

ZahPeterson 2007-12-05

PI: Yeah, I think we're on.

PZ: Yeah, it's on.

PI: OK.

PZ: [0:06] OK. I thought it might be important just to talk a little about my own personal experience when I was a -- just a young boy growing up in our community. And then little things that happened to me that makes all the difference in the world and my life today.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: As far back as I could remember, we always lived north of Keams Canyon, into a valley -- the first valley that goes up north and through the east side of the road there, by Keams Canyon. And I don't really remember how old I was, but that's when I really started noticing things, and it was a family gathering place where my grandma and my grandpa lived, and we always lived right close to where they were living. Of course, they had some sheep -- they had some horses, and maybe two or three cows that they owned. And I could remember going out with the older boys and tending to that. And what that did to me was really to build into my head when -- even when I was just a young man, the sense of responsibility. That we all have

responsibility, and that we all have to help to keep the family going, to keep the traditions going within the family. And be able to practice and really live some of those responsibilities that was expected of us by the elderly. And so it was something that I always remember, and sometimes, today, I will dream about, you know, living back then.

And the way it was, was the way we were living, we planted corn -- we planted all of the basic food that we would need: squash, beans, potatoes, you know, those kinds of basic staples. Watermelons, pumpkins. [3:00] And we had to make sure that they are good crops to be picked in the fall. And water supply, I would say, was maybe a couple miles up the canyon, and into the mesa there. And we had to really almost dig up our own water. And we used an old shovel, any kind of steel that we can find, and we would dig into the earth, where it was -- it looks like the water was seeping out, and then you'd make a little pothole into the clay. And then that's where the water accumulated every day and each night.

And so during the day -- in the morning you'd come with a bucket, and you'd take that water home. And then during the night, it would accumulate, and some more water would come out, and the next morning you'd take another five-gallon bucket to get that water. And of course the sheep, they had a windmill closer to the highway -- maybe about four or five miles, that's where we took the sheep. But drinking water was one of those commodities that was hard to come by. And so that was something that we did.

And I always think about that today -- we drank all of that water, just coming out of the earth. And how come we didn't really get sick? And I guess your bodies just get used to it, because you've been all your life, been drinking that water, and you build up an immune system to any kind of a virus or what have you that might have survived or that might have been in the water. And so it's just amazing, just to think about those things.

And back then -- and I would say this was probably in the early 1940s -- you didn't really hear all that much about Navajo-Hopi land dispute back then, because we were really living in District 6, which is the Hopi territory, Hopi

country. And there wasn't much discussion that I remember people talking about that. But it wasn't until perhaps during the war in the mid-1940s that I heard a lot about those kinds of local discussions -- local politics, and where the Hopi Nation was really trying to push out the Navajos who were occupying some of the spaces within Hopi territory. [6:00]

So we had to move on several occasions from Keams Canyon, going up further to the east and the north side of Keams Canyon. And every time we move, we would move maybe eight miles up or ten miles up, where we settled. And the settlement was such where you had to dismantle your hogan, and then we had an old wagon -- a John Deere wagon that my grandfather owned -- and we would use that wagon to haul all of the logs, you know, that we used for corral, for hogan. And it was hard work, but, you know, it was also good for our bodies and good for our mind and our soul. Because we were actually doing things.

And back in those days we didn't really have what you call toys. Nowadays, I, you know, live with my grandchildren, and everything they have we buy for them -- the parents buy

it for them. And so they just end up accepting the toys as they are, as they are made, coming out of the factory. And there's nothing that goes into thinking about how those toys are made. But with us, when we were at that age, when we would have some time to ourselves, we would go over to the mesa where there was a lot of moisture, and we would dig into the ground and dig out the clay -- the clay that the Indian people used to make pottery. And we would get that and we would create our own toys. If we wanted to have a horse, we had to draw our own horse, we had to shape the clay into a horse or a cow or even little things that we would need. And so I guess when at such a young age, when you do those kinds of things, a lot of your own creativity is instilled into you. And you then become a creator of your own toys, and you have to, you know, do things in such a way that you make things for yourself. You make your own toys, and you have to find places, and a time when you can be alone and play. And play the things that you like to play.

So I think people at that generation, in my generation, they learn how to do all of that, which I am very grateful that that happened. [9:00] You know, we didn't buy things

from the store -- everything we needed, we didn't buy it from the store. We had to create it and do all of those things and find it ourselves.

And so there's a lot of talk about people having to move from the former, let's say, Navajo-Hopi land disputed area. And people talk about it and it's very, very emotional for the Navajo people. But the way I look at it is that we had to move three times, my family, outside of -- we had to move outside of District 6. And then when we did that, we didn't move far enough, so we ended up into a disputed area where the land was jointly owned by the Hopi and Navajo. And then when that got settled in 1974, then we had to move again outside of that area because where we were living became Hopi country. They -- the mediator and the federal government made it so that they turned that land over to the Hopi Nation, so we had to move out of that area again. So the way I look at that is, you know, it just gave us a lot of strength. It gave us, you know, some of those things that pulled the family together. And my grandfather always said, yeah, we are having a tough time -- we're having to work hard, we don't have much to eat and all of that, and every day we have to work to build our own

dwelling place, our hogan. And we had to rebuild the corrals and all of that. But you know, this is going to make us a stronger family. And for you young boys, it's going to make you stronger individuals, where you have to do things on your own. You don't depend on anybody. We're not dependent on anybody; we're having to do all this ourselves, and so I'm teaching you a lot of self -- being self-reliant. And sure, there's going to be challenges in life, and this is just a good lesson for you to go through.

And so that was something that I experienced during my lifetime. My grandmother and grandfather were very strong people traditionally. My grandmother never went to school -- she doesn't -- she didn't know a word of English. And my grandfather had some schooling, and he was a carpenter. He was a vocational education educated person. [12:00] And so he knew how to do a lot of these things. And he spoke perfect English. He also spoke Hopi language and spoke the Apache language, and so he was, in every sense of the word, trilingual. And so he was very resourceful person. And he was the person that kind of held the family together.

And so that is something that I experienced during my lifetime, and one of the things that happened during the process of us constantly having to move was people being either drafted or volunteering to go into the Armed Services. To help during the war. And a lot of my uncles and some of my relatives served during the war, and that left us at home, the young boys, only with the women. And so because of the war, my uncles and my father and other people had to leave the camp. And that put all of the responsibility on our shoulders at such a young age. And I remember at one time, back in the early 1940s, we were so hungry -- we were so hungry, we didn't have much to eat. And what we ate was what we found out there. And we were so hungry that we started talking about killing our own horse -- the little pony that we had in the family, that was really cherished by many of the youngsters within our family. And that was really a terrible emotional experience that I went through, because we were taking care of that little pony, and we had to... we had to slaughter the pony in order for us to survive. And I remember when we got together -- when we got together, we'd talk about how do you kill an animal? Well, with a sheep it's very easy, you just get a knife and cut their throat. But how do you -- what do you do with a horse? And after some

discussion, the ladies in my family decided that my mother [15:00] should be the person responsible for killing the pony. So what we did is, she told us to put a -- a cloth over the pony's eyes, and hang the cloth on the ears, on the two ears, so that the pony can't see. And then she got an axe and hit the pony in the forehead, and the pony went down. But that was our food for, you know, the next several days.

So we had to do those kinds of things in order for us to survive. So I guess in my case, you have to learn -- you have to learn from that. And the learning was that anything that you do in terms of raising your own food, you always have to save. You always have to save some of the vegetables that you may raise during the summer, that you harvest in the fall, for the winter. And you have to dig into the ground -- into the earth, where you refrigerated the food. And then you had really took a great responsibility in taking care of that.

And that was our -- I guess, in many ways, our refrigerator. And so in the winter we would open that, and that's where our food was stored. And it was one of those

situations where when you're eating something, you also have your little other small siblings, brother and sister that were smaller than you. And you always have to keep them in mind because, you know, they want to eat too. And you don't want to be so picky, so you eat just enough to have the food go around so that you survive another day.

And that was a great lesson to all of us, and I vividly remember many of those experiences when we were put into that situation. But what really taught me there was that you have to share with whatever you have, and you also have to work hard even to get your own food to eat for the day so that you can survive. And it was a good lesson. It was a good lesson for me and for many of us to go through that experience.

I just wanted to talk about this so that we would have an idea what kind of background we had. It was not a situation in Low Mountain area where you always had a house and you had transportation, [18:00] you had the pickup trucks or highways, trading posts, electricity line to take care of your basic needs. We never had those. And when we went from -- when we were moving from place to place, we

had to go down into another valley. And there were no roads. So how do you get from the top of the mesa to go down into the lower section of that land? There were no roads, and so we had to build our own roads. And build it so that even the horses can be driven down the valley. And in many cases we had to work not for one week or one month, we had to work years just to do our own roads so a wagon could go down. And so that was the kind of environment that I was raised in.

And my grandfather was the one that really promoted that. He organized the community, and we all came out and had fun together, but at the same time we were working hard -- working really, really hard with the shovel, with the sledgehammer, with, you know, all of the basic, basic manual labor type tools. Crowbar and all of that, we had to use to build our own roads. And so it was something that was very, very interesting background for all of us, to be raised in that kind of a context within my family. I just wanted to say that.

PI: [19:50] Mm-hmm. Thank you. Do you want to stop for a minute?

PZ: Yeah, let me get some water, and then we'll talk about the challenges, and you can ask questions. (pause)

PI: I'm not sure --

PZ: OK.

PI: [20:08] I haven't moved it -- I think it's still on. Um, I wondered if you could just back up a minute in terms of when you made those moves -- was it within -- I know you were in District 6, but did Low Mountain remain the closest, you know, community, or were you -- you know, I know there were a series of places kind of sprinkled around that area. In other words, today we have all these chapter houses and chapters, so I'm wondering if you -- were you closer to Jeddito at one point, or were you -- did you remain there -- was Low Mountain still sort of the center?

PZ: [20:53] Yeah, we remained mainly between Keams Canyon and what is now Low Mountain.

PI: OK.

PZ: That was kind of like our area where we lived. We never really went over to Jeddito or towards that area when we were in the process of moving from place to place. And Low Mountain was not Low Mountain as we know it today.

PI: [21:23] Yeah -- OK, that's what I was trying to get at.

PZ: [21:24] And it was just a place where there were maybe only one or two families that lived down there -- down at the valley.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: And so we eventually ended up settling in Low Mountain, I would say -- not until 1953, 1955. Yeah.

PI: [21:44] OK. OK. But when you went to school, you said you were in school in Tuba City?

PZ: [21:52] I went to school at Tuba City. I was one of those individuals that started out late -- I believe I was nine years old when I was taken away from my family when we were living between Keams Canyon and Low Mountain, up on top of the hill. And we were taken to [cell phone rings] Tuba City Boarding School.

PI: [22:15] Uh-huh. [cell phone rings] Is that you? It sounds like it's for you.

PZ: Hello?

PI: Hm. That's unusual.

PZ: They'll call back.

PI: Yeah. (pause)

PZ: Well, let's just continue.

PI: [22:47] OK. (inaudible) So you -- you started at -- I just sort of wanted to just sort of fill in that blank a little bit -- so you went to Tuba City rather than Tu Amor (sp?)?

PZ: [23:00] Yeah, I went to -- I went directly to Tuba City. Probably mainly because many of my cousins --

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: -- were going to Tuba City.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: And I remember my aunt, who had three boys going to school at Tuba City, who was taking her children to Tuba City Boarding School for the first time. And I didn't go with them the first year --

PI: Right.

PZ: -- but the next year when they were going back, they talked about how it was in school, and it was, you know, there was plenty of food available --

PI: [23:41] (laughter) Yes, that's important.

PZ: [23:42] They played games, they played -- they had a softball team, they had, you know, basketball --

PI: [23:49] Basketball, no doubt.

PZ: [23:50] -- and all of that. And they were just talking about their school experience in their wonderful, enjoyable

way. And I was listening very, very carefully, and I decided that, you know, what I should do is join my cousins. And it didn't really matter with me if I didn't really have any clothes, nice clothes, nice shoes or anything like that. And I just tagged along, and I went.

And that was in 1948. And when I got there, many of the other boys that were in school, some of them had outgrown their clothes --

PI: Yes.

PZ: They couldn't really wear their clothes anymore, so they just gave them to me.

PI: Gave them to you? Yeah, that would be good.

PZ: And so it was one of those situations where I was able to fit my body into the clothes that they were throwing away. And for me, in my head, that didn't really matter with me. It was just -- it was just clothes, and I treated it as, you know, that's something that you have to have. And particularly in the wintertime, when it gets a little colder, you need a jacket. And, you know, it was a situation where I just had to, you know, borrow, in some cases, the jacket that other boys had.

PI: [25:24] Do you think that having family members, relatives, going to school at the school when you got there -- did that help you in terms of sort of adjusting to that different environment?

PZ: [25:38] Yeah... well, the adjustment was very hard.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: For me, personally.

PI: Yes.

PZ: And I guess it was hard because, in the first place, you know, you love your mother and you love your relatives -- your father and your grandfather. And the idea of leaving them -- the idea of leaving the animals behind, your horses and sheep that you own and leaving them with your family and your grandparents not getting any younger -- you know, that kind of was very emotional for me.

PI: I would think so.

PZ: But I also knew that it had to be done that way. We would just have to make that break and begin being self-sufficient as an individual. And one concept was that you had to go away from home to get an education. So that was something that was very strong in my own head, and that's why, you know, I didn't suffer as long -- as much as the other children did.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: As long as I had that concept in my head, that it was OK -- was something that I had to deal with in my life.

PI: [27:10] Were you able to see, like, you know, your mother or other persons at all when you first started in the fall until later on? Did they ever come over to see you, or was that discouraged, or...?

PZ: [27:25] My aunt, whose children were going to school there, we saw them maybe two, three times a year. I think maybe on one occasion my mother would come with her.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: Just to see us. But the problem was, there was no highway between --

PI: Yes, yes, exactly.

PZ: -- between Keams Canyon and Tuba City. It was all dirt road.

PI: Right, right.

PZ: And so it was hard -- it took a day from them to get from Keams Canyon to go to Tuba City.

PI: Yeah.

PZ: And there weren't any service stations.

PI: Right.

PZ: Along the way. So they had to go through a lot just to see us at the boarding school at Tuba City.

PI: [28:20] Mm-hmm. And can you describe, maybe, a typical day at the school -- I mean, how it started, and what you did?

PZ: [28:33] The boarding school was conducted almost like your military institute --

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: -- where they separated the boys between what they call, you know, the big boys' dormitory and the little boys' dormitory.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: But within that dormitory living, they had what they called a platoon system.

PI: Ah. Uh-huh.

PZ: Where you were each given a number.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: And you all had to get in line first thing in the morning -- let's say seven o'clock in the morning -- and you had to stand on your number when the whistle blew. And then from there, your platoon leader would march you to the cafeteria. But when you get up and the bell or the whistle is being blown, when you hear the whistle, you have to get

out there. But prior to that, you had to wash up -- you had to brush your teeth, you had to comb your hair, you had to make up your bed --

PI: Right.

PZ: -- and you had to have nice, clean clothes on. And you had to shine your shoes. And by the time the whistle blew, you were supposed to be all ready and ready to go and all you do is jump and go to your number. And then they would do little drills, by your platoon leader. And then you'd march over to the cafeteria to eat.

The food, a lot of vegetables. And later on I learned -- I learned that when I went to boarding school, for example, there in Tuba City, we had an opportunity to work out in the field. A place called Pasture Canyon. And that's where the school planted corn --

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: They had squash, watermelon -- much of what we were eating at the cafeteria was raised by the school, and we, as the students, volunteered to help the school personnel to do that. And all of that was brought into the boarding school, and then the kitchen workers prepared the food that we brought.

And so we had a lot of cornbread. We had a lot of beans. We had watermelon, we had corn, and all of that. And that, you know, it was a lot of healthy food.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: And so we had that for breakfast, for example, and then we came back to the dormitory, let's say around eight-thirty, and then something like quarter to nine, [31:30] then the whistle would blow again, and you were supposed to all go get back on your number. And then they would march you close to where the classes were. And then they'd dismiss you, and then you all went to your class.

And for me, for example, let's say, a typical day was where I went into my English class to learn more about English, perhaps how to communicate and what the words mean, and then the spelling of those words we were being taught. And then the next hour might be where it was devoted to learning more in working with your hands. Learning something about tools, and learning something that you can create with your own hands. Little toys that you might do, that you might cut out of the wood, and you'd sand it down

and you painted it. And you'd either do it for yourself or you'd do it for somebody or for the school.

And so it was a vocational-like class, maybe devoted to that kind of learning for about an hour, hour and a half. And then the next one might be physical education, where we -- during the -- during the year, you had baseball, football, track, and those kinds of activities, just to exercise your body. But they really didn't have any showers. You did that just in your plain clothes -- the clothes that you were wearing. You didn't go to a gymnasium -- there was no gymnasium.

So we did that, and then at noon we went back to the cafeteria. And the cafeteria was set up in such a way that you were each given a duty.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: Some of the students had to cook, and so they were given a permission to leave at the 11:30 or quarter after eleven, for example. And they did work at the kitchen until all the students started showing up at twelve. And they served us food, and then afterwards they would stay until about 1:30.

But we all had to go through that cycle -- the cycle of working in different areas. And so the food, again, it wasn't all that good, but they were edible; there were a lot of vegetables, and for me personally, [34:30] that's all I cared about, was that, you know, there were nice, healthy foods that came off the field.

PI: That you worked hard on.

PZ: That the students worked on -- that I helped bring into the cafeteria.

And then in the afternoons, we would go back to class, and maybe I'll be taking a math course. You know, learning how to add, learning how to subtract, learning how to divide, learning how to work with numbers and all of that -- maybe do a little arithmetic work that was put together by the teacher. And then maybe another class, we would learn more about hygiene. Something about the study of our own bodies, and the kind of food that we should be eating and what food does and what it does to our body. And then learning something about different sections of our body and all of that. And so there was a lot of health-related discussions.

PI: [35:36] And was almost all of that instruction in English?

PZ: [35:40] All of that instruction was in English. And for those students that needed some interpretation, you had to go to a specialized bilingual person.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: To help you with the teaching. But no one really -- none of the students really prided themselves on going to that person, because they don't want the other students to --

PI: Yes.

PZ: -- to know that they weren't really getting what they were being taught. It was kind of an embarrassment.

PI: Sure.

PZ: So not many students took advantage -- went to that individual. And you just had to blend in with the rest of the other students when we were being taught English.

PI: [36:34] Did they... I mean, you read about and you hear people say that at one point, they discouraged -- one way or another, they tried to discourage students from speaking Navajo, or whatever the case might be, in the dorms -- they wanted you to speak English. Was that sort of the way it was there, or no?

PZ: [36:52] At Tuba City Boarding School, it was a situation where the staff and the teachers discouraged that.

PI: Right.

PZ: And we were too small -- I was too young to feel the -- the brunt of that policy, where they would get a little stricter. Because I think we were just too young to really have the staff try to enforce the concept of not speaking Navajo. Because in my situation, I didn't really know that many English words.

PI: [37:37] That's what I wondered. Yeah.

PZ: And so --

PI: When you first arrived.

PZ: [37:41] So the challenge was just to learn more English words.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: And I didn't really feel that at Tuba City. Where I did feel all of that, and where I did experience some of that, was at Phoenix Indian School.

PI: That would -- yeah, I was thinking of that.

PZ: Because by that time, we were all in school, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelve grade. And we were considered young adults, and the instructors would say, "You guys know what

the rules are: you don't talk Navajo. And if you are heard talking Navajo then you will be punished for that." And that didn't happen at Tuba City boarding school, because we were too young. But it did happen at --

PI: Uh-huh. OK.

PZ: -- Phoenix Indian School.

PI: [38:33] Were there -- I'm assuming that there were some Hopi students that also may have attended the Tuba City school?

PZ: There were some what students?

PI: Hopi?

PZ: [38:45] They were at -- from Keams Canyon, after going there for two or three years, I then stayed in Flagstaff Public School for one year, and then I went to Phoenix Indian School. And at Phoenix Indian School, you had all tribes in Arizona.

PI: Sure, sure.

PZ: All 21 tribes in Arizona was at Phoenix Indian School.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: Of course the majority of them were Navajo.

PI: Right.

PZ: Many Hopi students, Apache, the Pimas -- they were all there. And some other Oklahoma Indian tribal members were also enrolled at Phoenix Indian School.

PI: Sure.

PZ: And Phoenix Indian School was a different story.

PI: [39:38] Right. And -- but if it -- I was thinking of in the proximity of the Hopi Community, you know, two Tuba, that maybe there were some Hopi kids that also might have gone to that school when you were there.

PZ: Yeah, at --

PI: A few.

PZ: [39:58] Yeah. At Keams Canyon -- I mean, at Tuba City boarding school, yeah, there were Hopi students there.

PI: Yeah. That's what I thought.

PZ: Not many, but there were some.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: And then there were some Paiute students --

PI: Uh-huh. Santa Monica, yeah.

PZ: -- at Tuba City. And I did -- I don't remember any of the other tribes --

PI: [40:21] You didn't (inaudible) -- now, at Keams, there were obviously a lot of Hopi students who went there, but there were also more Navajo students who went there than people often realize, I think.

PZ: Yeah.

PI: [40:40] Uh-huh. Yeah. Well. And... my grandfather was there for two years in the thirties, but that was before your -- he was there in '36 and '37, so.

At -- you talked about at Tuba, there was an emphasis on vocational training, and you continued that at Phoenix Indian School in terms of carpentry. Did they -- did they, in the '30s and '40s during the Collier administration, you know, and Dr. Willie Morgan worked with Robert Young and some of those *Little Herder in Spring*, those bilingual books and things like that. Did they -- had they -- did they move away from that after, you know, after the Collier people were gone, and did they not -- They placed some emphasis on, you know, trying to develop written Navajo and, like at Keams -- like at Fort Wingate they had some emphasis on weaving and, you know, silversmithing, and people like Ambrose Roanhorse and others were there. Did they -- did they have any time or any emphasis on Navajo

art or anything like that at all at Tuba? Or is that just --

PZ: [42:03] You know, over at the -- over at Phoenix Indian School, they really didn't have that.

PI: Right.

PZ: In other words, we didn't have silversmithing at Phoenix Indian School. I think they were trying to get away from -- from that. The concept of Phoenix Indian School was, there are different kinds of work that's available, that will be available to you in Phoenix. For example, Phoenix, the city of Phoenix is growing so much so fast that you need bricklayers to build buildings. You need electricians. You need carpenters. You need all of these different people with different skills. And we're going to train you so that when you graduate, you'll just naturally fit into the growing city of Phoenix. And sheet metal work was very heavy, because people were running swamp coolers. And so sheet metal work was something that Phoenix Indian School really took pride in teaching Indian kids. And many of the students that graduated as sheet metal workers went right into those jobs. So that's what Phoenix Indian School was trying to do.

Now, later on I learned that what Phoenix Indian School was trying to do was a little different than what the school at Fort Wingate was teaching. Because you didn't have the same kind of environment that Phoenix Indian School had back over at Fort Wingate, and so silversmithing and these kinds of trades was being taught at Fort Wingate. And what students could do with their own hands and their own minds, in terms of being creative. And at Phoenix Indian School, it was completely different.

PI: [44:22] Of course, the percentage of Navajo students would have been much higher at Wingate, too, I think, than at Phoenix Indian School. But maybe not. But, like, your father-in-law, Kenneth Begay, he went to Wingate.

PZ: Mm-hmm.

PI: And I've had students, you know, look into some of the histories, and they're surprised that -- you know, like at Albuquerque Indian School, there was some emphasis on weaving, and at Wingate, you know, they were looking into the use of, you know, vegetable -- vegetable dyes, and just different ways of doing things. And it's just sort of -- sort of different than the initial image we had of the school, but the curriculum you're describing for Phoenix Indian School sounds a lot like what they were about to do

at Inner Mountain, too. There were all those students who went up there -- there was a very strong emphasis on vocational training, and, you know, not -- there weren't a whole lot of people telling you that you should think about going to college, you know. You told my classes about how when you decided you wanted to go to college, that people at Phoenix Indian School were not necessarily -- didn't necessarily think that was a great idea.

PZ: [45:43] I think that when you look at all these boarding schools, like Phoenix, Fort Wingate, Albuquerque, Inner Mountain, Sherman Institute, Chilocco, Oklahoma -- all those boarding schools, they were not really geared towards putting the students into colleges and universities.

PI: Right.

PZ: Because the concept was that we're not able, capable, of doing any college-related work.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: And that we're more suited for working with our hands and putting us out into the workforce out in the community. That was their goal. But there were a few students from all of these boarding schools that went on to college. And I would say that those are exceptional students.

PI: Yes.

PZ: They were students that made it on their own. They were intelligent people that had, you know, a different background than most of the other kids. So that it's -- for me, it's just a miracle that so many of our... kids went through that program that may have been capable of doing college work. But they were really not, never given the opportunity. And it's only a very few of us that ever saw different opportunities in a different direction. And we just kind of took advantage of those opportunities.

PI: You had to be pretty determined.

PZ: You had to be pretty determined and really function on your own to find your own scholarship, to find your own way to a university. No one really helped you.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: There were no college scholarships, for example, for the Navajo Nation.

PI: Right.

PZ: They didn't have a scholarship program. And so when I came here and went to Phoenix College and ASU, there were no Navajo scholarship programs.

PI: And there weren't many Navajo students.

PZ: Yeah, exactly. That's why we only had at ASU, when I got here, seven or eight --

PI: Yeah.

PZ: -- Indian students here on campus.

PI: [48:02] Tell me a little about what it was like going to Phoenix College. As I recall, some of those buildings were -- had just been constructed through the WPA funds and things like that. And, you know, junior colleges were just sort of getting started in many ways at that time. But that was a bit of a bridge for you, I would think -- was kind of a transition that helped you get ready for ASU in some ways.

PZ: [48:28] Yeah, I -- I decided to go to Phoenix College, because one, it was closer to Phoenix Indian School.

PI: Sure.

PZ: And number two, a coach, a basketball coach at Phoenix Indian School by the name of Joe Famieullette was a famous Indian school coach that really encouraged me that I should go to Phoenix College. And that he had some conversation with the basketball coach there, and so one day, Coach Famieullette called me into his office and he says, "If you want to go to Phoenix College, you can get on the coach's program and play some basketball there. And for that, in

exchange for you playing on the team, then you would be able to get a free ticket for your meals and tuition and books, and you don't really have to pay for anything." And so I looked at that and enrolled at Phoenix College.

PI: Where did you live?

PZ: I lived for -- for a while, I lived at Phoenix Indian School. During the first semester. But then I had to move out -- I believe it was in December or January. Because there were more students that were coming in at Phoenix Indian School, and I had to leave and give my room to those incoming students. And so Coach Famieullette just picked me up and he says that "You can live with us --"

PI: Really. Uh-huh.

PZ: "You can -- we just have one spare room, and you can live there and you can walk to Phoenix College."

PI: Oh, that's -- yeah.

PZ: So what I did at Phoenix Indian School was, I walked every morning from 3rd Street on Indian School Road all the way to 16th Street on Thomas Road.

PI: Yup. I was going to say, on Thomas. Yup.

PZ: And that was walking --

PI: Yeah, that was good -- good for you.

PZ: Every morning. Yeah. And once I had made the basketball team, then I got to know other players on the team. Then they gave me a ride back to the dorm -- back to the Phoenix Indian School campus, at the dormitory.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: And so I was able to make those kinds of arrangements by getting to know some of those players.

PI: [51:29] Were there other Indian players on the team?

PZ: [51:31] There was one other American Indian student on the team, and that's Rodney Lewis.

PI: Oh, sure.

PZ: Rodney Lewis went to North High School, and he was one of the better players in the city of Phoenix back then. And he did very, very well.

PI: [51:32] This is from the well-known family --

PZ: Yes.

PI: -- at Gila River, I'm assuming.

PZ: [51:57] Yeah. He is from Gila River, a member -- a member of the tribe. And his father was a preacher there at Indian School, he had the church there. And many of the Indian School kids went to his church. And just a really good, solid family.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: And that really believed in education. So Rodney Lewis had a good background, because his family was so strong in community affairs -- worked with many, many of the Indian people here in the city of Phoenix.

PI: [52:43] And for the basketball team, what was your -- what was your strength as a player? What did you especially like about basketball, or part of the game?

PZ: [52:55] Yeah. I played on the team -- I made... I made the team, and unfortunately, during the season, I really got beaten up -- my tooth was knocked out, and for the first time I lost my front tooth.

PI: Mmm.

PZ: And it was broken in half, and I had to go through the Phoenix Indian Hospital to take care of it.

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: And then the other thing was that my ankle -- I had a broken ankle right at the lower half of my ankle in high school. And that never really healed up. It was always with me. The doctor was advising me that when you break an ankle like that and you stay in bed, and you stay in bed for so long, you get tired of staying in bed, and then

sometimes you think you've get well, so you start using your feet again -- you start walking again.

PI: Maybe too soon.

PZ: And yes, the first day it won't hurt, but what you're really, really doing is that you're using it before it gets completely healed.

PI: Sure.

PZ: And if you keep on using it and keeping on using it, it never really, really heals up. And so you're just damaging your ankle. Well, when I was at Phoenix College, I sprained my ankle in the same side, in the same place. And that was really painful. It was the most painful thing that I ever experienced. At nights it would swell up --

PI: Yeah.

PZ: And the doctor says that "You're just going through a lot of a painful process towards healing your ankle." And the only thing that they could do was just give me some strong medicine to take care of the pain.

PI: Sure. Yeah.

PZ: And they don't actually really treat it. And yes, I did have a brace that they put on, and -- but then you get tired of that, too.

PI: Yeah.

PZ: And so you end up taking it off --

PI: Sure.

PZ: Because you can't wear shoes.

PI: Right.

PZ: And so you -- you get tired of that too. And so that's what happened to me at Phoenix College. And I ended up dropping out towards the middle, or two-thirds of the season.

PI: That's too bad.

PZ: And so that's what happened.

PI: [55:54] Mm-hmm. And when you decided to come to ASU, which I guess wasn't -- for you it wasn't ASU yet, AS...
(inaudible) Did you think at all about going somewhere else to school, or was it just that it was the nearby...

PZ: [56:11] I didn't really think about going anywhere else. I enrolled at Phoenix College in 1958, and I went to school there for two years, a year and a half or two years. And then in 1960 I came to ASU. And I really did not think about going anywhere else except to go to ASU.

PI: Sure.

PZ: And that was because I knew people here in the city of Phoenix, and I had some support for other people that I knew here in Phoenix that I could rely on. And I couldn't rely on my parents, because they weren't working. They were living 330 miles away from Phoenix, on the Navajo Nation. And so you had to learn how to shift for yourself.

And, you know, I didn't have the scholarship, but I went to ASU and I told them I could work. You know, you guys need help, and I could work here. And all I want to do is take some courses, and trying to extend my education where I have earned it at Phoenix College -- I want to add onto it and get my degree in education and go back to the Navajo Nation as a teacher. That was my goal. And it was something that I really, really focused on, that was what I wanted from ASU.

PI: Were there --

PZ: And ASU responded, and they put me to work.

PI: [57:52] Yes, that's what I was going to ask. Were there... can you think about one or two people who made a different to you, who were part of the staff or faculty or somewhere at ASU, that sort of helped you a little bit in getting --

you know, making that transition and moving along with your studies?

PZ: [58:08] Well, I would credit Coach Famieullette --

PI: Mm-hmm.

PZ: -- from transitioning me from the Phoenix Indian School concept over to Phoenix College. Because he offered his house -- he offered his home. And so I was able to stay there until I finished at Phoenix College. And then when I went to ASU in 1960, Bob Russell was here. And Bob Russell was just a young man getting his degree here at ASU -- working on his doctoral degree here at ASU. And at the same time he was also an associate professor.

PI: In education.

PZ: In education. And he was one individual that also helped me. That kind of showed me the campus and some of the people that I need to know that could be of some help. So he was very, very helpful, and I owe a lot to the late Dr. Russell.

And the other person that people never really ever heard about, but in my own mind he was also very helpful, was a guy named Keegan. I don't remember his first name, but he was a professor here, in industrial arts. He kind of took

an individual interest in me, because I was different in his class. I was completely different than the other students. And he saw my work, what I was capable of doing, and the work that I was performing in his class was also a little different than the rest of the other students.

PI: [60:09] What kind of work was that?

PZ: [60:11] He was an industrial arts teacher where, for example, one of the courses that he was teaching was what they call finishing, where you work with metal and you finish -- do finish work, fine work. Where you weld things together and make sure that it holds and it's strong, and then you sand it off with a sander, and then you finish all of that and make sure whatever it is that you put on is also something that stays on. And he taught the same thing with wood -- the different kinds of wood, and how you finish, and what materials you use to finish wood. And some of it had to go into cabinetmaking, and designing different things, and how the factory designed different things that we use in our homes.

And so he taught that. He also taught finishing work on cars, vehicles, how you can redo the body of a car, and then how you can paint it and what you have to use. And so

a lot of handwork. And I guess Professor Keegan saw that I liked doing that kind of work, and so he kind of gave me some extra work that I could do to improve my grades, for example. So he's still around -- he comes around every once in awhile.

PI: Really?

PZ: He's just a great, great person.

PI: [62:05] Oh, that's terrific. (pause) And so -- we're about at that time, I guess. We can pick up from here -- OK?

PZ: [62:21] Why don't we do this... maybe what we'll do is, you and I get together another time, again --

PI: OK.

PZ: -- and then let's -- let's just talk about the future.

PI: OK.

PZ: The challenges on the Navajo -- for example, education.

PI: Right.

PZ: And what -- where it's at right now, where I think it should go.

PI: I think that would be terrific.

PZ: And then economic development --

PI: Right.

PZ: Where it's at now and where it should go.

PI: Yeah, that sounds good.

PZ: [62:51] The population -- urbanizing Navajo communities, and where it's at now, and the struggle that it went through, the Navajo Nation, and where it's headed.

PI: Yes.

PZ: I think those will be very, very good.

PI: Good. Good.

PZ: OK.

PI: OK.

PZ: [63:13] I'll get Keegan's -- Dr. Keegan's first name.

PI: Uh-huh.

PZ: And the correct spelling of his name.

PI: [63:23] OK. I really enjoyed --

PZ: Good.

PI: -- this today. I hope you did. It was -- I thought it was -- there were some things I learned that I didn't know about. And it reminds you of how much difference an individual can make in your life. It just...

PZ: [63:43] We all have our heroes, right?

PI: [63:44] That's right. That's exactly right.

PZ: Every one of us. Yeah.

PI: Exactly right.

PZ: And mine were those three individuals.

PI: [63:51] Mm-hmm. I remember when I first arrived at NCC, and I met Bob, and, you know, he had that big voice, you know? (laughter)

PZ: Yeah. (laughter)

PI: And all that enthusiasm, and all the rest, and all that energy.

PZ: He sure had that, yeah.

PI: [64:15] Boy, I'll say. And just -- you know, and the person that Ruth and that other people from the family, and... yeah. I was so -- I was so lucky to have that experience, and... but I can just see Bob kind of taking you in hand and saying "OK," you know, "You can do it," in other words.

PZ: Yeah.

PI: Yeah. Good for him.

PZ: [64:41] OK, Peter.

PI: [64:42] OK. Thank you very much.

PZ: Yeah.

PI: [64:44] So you'll --

PZ: Thanks a lot.

PI: -- you'll go look at your calendar and figure out when --

PZ: [64:49] Yeah. Next week -- it can't be next -- it can't be this month, because next week I'll be --

PI: That's fine.

PZ: -- I'll be in Flagstaff --

PI: Sure.

PZ: -- on Wednesday. And then I'm going to Wallapi Reservation.

PI: OK.

PZ: So then the following -- following week --

PI: [65:04] Yeah, we're getting into the --

PZ: -- is Christmas.

PI: Sure.

PZ: So it will be the first of January -- sometime.

PI: [65:08] Well, sometime in January would be great.

PZ: Yeah. OK.

PI: And what I'll try to do is listen to the tapes between now and then and kind of get a sense of --

PZ: Yeah.

PI: -- where we've been and all the rest of it.

PZ: OK.

PI: But I really enjoyed today, so thank you.

PZ: OK, Peter.

PI: OK.

PZ: I will see you, my friend.

PI: All right.

PZ: Yeah. (long pause)

PI: [66:10] (muted talk in background) It was a really good session today, because he was talking more personally --

F1: Yeah?

PI: -- you know, and that was really good. You know, about his own experiences in going to school --

F1: Uh-huh.

PI: -- and stuff like that.

F1: [66:22] That's excellent. Well, sometimes it takes a while, probably.

End - ZahPeterson 2007-12-05