

ZahPeterson 2007-10-12

PZ: [00:05] You want some?

PI: [00:06] Yeah, please. (pause) You know, you think about these guys and families who come out to Navajo country -- you think about people like the Babbitt brothers -- all those Babbitts that came from Cincinnati, Ohio, which is why the brand on the --

PZ: [0:30] Yeah.

PI: [0:30] -- livestock was C.O. Bar, was this -- was after Cincinnati. And I think what a lot of people don't realize is that this became something that was sort of passed down from one generation to the next. And certain names that you associate with the trading business over a long period of time, like Foutz and Moqui (sp?) and Babbitt and Burnham and all those guys -- and it's... it is a changing relationship over time. And by the time you became active in Navajo public life and politics, it was certainly an important issue was to know that -- their practices, their policies, their handling of the post office and a variety of other things like that.

When did you first hear about this, as --

PZ: [1:22] The traders?

PI: [1:23] Yeah.

PZ: [1:23] Yeah.

PI: [1:24] I mean, when you --

PZ: [1:25] OK.

PI: [1:25] -- when you were a little kid, you would have gone into Keams, or at -- at your Low Mountain there must have been a small trading post.

PZ: [01:30] Yeah. OK.

PI: [01:31] Yeah.

PZ: [01:34] Are we on?

PI: [01:34] Yeah, I think so.

PZ: [01:36] Yeah, red is on. Yeah.

PI: [01:37] Yeah, we're on.

PZ: [01:39] Well, I wanted to respond to your question about when I first encountered --

PI: [01:45] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [01:48] -- traders on the Navajo Nation. I must have been just... maybe eight --

PI: [01:56] Uh-huh.

PZ: [01:57] -- nine, ten years old. I was very, very young when one day, my dad told me that he wanted me to take him to Keams Canyon from where we were in Low Mountain.

PI: [02:16] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [02:16] I would say it's a good ten, twelve-mile ride --

PI: [02:21] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [02:22] And so my dad got his horse -- saddled up the horse, and early in the morning -- really, really early. And I sat in the back and we rode into Keams Canyon. Because he had to go to work -- he was working for the coal mining there, right below Keams Canyon on the west side of the trading post.

PI: [02:46] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [02:47] And when we went to the store, that evening was my first sight of a white trader. And I couldn't understand what they were saying, because they were speaking English, and I didn't know one word of English by then. And I... I kind of -- because of my first laying an eye on them, thought that, oh, these are the people that offer some goods to the Navajo people for a price, and they're the people that have a lot of the -- they exercise a lot of power by controlling whatever commodities they may have at the trading post, and giving very few of their commodities

to the Navajo people. And I thought back then that it was only for those people that they liked.

PI: [03:53] Mmm.

PZ: [03:53] And this was just a young kid standing by the counter where my dad was doing the trading. And my dad wanted to buy some food that could last him for a week there at the coal mine, and my job was also to get a sack of flour and maybe potatoes and coffee and put it on the saddle and then take it back to my mother and sisters back home. And so we went to the trading -- we went to the trading post, and that was my first sight of a trader. And it was quite an experience.

I didn't really get to know any of them very well because our family really didn't have the money to go back to the trading post. There was no reason for me to go back to the trading post if you don't have any money. So I just stayed away from them. And I think the second time that I went back to them was when I was on my way to school at Tuba City. And this was in the late 1940s, maybe '47, '48. And when I had to catch the bus, and get a ride from the trading post back to my mother and father's place in Low Mountain. And in some cases, they were helpful. But at

the same time, they were dealing a lot of businesslike activities within that community, and it was something that I also had that experience with them that was my second contact.

I didn't really get to learn more about what they were into until I went to college and I came back. And I believe it was in 1968, I became -- I was a deputy director of DNA People's Legal Services for about a year by then. And I kept on getting these cases from the Navajo people complaining about traders. And the practice of the traders on the Navajo Nation. And --

PI: [06:41] A little like with pawning, for example.

PZ: [06:43] Yeah. It was one of those situations where the Navajo people would come in seeking legal assistance from the advocates or from the lawyers, on many occasions, by stating that the traders are acting like pawnbrokers.

PI: [07:04] Yeah.

PZ: [07:05] They're the bankers. They are the post office for Navajo people where they can pick up their mail. And then they were also lending out money to their favorite community members. And they were also acting as a employment agency for the railroad company. And I guess

they had those contracts with the railroad and the United States Postal Services to provide those services to the local people.

And the complaint that I was getting from many of the Navajo people was that, they would say, "I pawned my saddle, I pawned my jewelry, I pawned the very little property that I had at the trader," and then they said that "A month, two, three months after that I went back, and they have the prices all jacked up too high, and that's not what I pawned the article for."

PI: [08:19] Right.

PZ: [08:20] And so as an individual giving legal advice to the local people, there was nothing that they could give us -- in other words, there was no pawn tickets, there were nothing that would show what the interest rate is when they pawned the saddle. And so that was just something that was lacking. There were a lot of lack of information -- the traders weren't giving out anything to indicate to the local people as to under what condition they were pawning a lot of their property.

And the other complaint that I was getting -- these are personal cases. The other complaint I was getting were where the local, the Navajo people would go to the trading post to pick up their mail, and they would -- they would pick up their mail because they were expecting either their Social Security check or a check that they have coming from the Navajo Nation government or a check that they would be expecting from the railroad -- unemployment compensation -- those kinds of checks that they were expecting. And the complaint that they came in with was, "I didn't know that the trader had gotten the check two, three weeks before I came to the trading post, and they kept the checks. And it wasn't until I ran up a bill at the trading post that the trader would then say, hey, you have run up \$100 bill here at the store -- I have a check here for you for \$120. You have \$20 left. I want you to sign the check over to me."

And so the local people were very upset that the traders were dealing with them in that way. And then when we would check the -- when the trading post had received the mail, the letter, it would show that they kept it for over two or three weeks at a time, until the individual had built up

enough credit, I guess, to justify, in their own mind, why they should keep the check.

And so those were the kinds of complaints that we were getting. And DNA, as an independent legal services program, can only do and handle those kinds of cases on a very limited basis, because we didn't have the information. Our clients did not [11:30] have the information. And so there was really nothing that you can sue on, because there just wasn't rules and regulations that was promulgated either by the tribe or by the federal government as to the condition that they should be dealing with their customers. And so that became very, very hard case to handle in court.

Therefore, in the year 1969, I talked with some students. These were Navajo college students. And they were very conscientious students -- students who cared about the Navajo people. I believe there was about nine of those individuals -- we decided we should do something.

PI: [12:30] Excuse me -- were the students Navajo? Or were they --

PZ: [12:32] These were Nav--

PI: [12:33] Yeah.

PZ: [12:33] These were Navajo students.

PI: [12:35] OK. Thank you.

PZ: [12:36] And one of those nine students is now the -- a member of the Supreme Court panel on the Navajo court. And the other student that I remember is now a superintendent -- a very well known superintendent of schools in Arizona, on the Navajo Nation, and I think presently she is in New Mexico. And these were students that were very aggressive -- they were very smart. They knew exactly what they wanted to do, and so we sat and we talked -- had a long, long discussion about what we should do, because DNA could only do so much. And they wanted to be involved in some ways. And so we organized and a non-profit organization and we called it Southwest Indian Development Incorporated.

PI: [13:38] Or SID.

PZ: [13:39] So for short, it was commonly known among the students as SID.

PI: [13:46] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [13:47] And then SID, as a non-profit corporate entity, went before the various agencies or lending institutions to get some grant monies. And for this particular project, the research project, SID students went to United Scholarship Service in Denver, Colorado. And it was a

United Scholarship Service that gave SID some money to employ the nine students to do what they called "action research". And to me, that research was a classical example of how research should be done. I, nowadays, go to conferences where students do research from colleges and universities on Indian land. And they, in many cases, are just doing research maybe for the sake of doing research. But they don't really have a full-blown purpose for why they are doing this. And the research on the trading post was where we wanted to do what we call an action research. And I was the head of SID -- I was the executive director at the time, and I was also the deputy director of DNA People's Legal Services. And this was kind of a side job for me -- a non-paid position, because it had to exist -- it had to continue to exist, because there were a lot of volunteers that were supporting the SID program. It was also SID that got involved in demonstrating against Gallup Indian Ceremonial, that year in 1968. In 1969.

And so what we did was that the nine students -- the nine students then came together and they said, "We want to participate. And what we want to do is we want to go out to the trading post. We know that a lot of these

commodities that they're selling has a tremendous markup. And we want to -- we want to do the survey on their pricing system." And so they took certain items and they saw, at the trading post, how much those certain items cost. For example, a pack of cigarettes, coffee, potatoes -- your basic, basic staples. And what the markup price was. Then they got those prices and they compared it with prices [17:00] in Gallup, New Mexico, and prices in Farmington and prices in Albuquerque, New Mexico. And they saw where, with their own eyes, a lot of these markup prices were outrageous -- anywhere from 30 to 120% markup on a lot of those staples that Navajo people really, really need.

And the students also wanted to survey the meat, like bacon, pork chops, in some cases mutton steaks, that they have. And the students also found out that in some cases, some of the traders were selling those meat when they were spoiled. Because the refrigeration wasn't all that good. And they saw where many of the Navajo people were being sold food that was unsanitary. And the traders' instructions to a lot of those customers was, "Make sure that you cook it very well. And if you cook it very well, then you don't have to worry about the looks and all of

that." And so the students actually heard -- overheard some of those instructions, and they recorded that and included it as part of their research.

And so what happened with those students was that they really, really got annoyed and angry. And they decided that what we should do was publish that report, and then go to the Navajo council -- the Navajo committee. At that time, the Navajo tribe had a committee of the standing committee of the Navajo tribal council called the Trading Post Committee. But the Trading Post Committee did not offer any help to... to even read the report and then try to do something about it. They looked at these young people and they said that these are just young, radical, college-educated kids that went out and they put these reports together. And so the council really didn't listen to them.

And then they went over to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I remember there was a guy named Graham -- Graham Holmes.

PI: [20:02] Oh, sure. I remember him.

PZ: [20:05] He was the area director. And they had a session with him. And I remember Graham Holmes saying "I live here

on the Navajo Nation -- I live in Window Rock -- and sometimes I go to chapter meetings and I meet with people every day. I have not heard, during the time that I am here as area director, where the Navajo people were complaining about the traders." And so he kind of brushed that aside and in so many words told the students that they didn't have any basis to make these kinds of charges and complaints. And what the students wanted was, they wanted him to do something. Where the traders were federally licensed. They were licensed by the BIA on the Navajo reservation to do business among the Navajo people throughout the whole reservation. And at that time there were something like 100 traders -- trading posts, I should say -- on the Navajo Nation. And so the students wanted the BIA area director to come up with rules and regulations, so that there would be fairness. There would be... and that fairness would then go into having a good relationship with your customers.

But Graham Holmes didn't want to do that. And so the next thing was for the students to come back together and say, "Hey, we have a situation where the Navajo Nation -- the tribal council don't want to do anything. We also have a

situation where the BIA, who's ultimately responsible for licensing these traders -- they don't want to do anything. We can't really bring on a good case in tribal court and ask a tribal judge to do something. So what do we now do?" And that's when they decided that they should approach the Federal Trade Commission. FTC.

And so we went to the Federal Trade Commission and asked them to come out and review some of the studies and the research that the students did on the activities of traders on the Navajo Nation. And I remember it was a big, huge meeting. The federal --

PI: [23:00] Was this the -- the early '70s?

PZ: [23:02] Yeah. The Federal Trade Commission -- the Federal Trade Commission had a meeting, or had a hearing in Window Rock, where they subpoenaed the area director and they subpoenaed tribal officials. And they were just really outraged about the prices that the traders had marked up on a lot of the things that they were selling to the Navajo people. They were also just shocked that there were no rules and regulations to govern their activities. So basically, they collected all of those responses and information, and they forced the BIA to come out with rules

and regulations. And all of this happened at the top level in Washington.

And so as a result, the United States Department of the Interior at the Washington level had to come out with those rules and regulations that governed the activities of the traders and their relationships with their Navajo customers.

Now, in that announcement of the new regulations, the regulations clearly stated that when a Navajo person comes to a trading post, and if they are to pawn whatever property that they may offer, like saddle, jewelry, belt -- the trader is obligated by the new rules to give them a pawn ticket, and on the pawn ticket it would say what the interest rate is per month and what the interest rate is per year. And that the traders really can't sell those items as long as the customer, the claimants, were paying interest on the items that they pawned with the traders. Because prior to all of this, the traders -- the traders were also selling a lot of what the local people pawned to visitors, during the summer months when they come onto the Navajo Nation. It is all good jewelry at the trading post

that they saw some really, really good Navajo rugs or saddle or whatever, and if the visitor really, really liked that, there was nothing that would prohibit the trader from selling that [26:00] at a high price. And so with the new rules and regulations, they had to give a pawn ticket to the customer, and thereby they can't sell the item as long as the local people were paying interest on whatever items that they pawned at the trading post. That really upset the traders.

PI: [26:25] Yes.

PZ: [26:26] And so the traders then started saying, "We can't do business anymore -- there's too much paperwork that we now have to do." And they said that "We can't continue to do business under these circumstances." And so basically some of the traders decided to close.

PI: [26:52] Right.

PZ: [26:53] And gradually and slowly they -- they pulled away. They were angry that the federal government, with the blessing of the tribal government, would have these rules and regulations. That, to me, is quite a success story. By just having young people of nine students to come together, and they said, "We're going to focus on this and we're going to try to do something about it, and this will

be what our research is all about, is all about that." And they said that "This is what we want to do. And then at the end we want to have a fair treatment from the traders with the Navajo people." So they accomplished that. It didn't take a year, or one summer. It took two or three years to do this -- but they kept at it. They kept at it. Because the following summer, almost the same students came back, just to do a followup work, after they came back for their summer vacation. And so I take a lot of pride in those young people and in doing what they did, because a lot of times we have young people that will say, "Well, Navajo Nation is facing a huge problem," or "The Indian community has this huge problem, and we're just students -- we can't really do much about it." Here's a situation where nine students, banding together, finding the resources, and they knew exactly what they wanted to do. And at the end, all they were looking for was fairness and the fair treatment of local Navajo customers, and to have them have a sanitary food where nobody would hurt -- be hurt, or nobody would be harmed.

And so that's what they were really, really looking for, and so it's something that, I think, Indian people, the

young people, need to take a look at -- these kinds of activities, where it would give them a lot of encouragement as to their own role with their own people on Indian land.

PI: [29:25] Do you remember the names of some of those students?

PZ: [29:28] Well, I remember one of the students was Gloria Hale-Showalter, who graduated from Window Rock High School and went to Fort Lewis College. And then she, I think, got her Master's degree and she became superintendent of Window Rock High School for several years. And then she was also a superintendent at Sanders High School. And then, I know that she is in New Mexico now.

PI: [30:09] I see.

PZ: [30:09] She's a very highly respected young lady, very smart, and she was very aggressive, even back then. And one of those individuals that really cared about the Navajo people.

PI: [30:26] Is she related to Albert Hale?

PZ: [30:30] Pardon me?

PI: [30:30] Is she related to the Hale who's involved in politics?

PZ: [30:33] Yeah.

PI: [30:34] OK.

PZ: [30:39] I don't remember -- well, one of the other -- one of the other persons was Larry Foster. Larry Foster also went to Window Rock High School, and he's now involved in a lot of the Navajo programs.

PI: [30:58] He helped with some protest organizations.

PZ: [31:00] Yes.

PI: [31:01] I'm remembering. It was Farmington or Gallup or someplace.

PZ: [31:04] Yep. And he is the individual -- the other individual that was involved in that. The other one is Lorene Ferguson -- Lorene Ferguson was also a student at Fort Lewis College and then I think she went on to UNM in Albuquerque. And she ultimately became a lawyer -- got her law degree from the University of New Mexico. And then she was a tribal judge in Shiprock for several years, and then during the last five or six years, she has been serving as one of the justices on the Navajo Nation Supreme Court panel. Highly respected, very smart individual, and she was one of the students that did the research.

So those -- those three come to mind right away. And I think we lost maybe two of the people that participated.

PI: [32:19] Well, Michael Benson participated.

PZ: [32:20] Michael Benson, I believe, was another one.

Michael was always involved in a lot of the activities against Gallup Ceremonial. And his sister -- he had a sister, a young sister --

PI: [32:36] Yeah. His sister was an old friend of mine. Gloria. GloJean.

PZ: [32:42] GloJean Todacheene is now a council -- member of the Navajo Nation council. And those were the students that I remember, back then, having to work with.

PI: [32:54] I met her in 1968, or -7 -- she was one of those ABC students, you know, who went back east for school, but she'd been teaching, you know, home ec at Shiprock High School, and then she became the principal at the --

PZ: [33:10] Yeah.

PI: [33:10] -- middle school. Mesa School. I've known her for a very long -- a very long time. That's a pretty impressive group of people, isn't it?

PZ: [33:21] Oh, yes. And I was -- you know, I was just -- I was just blessed with having these people come forth, and they were volunteering their services to do this. And they knew that this wasn't going to be easy -- they knew that this was going to involve having to organize and pressure

the members of the Navajo council, and then even having to persuade, try to persuade a federal government entity such as the Federal Trade Commission to come out and do what they did, which was to have a hearing and then, using some of the research materials that they collected, to use that in forcing the BIA to come up with some type of rules and regulations. And it was really done through the pushing of the students.

PI: [34:30] Yeah. I had -- I came to Many Farms in the fall of '69, so it was, you know, things were just getting started. And I had to do this for a class, and they had the same reaction. You know, they followed this model. And they just couldn't believe it, how big the markup was. But since -- and I'm just saying this for the sake of readers of the text who wouldn't know -- of course, the transportation picture changed dramatically: people had alternatives to -- many of them, at least -- alternatives to the trader. You know, they would drive on in to Gallup or whatever. And so that really changed the status. I mean, many of these guys just had sort of a monopoly.

PZ: [35:13] Yeah.

PI: [35:13] Over the local trade, because --

PZ: [35:16] They sure did.

PI: [35:17] Yeah.

PZ: [35:17] Yeah. One of the other things that I omitted that I think is worth talking about --

PI: [35:24] Sure.

PZ: [35:25] -- and that is where some of these traders entered -- entered into agreement with, for example, Santa Fe Railroad. And the railroad people were always looking for Navajo labor --

PI: [35:42] Right.

PZ: [35:43] -- to go on railroad work. And so by entering into some kind of agreement, the understanding between the two parties was that the trading -- that the traders would be able to select from the local community members who should go on the railroad job. And railroad work is hard work, and so they were looking for middle-age, maybe young people to go on these jobs.

But because the railroad industry entered into an agreement with the local traders where the traders, they took advantage of that by looking for the young Navajo people in the communities that can -- let's say, that knows how to speak English, that is not afraid to go off the reservation to work on railroad and rural communities of America.

PI: [37:01] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [37:01] So they looked for those kinds of people. And when they found those individuals, they would encourage the individuals to do business at their store. And they would run up credits, and they would ask individuals, "We can give you," and "We can sell you these items, and I'll just charge it against your name." And when they -- when they, there was enough charges that the local person that they found did, then they'd say, "Hey, I got this railroad job, and we want to recommend that you go to work next Tuesday. If you want to work, be here at eight o'clock in the morning -- we'll drive you to Holbrook, Arizona, and then we'll put you on the train, and you're going to -- they're going to drop you off in Kansas City. And you're going to be working there for eight months to a year or so."

And so when the traders did that, they were able to give the railroad companies the person's name and address, so if there's any checks coming --

PI: [38:23] Ah, I see.

PZ: [38:24] -- from their work, you know, they were able to get that at the trading post, and the traders controlled that poor individual.

PI: [38:33] Yeah.

PZ: [38:34] -- with his check -- the mail that he was getting at the trading post. And according to the new rules, they couldn't do that.

The other thing that happened subsequent to all of this, where the nine students and all of us who supported them, was when the traders finally left, in its place, the Navajo Nation started building shopping centers. And so as a result, you have Chinle Shopping Center, that was promoted by a non-corporate entity. And so by having a shopping center and having a Bashas store and all of the other convenience stores, the Navajo people got good prices for the commodities that they were getting. And admittedly they may have to drive in to do that, but they always have business to do in and around Chinle anyway.

And so that's where they shop. And so the shopping centers really replaced the function of the Indian trader -- Navajo traders.

PI: [40:03] And they employed a lot of people, too, didn't they?

PZ: [40:05] Yes.

PI: [40:06] Yeah.

PZ: [40:06] And the other thing that happened is because the traders were no longer in the community, the federal postal services also then began going out into communities like Pinon. And they established a post office, with individual boxes and numbers. And the Navajo people can come to the post office and pick up their mail. Some of them have individual boxes. And they didn't have to deal with the traders.

PI: [40:49] Right.

PZ: [40:50] And so when they did that, then the Navajo people had, you know, their checks or whatever it is that they were expecting from their former employer, there was something that the traders did not have to open some of those letters to see if there was --

PI: [41:19] A check in there?

PZ: [41:21] -- a check in the envelope. And sometimes the local people had to worry about that.

PI: [41:27] Sure.

PZ: [41:27] And so it was -- to me, it was something that, yes, it was maybe not such a good idea to have the traders have this powerful, powerful role in the community that they wanted to hang onto. But at the same time, the students

and myself and others, we knew that it just had to change. And so that transition between building shopping centers, building post offices at these local communities -- that was a big transition.

PI: [42:05] Sure was.

PZ: [42:06] But we looked at that as progress, where if you have a trading post, you didn't have the privacy that you wanted, because you were always expecting the trader to see if you got your check in the mail. And you were always worried about what happened. Or if he was telling you the truth, that it's not there or it has not arrived yet. And by having the post office, you didn't have to worry about that.

PI: [42:45] And building those Bashas stores, you see a larger supply of mutton available than you would in Phoenix area Bashas. I mean, they've made an effort to supply certain things that they wouldn't do in other locations. When did those stores come in? I was trying to remember about that. The Bashas stores.

PZ: [43:10] Pardon me?

PI: [43:11] When did the Bashas stores start being constructed?

PZ: [43:17] I think Bashas started coming in probably around the mid-1970s --

PI: [43:24] OK.

PZ: [43:25] Mid-1970s, they opened up Chinle --

PI: [43:34] Right.

PZ: [43:34] -- and then Tuba City. And then when I came into office, we opened up the Kayenta -- Kayenta shopping center. And the second one was Crownpoint and Shiprock.

PI: [43:52] I was just going to ask you about that. Yeah.

PZ: [43:55] And so those stores and shopping centers came into existence probably in the mid-1970s on to, into the 1980s.

PI: [44:10] There's one in Window Rock too, right?

PZ: [44:12] Yeah, Window Rock was done in 1984... excuse me, 1988, '89.

PI: [44:32] Were there Navajo people who worked at the trading posts or who were traders themselves at that time? I'm thinking of somebody like Richard Mike, who I think worked at the Heflins' place in Canada or something like that, and then going on eventually to start that Burger King franchise and stuff. I was just saying to people who, you know, had contact with these traders, that got interested in the idea doing business in a different way. And... Richard was on the faculty at the Navajo College while I was there, so we would talk about things.

Yeah, they were very -- in this book, you know, they were -- I don't know if "joy" is the right word, but it will bring a smile to your face once in awhile. They are so used to being without regulations. I remember hearing that -- I think it was in the '40s, late '40s, after the war, they brought in this guy to -- they had a big hearing about conditions and Bill Lippincott and other people from the traders talked about that. But at that time I think they were paying -- their lease was like \$25 a year, which was nothing. And they thought that was a pretty good deal --

PZ: [45:54] Yeah.

PI: [45:55] -- and they wanted to keep it going that way. Have you seen that film, *A Weave of Time*? I'm sure you have at some point. That's that film where John Adair goes back to --

PZ: [46:05] No.

PI: [46:05] -- the Navajo -- you haven't seen that? Oh, you should. Well, there's a copy here, or two. It's an hour long and it focuses on somebody you knew.

PZ: [46:17] What's the name of it?

PI: [46:18] *A Weave of Time*. He's -- Adair had been through, you know, doing the early silversmithing research, you know, and that's --

PZ: [46:26] No.

PI: [46:26] -- and he was later involved with that Many Farms Health Project and stuff. But he also took some film at that time with some of the Burnseys, and Mabel and Tom and others, and so he sort of spliced that in. But it's -- they focus on the contemporary situation of... what is her name... Isabel and -- let's see, it's a guy who went to law school at Georgetown but didn't pass the bar, and now he's an advocate --

PZ: [47:02] Daniel Deschinny?

PI: [47:03] That's it. That's who he is.

PZ: [47:03] Yeah. Did you know that he passed on?

PI: [47:06] I did know that.

PZ: [47:07] Yeah.

PI: [47:07] Yeah. And he's -- you know, we'll have to have you take a look at this film sometime, because it's -- you know, they talked to... it partly deals with the question of weaving and getting proper compensation --

PZ: [47:18] Oh, yeah.

PI: [47:20] -- and they went into Gallup and they're talking to Turpins and they're talking to the Richardsons and all of these people who don't seem to want to give them a fair price.

PZ: [47:27] Daniel's wife and mother-in-law?

PI: [47:32] Mm-hmm?

PZ: [47:32] They were great weavers.

PI: [47:33] Yes, they were. Mabel taught at --

PZ: [47:35] Mabel, yeah.

PI: [47:35] -- at the college when I was there.

PZ: [47:38] Yeah.

PI: [47:38] Like Kenneth Begay, who, she would say, "Stop talking. Turn off that radio." You know. "Watch what I'm doing." Yeah. She was really something. (pause)

I'm thinking about the -- this is just to sort of clarify for the record -- when we talked about problems in buying a pickup truck or whatever the case may be, some of these were not traders -- they were just sort of dealers just like anybody else. But they would have the same problems with leases, and many people went in and didn't know English well. And I remember talking to people at that

time -- they were so angry about that Farmington business -
-

PZ: [48:26] Oh, yeah.

PI: [48:26] That was a place that seemed especially bad in that sense. Was -- the DNA was the legal services program that received funding from Washington, and it took on a number of important things -- we've talked about this in the past, like the McClanahan case, right, and others that were important in the long run.

OK. Are you -- do you feel comfortable with what we've done so far today?

PZ: [49:05] Yeah.

PI: [49:05] Is that OK? Anything else you want to go over?

PZ: [49:10] Yeah -- the role that DNA People's Legal Services played --

PI: [49:18] Good.

PZ: [49:19] -- was when the students did their research, and they couldn't do any more than what they did in trying to force either the tribe or the BIA to have them come up with rules and regulations -- I think it was at that point that the director, Ted Mitchell, personally, himself, filed a

suit. And he got John Rockbridge and my own father, Henry Zah -- they were the two main plaintiffs.

PI: [49:58] I see.

PZ: [49:58] And so there's a case called Rockbridge and Zah versus Graham Holmes, the area director of the BIA on the Navajo.

PI: [50:06] Yes.

PZ: [50:08] And all that case is about is trying to legally force, through the court system, that -- the BIA should come up with rules and regulations. And that was the role that -- the role that DNA played in this whole process.

And so they had a limited role. They had a limited role, mainly because we didn't have -- we didn't have the statistics. We didn't have the documents. Papers that would clearly indicate there was some wrongdoing here, for the judge to make those corrections. And so in that respect, the DNA was limited. And the only thing they could do was to do like what Ted Mitchell did, which is to ask for some rules and regulations to be published by the area director and by the Department of the Interior.

PI: [51:20] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [51:22] And I remember -- I remember back then, the BIA Indian commissioner, and later the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs -- when those people would come out to a conference where we were at, we would --

PI: [51:44] Let them know that you were there.

PZ: [51:45] Yeah, we would publicly ask them to respond to our lawsuit. And we would explain that "you have a responsibility over traders. And the trading -- the traders on the Navajo Nation are out there because you gave them a lease --"

PI: [52:07] Sure.

PZ: [52:08] "-- for \$25 a year. But you don't want to regulate them. And there are some terrible things that they're doing to Navajo consumers." We said that publicly in -- at a conference, when there were a lot of people in attendance. And so it got so where if they came close to the Navajo, none of those federal officials would ever consider coming out, because they knew that we were going to be there to ask them.

PI: [52:46] Yes.

PZ: [52:46] So it took that kind of pressure --

PI: [52:48] Sure. Sure it did.

PZ: [52:49] -- to have them focus on what we were trying to do.

PI: [52:54] Robert Salibi (sp?) was doing that too, right?

PZ: [52:57] Robert Salibi was one of those individuals from
Chinle --

PI: [53:01] Yeah.

PZ: [53:01] -- Chinle DNA office. Yeah.

PI: [53:04] Yeah, with Hilgendorf at that time. I remember
from that time -- he married someone who was a student at
the college -- Verna Harvey?

PZ: [53:11] Verna Harvey was --

PI: [53:12] Yeah.

PZ: [53:13] -- his wife. She was working for us as a
secretary, I think, at DNA.

PI: [53:21] Yeah.

PZ: [53:23] And Robert Hilgendorf was --

PI: [53:25] Yeah. He and John Silko --

PZ: [53:26] -- was the lawyer at DNA. Yeah.

PI: [53:34] Well, this is -- this is great. I'm... I think we
may need two more sessions, maybe, to -- and before the
last one, I'm going to listen to those tapes and we can

make sure there aren't any big holes or anything. But I think we're getting there.

PZ: [53:52] Yeah.

PI: [53:52] Do you?

PZ: [53:53] Yeah. I think -- I think so. I -- like I said, let me decide on Monday --

PI: [54:00] Sure.

PZ: [54:00] -- whether I should go back to the Navajo. And if I don't -- and then let's look at next week from Wednesday on --

PI: [54:08] OK.

PZ: [54:08] -- either Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday --

PI: [54:12] OK.

PZ: [54:12] -- to have another session. Now, if I'm going to go back, then it'll be the following week.

PI: [54:16] That's fine.

PZ: [54:17] Yeah.

PI: [54:17] I am going to be gone some too -- I'll be gone on Friday of next week, and I'll check what else.

PZ: [54:22] Yeah.

PI: [54:22] But yeah. Sounds good.

PZ: [54:23] OK.

PI: [54:24] OK, thank you.

PZ: [54:25] Thank you. (laughter) Now, you're going to lend this to me, right, one of these --

PI: [54:30] Well, I can give it to you. Why don't I just give it to you? That's more simple.

PZ: [54:33] This one?

PI: [54:34] Yeah.

PZ: [54:34] OK.

PI: [54:34] And you can have this one. Do you want this one, too?

PZ: [54:36] Yeah -- I'd like to see it, yeah.

PI: [54:38] Sure. No, I can find a way to get another copy of this, so. So -- sure. It's fine.

PZ: [54:44] I remember talking to this guy, and we had long conversations like what we're doing here.

PI: [54:48] Mm-hmm. Yeah.

PZ: [54:51] But he never got back in touch with me, about his book.

PI: [54:53] Ah. Interesting. You know, I remember interviewing Graham Holmes when I was working on my

dissertation, and he said, "What's all this talk about self-determination? Self-determination must mean being able to spend the white man's money without having to be responsible for it."

PZ: [55:09] (laughter)

PI: [55:10] Doesn't that sound like Graham Holmes?

PZ: [55:12] (laughter) Graham Holmes, yeah.

PI: [55:13] He was -- he was unhappy. I said, well, things are changing around here.

PZ: [55:17] Yeah.

PI: [55:18] I think that was part of the problem. He was so used to just --

PZ: [55:20] Yeah.

PI: [55:20] Having total control. But I can still remember interviewing him in his office, and he was... he was -- "Self-determination. Hmph."

PZ: [55:26] I remember -- I remember the students -- the students were demonstrating --

PI: [55:33] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [55:34] -- in Window Rock. This happened way back, I think 1968.

PI: [55:39] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [55:40] There were a lot of unrest on the Navajo Nation.

PI: [55:41] Yeah. Yeah, there was.

PZ: [55:43] And the students were demonstrating at the tribal council.

PI: [55:49] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [55:50] And they were marching around the council chambers like this -- I think it was at the time that Annie Wauneka --

PI: [55:58] Yeah, I think so.

PZ: [55:59] -- socked Ted Mitchell.

PI: [56:09] Yeah, I think so too. I think that was the same time.

PZ: [56:03] And I was standing there in the audience, and Graham Holmes was --

PI: [56:07] (laughter) Yes, yes.

PZ: [56:08] -- standing in front of me. And right next to him was another Anglo BIA person who happens to be married to a Navajo.

PI: [56:23] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [56:24] And Graham Holmes was mad. Because he said something like "I wonder who is behind all of this --"

PI: [56:35] Yes.

PZ: [56:35] "That got the kids to do this."

PI: [56:37] Yeah, right.

PZ: [56:38] And he said something like "And I even wonder if they know what they're doing."

PI: [56:46] Yeah, that's just what he would say, all right.

PZ: [56:48] "Does anybody know what these kids are doing?"

PI: [56:50] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

PZ: [56:51] And then the guy that was standing by him turned over to Graham Holmes and says, "Graham Holmes... do any of us ever know what we're doing from day to day?" (laughter) Or something like that.

PI: [57:04] That's right. (laughter) That's right.

PZ: [57:05] "Including us," or something like that.

PI: [57:07] Yeah, that's good. Yeah.

PZ: [57:09] Yeah, I always remember that.

PI: [57:10] Yeah. It's like a sportscaster on ESPN said -- we talk with football injuries about things being day to day, but when you stop and think about it, we're all day to day.

PZ: [57:08] Yep.

PI: [57:19] Yeah, that's right.

PZ: [57:22] OK, my friend.

PI: [57:22] Thank you, sir.

PZ: [57:23] Thank you for this.

PI: [57:24] Yeah, you're welcome.

PZ: [57:24] Yeah.

PI: [57:25] Yeah, this really looks good.

PZ: [57:26] It is -- it does -- it looks good. I may want to change my -- I may want to change my schedule, because there's some section in here --

PI: [57:35] Uh-huh.

PZ: [57:35] -- water rights.

PI: [57:36] Yeah, might be interesting for you.

PZ: [57:37] So I want to have a look at that.

PI: [57:38] Yeah, sure. That would be great.

PZ: [57:39] OK.

PI: [57:40] OK. Thanks, Pete.

PZ: [57:41] Yep. We'll see you.

PI: [57:42] OK. And we'll take a look at our calendars early next week and --

PZ: [57:45] Yeah. OK.

PI: [57:46] -- see where we're -- how we are. Yeah.

PZ: [57:49] See you again. I'll give you a call.

PI: [57:51] Sounds good.

PZ: [57:52] Yeah.

PI: [57:54] Did you find it -- it was OK to do this here,
wasn't it?

PZ: [58:00] Yeah.

PI: [58:01] Yeah. In some ways it's nicer.

PZ: [58:02] Yep.

PI: [58:03] Not looking at those black walls all day. OK.

End - ZahPeterson 2007-10-12