Editors:

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Case in point — the Navajo and their reservation. Despite what many may consider to be its stark mountain ranges, its sun-baked red earth, its seemingly lifeless *arroyos* and its all-too-often lack of cool greenery, the Navajo believe their reservation to be a very beautiful and sacred place, deeded to them by the gods of their forefathers. And they would not trade it for any other land on earth.

In this issue, we take you on a visit to this enchanted land. You'll meet the people who live there and learn what it is that makes their land so special to them. And, of course, you'll see plenty of its spectacular scenery as well.

"If you've ever wondered what it means to be a Navajo today — or have given any thought to their origins, their value systems or their motivations — then stop here a minute and meet Hosteen Alex Etcitty. . . ." So begins "Dinetah, If I forget You," our first offering on the Navajo and his land, by New Mexican author-journalist-teacher Tony Hillerman. His prose rings with truth, vision and sincerity. Etcitty, you'll agree, is the Navajo man for all seasons.

If you've seen Monument Valley time and again, then take a look at the intriguing valley just next door. We did. And we found Mystery Valley to be a world apart, where a four-wheel trek takes you into the far past, amidst great rounded sand dunes long ago turned to stone and the ruins of an ancient Indian civilization . . . and lots of sand, solitude, and sun. Author Dan Lee takes you there and shows you the sights firsthand.

An issue on the land of the Navajo wouldn't be complete, however, without taking you on an armchair tour of its many attractions. Writer Dan McGowan begins your prose journey at Flagstaff.

Sam Lowe, author and newspaper-bred journalist of note, has a deep and abiding interest in people, especially those in circumstances outside of the ordinary. His insightful look into the lives of two modern-day Indian traders offers a treasure house of information about life in the outback, where simple things have a way of taking on extraordinary importance in the daily scheme of things.

Concluding this issue is "Navajos Now: A Nation in Transition" by writer Maggie Wilson, whose specialized knowledge of things Indian is second to none. With firsthand experience backed by interviews with leaders of the Navajo Nation, Ms. Wilson gives us a no-holds-barred look at Navajo life today and what it may be like tomorrow.

Naturally, you're also in for a color extravaganza in this issue, brought to you by some of the most imaginative and talented scenic photographers in this or any other land.

See you in Navajo Country.

— Richard G. Stahl

(Wraparound cover) "For nearly 2000 years man has taken refuge from enemies and the elements in the rock shelters of the sheer red cliffs. The fertile canyon bottom has provided soil and water for crops and a variety of edible plants" — from *Canyon de Chelly, Its People and Rock Art*, by Campbell Grant. Scene is of Canyon del Muerto, one of three canyons which, in total, make up the complex called Canyon de Chelly, taken from the Rim Drive near Antelope House, one of several scenic ruins in this National Monument. **Wayne Davis**

(Inside front cover) A modern Navajo home in the Monument Valley area. The rock monolith in the background is called "Big Indian." Photographed from Goulding's Lodge, looking to the northeast. **Allen C. Reed**

(Page 1) Framed within a traditionally east-facing hogan doorway, a pleasant-faced Navajo woman smiles a friendly welcome to her land. Lula Whitehorse and her family live on the Todicheenie Bench, a very isolated area of the Navajo Reservation. It is featured this month in "Reflections on the Good Life," pg. 45. **Jerry Jacka**

(Left) A Navajo shepherdder moves his flock up the White House trail out of Canyon de Chelly to pasture on the rim. **William M. Anderson**

If you have ever wondered what it means to be a Navajo Indian today — or have given any thought to their origins, their value systems, or their motivations — then stop here a minute and meet Hosteen Alex Etcitty.

Dinetah, If I Forget You...

by Tony Hillerman

*Beside the streams of Babylon we sat
and wept at the memory of Zion.
Jerusalem, if I forget you,
May my right arm wither . . .*
Ballad of the Exiles,
Book of Psalms

*Now I am just like a woman,
sorry like a woman in trouble,
I want to go and see my own country.*
Barboncito
Proceedings of the Peace
Commission, May 28, 1868

On this dusty night in August, my old friend Alex Etcitty and I have been watching the 10 p.m. newscast in our motel room at Kayenta on the Navajo Reservation. The principal topic has been terrorism and tribulations in modern Israel. That and the wind whining around the Holiday Inn have made Etcitty pensive. He remembers that when he attended the Franciscan boarding school at St. Michael's, the Bible History teacher compared the captivity of the Jews in Babylon with the exile of the Navajos to Bosque Redondo.

"He made it real for us," Etcitty recalled. "He'd relate Moses and the Ten Commandments with Changing Woman and the rules she taught us. He told us no one could understand the Jewish culture without understanding Zion any more than they could understand us Navajos without knowing what *Dinetah* means."

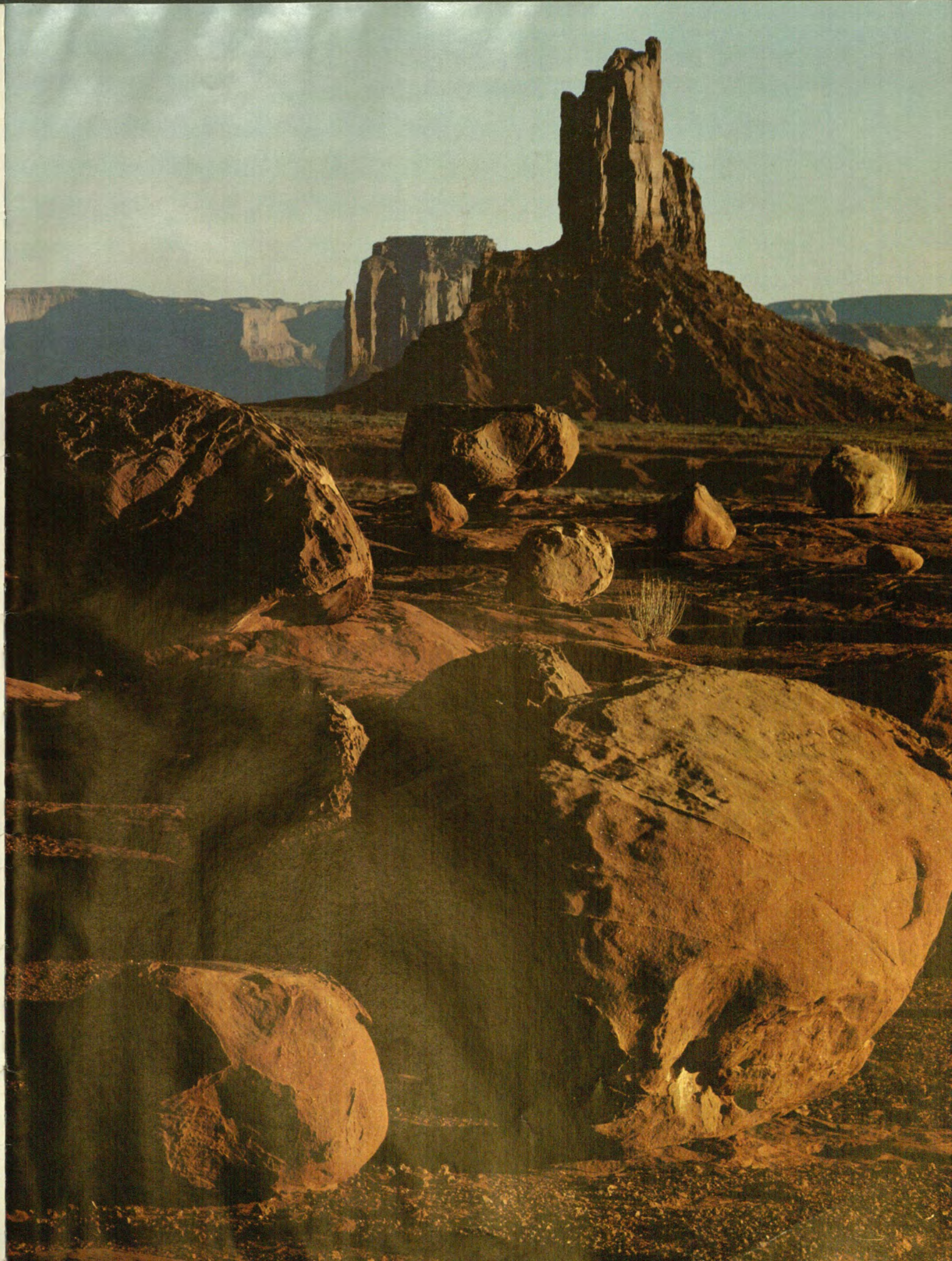
What *Dinetah* means, when translated more or less literally to English, is "among the people." (Navajos call themselves *dine'* which means "the people.") In practical terms, *Dinetah* means the Navajos' reservation, an expanse larger than all of New England and twice the size of Israel. But Etcitty was talking of still another meaning. Like Zion, *Dinetah* involves more than geography. It, too, is tied to ethnic identity, the supernatural, a system of values and a sense of identity. Like Zion, *Dinetah* is the Holy Land of its people. It is also a way of life for the Navajo.

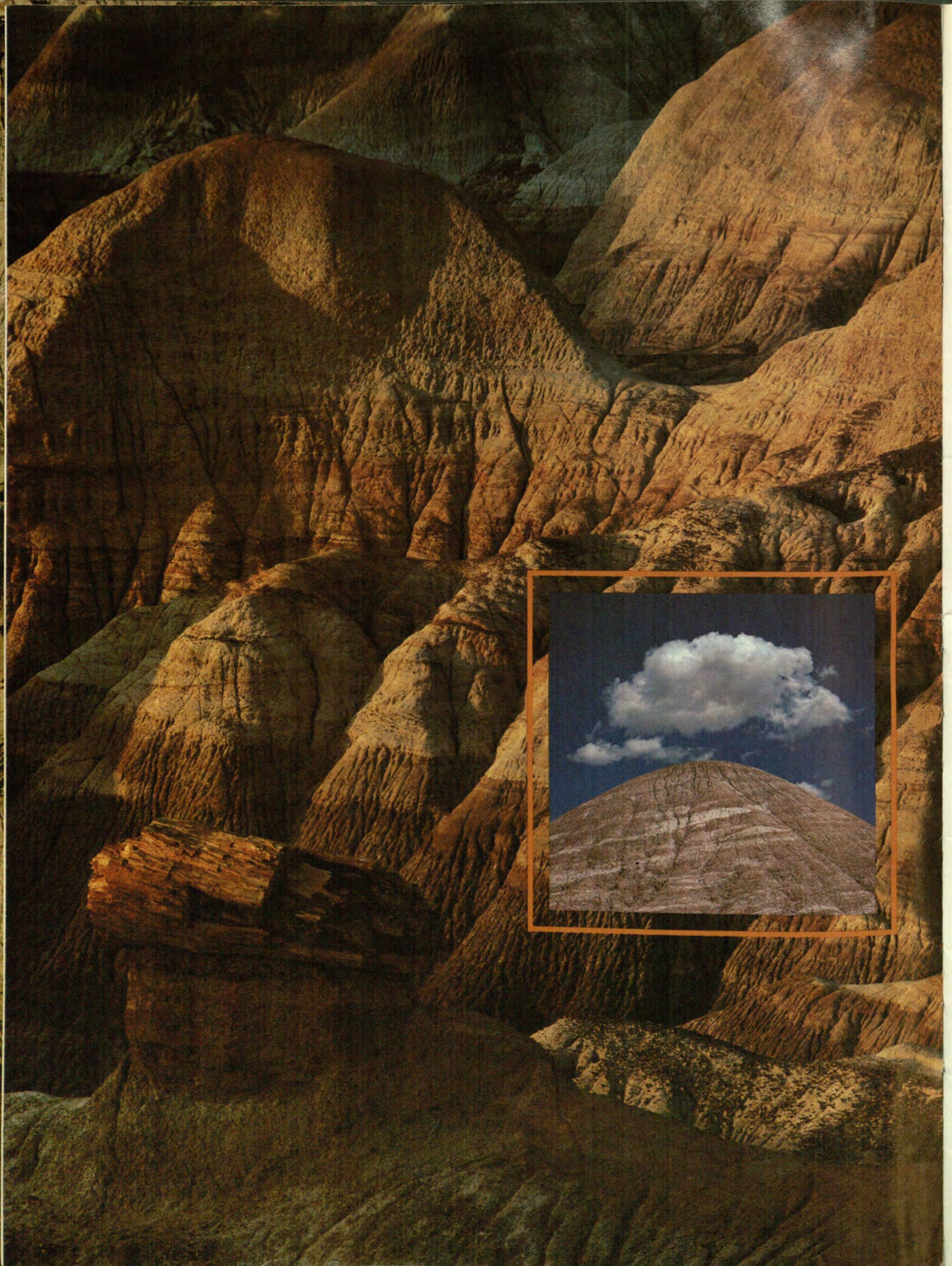
Etcitty is "born to" the *Taadii Dine'e*, or Slow Talking People — the clan of his mother. The clan's mythology, like that of all Navajos, is tied directly to

the specific landscape of *Dinetah* and how to live upon it.

After an evolution through the Black, Blue, and Yellow worlds under the earth, the Holy People of the Navajos emerged at last on the Earth Surface World (or Glittering World, or Fourth World, or Fifth World, depending on clan and version). The point of emergence was near Huerfano Mesa in New Mexico, but the exact place is as hard to find as the Garden of Eden. Once upon the Earth Surface World, some of these Holy People (*yei'i*) began preparing a place for the yet-to-be-created human Navajos to live. First Man (who was not a human but, like all the Holy People, a sort of concept of humanity) hung out the stars with the help of Black God and Coyote, and brought up from the underworld the material to build the four Sacred Mountains. He built *Sis Naajini* (the Mountain of the East which we call Mount Blanca in southern Colorado), *Dook o' ooshid* (San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff), *Dibe Nitsaa* (La Plata Mountains in northern Colorado), and *Tsoodzil* (Mount Taylor in New Mexico). On each, First Man

Monument Valley with its magnificent other-worldliness — this too is *Dinetah*, the Promised Land of the Navajo. David Muench





posted a *yei* (spirit) to live and guard the Navajos from harm. Thus Mount Blanca is forever the home of Dawn Boy, and the spirit of Turquoise Girl abides in Mount Taylor's Mosca Peak until the end of time.

With scores of other epic deeds establishing the landscape, the stage is set for the serious business of teaching a way of life. Now one of the most remarkable personages in the mythic literature of any civilization appears. Her name is Changing Woman.

First Man and First Woman hear someone sobbing atop Gobernador Knob, an almost unclimbable volcanic throat in New Mexico. On top they find an infant girl and adopt her as their own. The infant, called White Shell Girl, grows and becomes Changing Woman. Asleep beside the San Juan River, she is impregnated by Sun and River Mist. After a gestation of four days, two sons are born. They are Monster Slayer and Born of Water — the Hero Twins. The boys steal magic weapons from the sun and launch an heroic odyssey to make Dinétah safe for the Navajos. Meanwhile their mother creates the 65 Navajo clans from skin rubbed from her body. She teaches them the Navajo Way.

Changing Woman's instructions are as detailed as those revealed in the Torah or presented by the Prophet Mohammed to Islam. They cover how to build a hogan, how to cope with death (remove the body through a hole knocked in the north wall of the hogan, place the moccasins on the wrong feet, avoid speaking the name of the dead, etc.). They list hundreds of things that are "*bahadzid*" (taboo), from lightning-struck trees to looking into the eyes of one's mother-in-law, to eating raw meat, or marrying into your own or your father's clan, or combing your hair at night. They cover how children should be named, how girls should be welcomed into puberty (including even the recipe for the cake to be baked for the puberty ritual) and the fantastically complex formula for scores of curing ceremonials by which persons out of harmony with their world are restored to beauty.

A strong thread of philosophy runs through all of this. Man is not presented as Lord and Master of the natural world. He is an equal part of a great interrelated system, no more important than corn beetle, creosote bush, the mole, the wind, or the mountain. When this relationship is in proper balance,

the Navajo lives in *H'ozRo* — a concept for which we have no exact word. We usually translate it as "beauty." Harmony or contentment are as close.

It works something like this: When there is drouth, the Zuni and the Hopi and the white rancher will pray for rain. The traditional Navajo prays for nothing. If the drouth troubles him, he would hold the appropriate curing ceremony to adjust himself into harmony with a land without rain. Navajos I have known have been impressed with the way the Zunis can call the clouds (which are, after all, the *kachina* spirits of their ancestors). But the Navajo asks nothing of the *yei* spirits. His metaphysics is without supplication, humility or penance. The *yei* are, at best, neutral. If he is unhappy, sick, out-of-tune-with-time, it is because he has broken a rule and is out of harmony. Perhaps he has allowed himself to become infected with ghost sickness. If so there are at least four specific cures. If a Red Ant Way is needed, a medicine man will be hired to perform this beautiful ceremony, and his relatives will gather to lend it force. If the ritual is done exactly as Changing Woman taught, the trouble will be ended and the patient restored to beauty. No penitence or plea is involved. The ritual is compulsive. The evil is eliminated.

In the Navajo conception, evil is a sort of opposite of the Navajo Way. It is characterized as witchcraft and First Man is also First Witch. Significantly, in several versions of the origin myth, witchcraft is called "the way to make money." Thus the desire to possess material things, unless kept in harmony, is the source of the ultimate evil for the Navajo.

"I was taught it's a good thing to have what you need," Etcitty told me. "But if you start getting too much, it shows you're not looking after your relatives right. If you get rich, you've taken things that belong to somebody else. Saying 'rich Navajo' is like saying 'dry water'."

The late W. W. "Nibs" Hill, foremost authority on Navajo culture and a member of the faculty at the University of New Mexico, illustrated the same point by quoting an old Navajo rancher: "I've been a poor man all my life. I don't know a single song."

The tribe had a unique opportunity to choose between a fatter life and the sometimes hungry beauty of Dinétah in 1868. General William Tecumseh

Sherman headed the Peace Commission negotiating with the 7304 who had survived Kit Carson's scorched earth campaign and five years of dismal captivity along the Pecos River in New Mexico. Sherman offered three choices. The Navajos could remain at Bosque Redondo. Or they could occupy a reservation in Oklahoma Territory — an expanse of fertile farmlands and timber which was aswarm with game. Or they could return to Dinétah. Sherman told President Andrew Jackson that he had doubts the tribe could support itself on the arid expanse of canyons and deserts in northeastern Arizona, but, he said, it was totally worthless and therefore should be safe from the greed of white men. It was, he said, "as far from our future possible wants as it is possible to determine."

Then as now, Navajos disagreed with white values.

The Navajo spokesman was Barboncito (Little Whiskers). He was noted as a fighting man — not as an orator. But listen to his words:

"I hope to God you will not ask to go to any country but our own. Our grandfathers had no idea of living in

"I was taught it's a good thing to have what you need," Etcitty told me. "But if you start getting too much, it shows you're not looking after your relatives right. If you get rich, you've taken things that belong to somebody else. Saying 'rich Navajo' is like saying 'dry water'."

any other place . . . When the Navajos were first created, four mountains and four rivers were pointed out to us. That was to be our Dinétah, and it was given to us by Changing Woman. It was told to us by our forefathers that we were never to move east of the Rio Grande or west of the San Juan, and I think that our coming here has been the cause of much death among us and our animals. This woman I spoke of, when we were created, gave us Dinétah, created it specially for us. . . ."

The petrified log and the sea-deserted formations of the Painted Desert are parts of the natural world of which the Navajo believes he is an equal part, and with which he seeks to remain in harmony. David Muench

(Inset) Mudstone knob in the Painted Desert. Peter Kresan

Away from Dinetah, Barboncito said, "Whatever we do causes death." The foreign land was hostile to them. The Pecos drowned them when they went to wash in it. Lightning killed them. Even their old friend, the rattlesnake, struck them here without warning. And away from Dinetah, the rituals for curing were not possible.

"The mourning of our women makes the tears roll down into my mustache," Barboncito said. "I can only think of Dinetah. I am just like a woman, sorry like a woman in trouble. I want to go and see my own country. If we are taken back to our own country, we will call you our mother and our father. If you should only tie a goat there, we

would all live off of it, all of the same opinion. I am speaking for all of the People, for their animals from the horse to the dog, also for the unborn."

Barboncito was indeed speaking for all The People. A vote taken among the Navajos the next day was unanimous. The treaty was signed on the spot and The People immediately began the return half of their historic Long Walk.

Etcitty made his own Long Walk when he was a much younger man. He had gone to a technical school in Phoenix and was hired as a transit man on a surveying crew. During his first winter on the job, his wife's uncle and her brother were killed within a month in unrelated traffic accidents. The widow

of the uncle became ill, and the Hand Trembler called in to diagnose the problem said an Enemy Way was needed to restore all concerned to health and beauty. The Enemy Way ritual requires eight days. Without leave time, Etcitty faced a choice between keeping his job and family responsibilities. He made the Navajo choice and came back to live "among the people."

The dilemma faced by Etcitty is far from unusual. Fairchild Semiconductor's big Shiprock plant cut its employee turnover rate drastically when it made provisions during the fall-winter ceremonial season for ritual leaves.

On this particular August night, the errand which has brought us to the



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Kayenta motel is an effort to find a "listener."

I write mystery novels set on the Navajo Reservation, and Etcitty accuses me of using him as the model for my hero — a Navajo tribal policeman. Therefore, since a listener is one of the characters in the book-in-progress, Etcitty wants me to talk to one of these shamans and learn for myself how they diagnose the cause of illness. Our hunt is for a cousin of his who practices this science. It had taken us from Moenkopi to Goldtooth, and hence to Coalmine Mesa, and from there to Ganado, and then northward to Many Farms. We had driven through a landscape as empty as any in America. The scenery

has put Etcitty into a talkative mood.

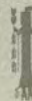
He talked of family ties, of values which reverse materialism, of the magnetic pull of ceremonialism and of how a Navajo content on the lonely landscape of Dinetah learns the meaning of loneliness in the crowds of Phoenix.

While he talks, we top a hill on Navajo Route 8. Etcitty pulls the car to the shoulder and gestures through the windshield. Spread below us in the immense "sink" which drains the southwest slopes of the Chuska Mountains. It is a wilderness of sunbaked stone, gray caliche, wind-cut clay red as barn paint, great bluish outcroppings of shale, the pockmarked dingy white of old volcanic ash and the cracked expanse

of salt flats where the mud formed by the "male rains" of summer tastes as bitter as alum.

This is the ultimate in how erosion can ravage a land. Everything is cut and worn and tortured. It is axiomatic that the desert teems with life. But there is no life here. Not even creosote bush or cactus grow. It is a landscape totally without hospitality, offering neither food, nor shade, nor water. The white mapmaker would call it Desolation Flats.

"Our name for this," says Etcitty, "is Beautiful Valley."



Others may call it desolate wasteland, but to the Navajo it is home and a place of beauty. Photo is from the Lee's Ferry area, near the Colorado River, on the northwestern boundary of Navajoland. Dick Arentz

